

Vile 341

[Chapter 341 - Clean Slate Project P2](#)

"Reen... is connected to my existence.

She... she is someone I can't live without. Before you do anything to us, please tell me the whole story. I wish to know."

He bowed to Eliza and spoke tremblingly. Unbeknownst to him, tears were forming in his eyes. They rolled down on his cheeks and onto his clothes. And new tears kept taking their place.

It was more terrifying than dying a meaningless death to feel separated from the only person who knew about his new start and cared for him. Reen was equally afraid of being separated from him. She felt her survival was meaningless if she didn't have Eren.

Only now did the butcher realize the importance of someone or something other than his goals in his new life. He worked tirelessly every day to improve his ranking status. Never realizing what he already had was an equally crucial part of his life.

Eliza thought it was only fair that she fulfilled Eren's request before carrying on with her next set of plans. She nodded lightly at him even when his head was down and continued speaking:

"The concept of creating an artificial demon beast was something my half-blood clan had come up with when it was at its peak. It was supposed to strengthen the half-bloods, humans, and all the other races involved in the calamity of that time."

Eliza said until here and her expression changed. She closed her eyes and replayed all the scenes from her past in her mind. It took a while before she picked up from where she had left off:

"However, things happened, and my clan decided not to reveal their research to the public. I had vehemently opposed that seemingly selfish decision. But it turned out I was not as prodigal as people had made me believe.

That decision turned out to be right when the half-blood clans were betrayed by all the other races in the alliance. Our fates had been sealed at that point. But we at least prevented ourselves from making our backstabbers even more powerful than they already were."

Eliza tried not to let her emotions influence the surroundings around her while she was saying that. She had advanced so much in the way of her element, that the surrounding mana itself wanted to bend to her will. As a result of which, green flames suddenly appeared around the duo and encircled them inside it.

Eren could feel that the green flames produced by the Draconic Lizards would pale in comparison to the flames he was witnessing right now. The beasts' flames displayed enhanced damage potential because of their higher-than-normal temperature values. But they lacked a certain intent in them.

Of course, the green flames Eren was currently encircled with didn't hurt him. He did not use his mana sense to check out. He feared even his intangible mana sense would get affected after coming in contact with something like this.

The flames unintentionally produced by the Sage ranker were now carrying an intent. An intent of corrosion. An intent of total annihilation.

Eren could feel that as long as the Sage ranker wished, even the high-ranked entities of her level would find it difficult to extinguish these flames with any normal means. They would only get extinguished after their target ends its existence. Hence, the name Enderflame was an apt fit.

Neither Eliza nor Eren paid attention to the flames surrounding them. Sage continued after getting her emotions in check:

"Long story short, I was stabbed in the back along with all the rest of the half-blood rankers. I was injured and almost on the verge of dying, but I managed to run away. I have been biding my time in this place ever since."

Eliza started pacing around the hall for a while as if to gather her train of thoughts. She took her time and continued with stoic expressions on her face:

"When I came here, I was helpless and distraught because of the annihilating tragedy that had happened to me. I was dying.

But on my deathbed, I entered a state of epiphany and found a way to survive. I found a way to bid my time and wait. My epiphany had also blessed me with more than my temporary fix. It also enabled me to see a way to craft a vessel for myself.

There was only one thing left for me to do: rework my clan's ambitious project that had never been finished before. But to do that I needed to go outside this separate dimension. Something that wasn't possible for me anymore."

Eliza was seen clenching her fists as she said all this. She continued right afterwards:

"I was frustrated and angry at the game I was forced into by my fate. I had a way to come back stronger than before. And exact vengeance on those who had harmed me and my clan. But I couldn't use it if I wanted to stay alive.

Have you ever experienced something like this? When the frustration of this level lasts as long as mine did, it becomes easy to take your own life. It can be easy to give up.

But I did not do that. You know why?"

Eren knew the question was rhetorical. He just sat there and listened. His tears had dried up, but his eyes were still red. Yet surprisingly, there was a certain clarity to his face. That clarity made him grasp and etch into his memory every word the Sage ranker had said till now as well as the one she continued speaking:

"Because I was part of the reason the half-blood clans faced their doom. I had to carry this burden. Otherwise, who would avenge them if I, supposedly the last surviving Sage from their side, decides to call it quits?"

But do you know, Eren? Even the shittiest of luck comes with an expiry date. Mine did when a certain someone stumbled into this separate dimension."

Chapter 342 - [Bonus] A Purge Shall Begin Anew

"Even the shittiest of luck comes with an expiry date, Eren. Mine did when a certain someone stumbled into this separate dimension."

She paused after a few minutes and continued in a voice that was laced with amusement:

"Arthur Renar was in the C-Rank at that time. On the verge of achieving his breakthrough. It seemed that he had been stuck in that rank for quite some time.

So he decided to achieve a forced breakthrough by adventuring into the unknown. That's how he found this place, by his and my sheer luck. Fufufufu!"

Eliza looked upbeat when she thought of how her plan to revive herself was rebooted after Arthur's arrival.

"That idiot entered the first floor of the C-Rank tower and faced his tribulations. Additionally, he made it to the next rank and survived seven days on the first floor.

Ideally, I wouldn't have bothered meeting with him. I might have killed him to vent my frustration."

Eliza said and shook her head. Then she sighed in irritation before verbally marching on:

"The world had moved ahead and changed so much while I was inside here. Creating a "clean slate" was even more difficult now than before. Plus, now I would have to be wary of newly risen Sages as well as the old monsters that could be aware of my identity.

Then I looked into Arthur's memories through the dungeon's mechanism and found out he was a duke-to-be candidate for the Edinburgh kingdom. I realized then that I'd need someone of at least Arthur's status to make things happen without worrying about exposing my identity outside.

Hehe! That day, I found the right pawn in him who could invest his wealth and resources in my project. I made Layla meet him and offer him a deal he couldn't resist."

Eren saw a smile sprout on Eliza's face when she said this. He knew this smile. It was the same smile he used to have when his machinations on a group of people were about to become fruitful.

"A ranker's progression after they break into B-Rank and above is heavily influenced by their progress in the way of the elements. I told him through Layla that I could help him expedite his progress into the way of the elements if he takes on the whole "clean slate" project under his belt.

I also told him he would have the true reward of the tower's first-floor clearance even if he was no half-blood, to begin with. Plus, he'd be able to get access to the old paths of magic that weren't seen in the continent anymore because of how complicated the politics of the ranking society had gotten.

I would provide the research roadmap for the whole project as well as the knowledge related to it, which my clan had gained in the past. He would just need to make sure the project ran smoothly and the outcome was delivered successfully to me."

Eliza chuckled as she said this. Eren came to understand how deeply woven Eliza planned to revive herself when he heard and understood how things had taken place.

"So this was enough to bait him?"

Eren asked out of curiosity. Eliza shook her head before continuing:

"No. The guy was too ambitious for his rank, I must say.

Arthur was finally sold when I told him I would allow a certain number of Anthropes and other human rankers to visit the separate dimension. That is if he kept the news of its existence within his circle.

He immediately entered into a binding contract with me through Layla. The project would eventually even out after he farms the place through other participants, he must have thought. This will enable him to get his hands on even more exclusive stuff.

The fish had taken the bait. Now I just had to reel it in slowly. He had access to just enough of the project's research content that could be used in the development of an artificial demon beast. I kept him waiting for the rest of the rewards."

Layla waved her hand and a statue of a seven-headed serpent appeared at the place of the giant's skull. It was half as big as the skull. But it looked eerie and had strange vibes attached to it.

Only the first head of the statue was facing forward. It looked like the rest of the heads were still asleep. Eliza continued while looking at the statue:

"This statue was the reward he most desired. This was what kept him on track. But it's not like the guy is completely loyal to the cause.

I know what is he up to. So it's fun to watch him trying to double cross me. I knew he was planning to delay on his part of the deal. He wants to use his bastard son as an example to test out and fulfil his own personal of goals. He wants to make him the half blood ranker of an artificial demon beast."

Eliza looked at the statue and smiled. She continued soon after:

"But everything had been still under my control. That was until the artificial beast managed to escape. I thought I would have to wait longer to find you through Arthur's hands. But turns out I didn't have to.

With you here, I'm one step closer to reaching my goals. You don't know how long I've been waiting for this."

Eliza thought of something and replied with a certain passion in her eyes:

"Hehehe!

The time I spent here was lonely, Eren. Have you ever witnessed such a long period pass by you?

I kept my mind busy by writing down my desires. Today, I've found my audience in you."

Eliza raised her right hand after she said that. Immediately, the green flames that were surrounding the duo disappeared only to get consolidated and wrapped around her raised hand.

She started speaking slowly. But the intent she had as a Sage ranker seeped through every part of the surrounding and made her voice echo inside Eren's psyche as he watched her and listened to her helplessly:

"Deep within me

I spark my fire

Let no man

Douse my desire

To soar the skies, I did try

For my lost pieces, my heart did cry

But I let that not stray me

I let myself not betray me

For I'll rise once again

From the ashes of those who I blame

A purge shall begin anew

When I light my Enderflame!"

[Chapter 343 - Dragon Half-Blood](#)

"A purge will begin anew

When I light my Enderflame!"

The green flames that were wrapped around and dancing over Eliza's hand suddenly shot up in the sky and created a domain around her. The flames started morphing into a beast after they completely engulfed Eliza's visage in them.

First to form were huge wings that remained open. Then a serpent-like torso appeared. The torso sprouted four distinct limbs that were equally intimidating as the overall size of the beast because of their girth.

The limbs started forming razor-sharp talons. The back of the beast's crown and neck started growing horn-like protrusions. The rugged dragon scales soon covered the beast's entire body. The long tail also had a series of protrusions over it.

The beast looked small when it was compared to the overly exaggerated, grand scale hall it had manifested itself in. However, it was still too big for the human teenager who was sitting ducks in front of it.

This was a green dragon that stood 70 meters in height. Its long torso and huge wings made it look even more intimidating.

"ROARRRRRR!"

The acoustic vibrations and mana ripples of a dragon's cry permeated the surrounding area and penetrated the ground the beast stood on, causing them to travel long distances. The cry was followed by a breath attack that was aimed at the sky. A large cloud of green flames was created in the air that released a menacing mana pulse.

"You.... you are a dragon half-blood?"

Eren asked with his trembling voice. His body had goosebumps all over it just by being close to this thing. Nevertheless, it seemed that Eliza had taken conscious efforts not to hurt Eren physically.

Eliza looked down and gazed at an ant-like existence that was Eren. She stretched her neck and brought her dragon-face only a few meters away from him before stopping.

The size of her maws was enough for her to eat twenty Erens in one go. Maybe more. She breathed through her large nostrils and released a dense blast of warm air before replying in a reptile grunt:

"Yes, Eren. The house of Samael was a dragon-half blood clan.

Heh! At one point, we were regarded as one of the strongest forces of rankers present on the continent of Anfang."

Eren could see the insides of Eliza's maws as she talked while keeping her huge beastly countenance near him. He could see that her huge pinkish green tongue also had a barb-like protrusion on it. Whether or not she decides to swallow them whole, the way down her throat won't be pleasant to her victim.

Eren knew that part of the reason Eliza had displayed her dragon manifestation was that the excitement she had felt after knowing the fruits of her labour were almost in her hands. And the other part of the reason was that she wanted to intimidate him. Because it was the same scare tactic Eren would come up with against someone.

The most difficult part about this realization was that even when he knew that Eliza was using psychological pressure on him, he had to admit that it was working. It was chipping away at the defences set around his psyche bit by bit.

When Eren blinked again, Eliza's dragon manifestation was over. A slightly seductive yet dignified looking young woman stood in its place. She looked at him with her hands folded under her chest and said in a determined voice:

"But the house of Samael is no more. So it doesn't matter how my clan was and what its achievements were in the past. What matters is what I do from now on. And I intend to settle scores with all my debtors.

You know a thing or two about revenge, right? I'm sure you can understand how I feel."

Eliza smirked at him before continuing:

"I don't want to harm you, Eren. Even if you were created using an experiment that was aimed at something entirely different, you are still technically a half-blood. I don't want to erase you if I can avoid it. So you just need to hand over the demon beast that rightfully belongs to me. No harm will come to you.

But before you answer, let me clarify this. What you say or decide won't change the outcome for me. It'd only change the outcome you'd have. Because I'm getting what I want either way."

Eliza declared her domineering policy plainly while looking at Eren with eyes that were devoid of any sympathy. The latter had too many shocking experiences in a day. So his deadpan expressions had stopped reflecting the conundrum his mind had found itself in.

Eren was also tired of being toyed around with. Just when he was about to voice his anger, a weak yet determined voice was heard in his consciousness:

'Erni. Don't say anything stupid. The situation is beyond our control.

Don't worry.

I'll... I'll be fine. Maybe we could meet in the future. Just take care of yourself, okay?'

Using their mental connection, Reen communicated with Eren and morphed out of his body. She had come to realize that it was practically impossible to stay close to Eren when a Sage ranker wanted to draw her out. Moreover, she could end up hurting Eren before getting the results she always wanted.

So Reen decided to show herself without waiting for the Sage ranker to drag her out. She had taken the appearance of Elena. Her eyes had gotten red. Stress, sadness, and fear could still be seen on her face. Most of all, her presence felt so feeble than before because of her mana core still being restricted by the tower's restrictions placed on her.

Reen started walking towards the stoic-looking Eliza when she heard a trembling voice from behind that she almost couldn't recognize.

"Reen... wait. Don't go.

Sage Eliza, I'm sure you'd have countless methods up your sleeve to achieve the same results differently. Please spare Reen.

It... it may sound presumptuous coming from a nobody like me in your eyes, but I can do anything you ask for as long as you assure her safety."

Reen heard Eren's voice and turned around to see his humbled visage. She couldn't believe it was the same Eren she had known all these months and grew fond of.

Then she recalled it was the same desperate Eren she had seen in his past timeline. She felt happy that Eren cared about her this much. And worried that her absence might leave him broken again.

The series of mental traumas Eren had faced today had made him regress into his former self. The dried lines of tears were moistened once again as he saw the tears in Reen's eyes.

"Erni, take better care of yourself, okay? I'll... I'll be leaving."

Reen continued to walk towards the Sage ranker after she said this. Eren saw that and his heart felt like it had been pierced by a thousand swords all at once. He tried to get up and run towards his companion but soon found out that a huge yet intangible force kept him seated on the ground.

Eren couldn't get up. He was unable to change the outcome due to his insufficient strength against the Sage ranker. The only thing he could do was to verbally vent out the feeling of despair that had overwhelmed his entire being."

"Aaaaaaaaaaargh!"

Eren let all his emotions run amok inside his mind and cried with all his might. His bloodshot eyes and running tears erased the halo that surrounded an exceptional ranker.

Eren had gone back to being a pitiful figure who was drowning in his hopelessness and anguish.

[Chapter 344 - Desperate Times Desperate Deals](#)

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In the next moment, Eren's hair started turning white and his skin turned pale as he entered the Life Drain enhancement mode. Elise furrowed her brows when she noticed a strange ripple emanating from him.

The ripple of the strange mana pulse reached the seven-headed serpent's statue and all of the serpent heads came back to life. They raised their heads and hissed at the origin of that mana pulse.

'Perhaps...'

The strange mana pulse and the even stranger reaction of the statue serpents did not go unnoticed by the Sage ranker. She raised her eyebrows and thought of something.

As a result of which, she quickly thought of something and recalled the force that was keeping the newly advanced Ace ranker pinned down to his current position.

"Eren... Eren... Eren!"

Eliza tried to call the Ace ranker but it seemed he couldn't hear her. So she waved her hand and made Eren stand up on his feet. Then she got near to him and slapped him:

Thaaaaap!

A slap sound got mixed into Eren's cry and the butcher was brought back to reality. His crying stopped as a result. His hair and his overall appearance returned to normal. Then he was made to look in Eliza's direction before the latter spoke up:

"Eren, I didn't mean to imply that you won't ever have your companion back. I'm saying she would stay with me until my experiments on her are completed. In exchange, you'd have to do my bidding on the outside though. Do you understand what I'm saying here?"

Eren stared blankly at Eliza's eyes. Sage ranker no longer held any respect in his eyes. But when Eliza gave him hope, some clarity was injected into them instead. A cold-blooded clarity that he had come to cultivate because of his past experiences.

'This kid... he holds a grudge. Maybe as much as me, if not more.'

Eliza thought. There was a part of her that wanted to kill the Ace ranker for showing her impudence. A part recognized him as trouble. Then another part of her laughed at herself for being intimidated by an Ace ranker. This was, in ranking terms, someone who had just started walking on his two legs after all. How dangerous could he be?

She was finally snapped back when she heard Eren's hoarse voice that had gotten devoid of any fear:

"What do you mean?"

Eliza retracted her force and stared into Eren's eyes. She could see the guy had stopped caring about what happened to him anymore after his separation from Reen.

Eliza couldn't intimidate a broken man. She had no use for someone who lacked the sense of personal safety. Because using guys like these was more harmful than using someone mediocre. So she had to give him hope and keep him invested in her cause.

So she decided to not push Eren off his edge anymore and spoke in a clear voice:

"I'll be honest with you, Eren. I would have killed this demon beast to make a suitable vessel had she been delivered to me the way I had wanted her to. I would have also been fine if she had been experimented on by Arthur for profit because he couldn't have introduced irreversible changes with his calibre.

But there's something unique that has happened in your case. There may be a lot of factors attached to it. I am a Sage ranker, yes. But I'm not omnipotent. And my powers are especially limited in my current state.

That's why, since you've formed a connection with her and made her your companion, things have gotten a little complicated.

Her no-elemental-conflict trait has been made restricted to you exclusively ever since you formed the bond with her. Though I have methods to erase your influence from the artificial..."

Eren interrupted the sage ranker out of the blue when she was speaking to him:

"She has a name, Sage Eliza. Please call her Reen from now on."

Eren spoke callously. Although he had included the word "please", Eliza knew that it lacked the anxiety and helplessness from before.

'That white-haired transformation has made him even more of an abomination than he was before.'

Eliza thought and revised her statements:

"Hmm. I do have methods to erase your influence on Reen. But it would be easier for me to use her constitution sample differently. If I proceed with the troublesome but more sought-after route, I would have the most suitable vessel, Reen would be saved, and you would have your companion back.

Are you in?"

Eliza spoke, keeping her voice steady and her face expressionless. Eren had come to realize that it was the Sage ranker's plan all along to make him her next pawn like Arthur. Someone with fewer resources, and no backers. But someone who was less suspicious and more liberated.

Eren Reen was standing behind Eliza. She was looking at him with guilt written all over her face. But within that guilt, there were also hints of gratitude and hope mixed in. Gratitude because she had come to realize that he would go to any lengths to protect her. And hope that she will be able to be with him if and when the dust settles.

Eren had realized that dealing with a Sage ranker was a lot tougher than he could even think of. An old monster like her wasn't someone he could easily hoodwink of. In the most likely case, he would end up with the short end of the stick in dealing with her. Just like Arther had been, even if he wasn't aware.

'Desperate times, desperate deals.'

Eren finally made up his mind before speaking up

"I'm just getting dragged into another mess I never intended to be part of.. Nothing new for me. Tell me what do you want me to do?"

[Chapter 345 - High Functioning Psychopath](#)

"I'm just getting dragged into another mess I never intended to be part of. Nothing new for me. Tell me what you want me to do."

Eliza could tell Eren had suddenly flipped the switch in his head. This was good and bad news for her at the same time. The good news was that the guy wasn't as useless as she thought him to be. He could still be useful to her.

The dragon half-blood started seeing Eren as a broken young man that could keep his emotions in check given enough time to recoup from his miseries.

Eren could spend his life self-loathing if he didn't have anything to look forward to. If he didn't have any goals in his life. But Eliza could see that he would also grow stronger from the hardships he faced given the right conditions.

A high functioning psychopath.

Guys like Eren would be capable pawns for a Sage like Eliza. He could plan things with minimal guidance from her. No matter the cost, he was able to adapt to real-life situations and take measures beyond conventional plans to ensure the end goal was achieved.

The problematic part about using a psychopath as a pawn was that one could bet that the moment the manipulator let their guard down, the same pawns wouldn't hesitate to stab them in the back. They would have designs on everybody and anybody they see as their opponents.

But Eliza knew she had Eren's characteristics too. A ranker who had managed to become a Sage was sure to have their hands painted red in others' blood. This was the mindset needed to rise above the restrictions placed on rankers by society and by nature itself.

'Heh! Two can play that game, cute kitten. You are a few centuries too early to mess with me.'

Eliza smirked while looking at Eren and casually said:

"Don't worry, I won't tell you something completely impossible for you to do. I just trust your ability to plan things and your abilities as a slime half-blood.

I only ask for results. The way to get them is totally up to you, provided you don't expose my identity or anything about me until I'm not ready."

Eren had realized that Eliza must have drafted countless backup plans by now to serve as failsafes. She first sensed his bond with Reen and intimidated him by subtly implying that she was planning to kill her. She made him cry in front of her. To make him realize that he could be hurt.

The Sage was practically unfazed when Reen escaped from the research facility even when Arthur was burning in rage and anxiety. Eren came to realize that Eliza must have the means to track Reen in case she escapes from him, judging by her absolute confidence. Means that she hadn't shared with Arthur for some reason.

She just watched Arthur making futile attempts to get Reen back. She watched as he contacted various experts and spent fortune tracking the artificial demon beast down.

The kind of mental fortitude Eliza displayed made Eren realize that he was too far away from her as a ranker. He was also striving for his goals at any cost. But had he been in her shoes, he wasn't sure he could have maintained the cool Eliza showed him.

In short, Eliza would have multiple ways to bring Eren to this place. He had just made her job easy by coming here. This realization was very disheartening for Eren. but it also made him realize that there was nothing he could have done to prevent this outcome. He sighed after this thought came to his mind and responded:

"Alright. Tell me what an Ace ranker can do for a Sage? And do we need to sign a binding contract?"

The witch of the Enderflame chuckled and responded right after

"Fufufu! Don't be so hasty. There are a few details about the outside world that are missing in my equation. I will have to send Layla outside with you to fetch them through her.

She will inform you once I am done. And don't worry about the binding contract. There won't be any."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard the witch's response. He thought this deal was too good to be true.

He could just leave the kingdom and settle elsewhere if and when he gets outside Purgatory. There was no need to risk his life doing something potentially dangerous for a Sage if he didn't have a binding contract to compel him to do that.

Eliza could not walk outside. And Eren won't enter the separate dimension. No matter how rich the rewards for progressing through the dungeons and towers would be.

The puzzling expressions on Eren's face made Eliza chuckle even more. She explained to him the reason soon after:

"It looks like you don't know. You underestimate a Sage ranked entity way too much, Eren.

We are not on the same page for you to sign a binding contract with me. A binding contract with a Sage would immediately shatter an Ace ranker's soul because of the sheer burden it would have to face."

'Hm? Does that mean...'

Eren found it difficult to control his smile when he heard that. But it still made his lips curl upwards.

He had not personally interacted with even an A Ranker in his past or current timelines. So he was unaware of such restrictions placed on the usage of binding contracts. But this supposed negative aspect of the contract came as a blessing in disguise for him.

Or so he thought!

Eliza watched him react that way and smirked at him before moving on:

"Heh! Don't celebrate too early, cute kitten. I have what I need to keep you in line.

Fufufu! But before I tell you anything about that, I want you to meet someone. Maybe you'd recognize him right away."

Eliza said and waved her hand. Immediately, a teleportation array appeared near the duo— indicating that something or someone was getting brought over here from another place.

Eren felt even more puzzled by Elia's response. He wanted to ask what she meant by that. However, he stopped himself when he saw the array light up and teleport someone over.

The array of lights eventually faded, allowing Eren to see a young man who had light ivory hair. His eyes were lively and full of spark. His facial features were sharp. His body structure was lean yet muscular. And he was exuding a menacing vibe because his hands, legs, chest, and back were tied by runic marks. His lips were also seen to be closed by the same runic pattern.

"Ivor Osan? What is he doing over here?"

Eren couldn't help but exclaim. He wasn't expecting to see someone from his academy getting summoned here. Ivor Osan left to explore the tower alone, skipping the underground dungeon.

Ivor was a genius and ferocious ranker with multiple trump cards in his sleeve. Eren would hate to admit it but he knew Ivor's innate talent was greater than his.

He might win against Ivor now. This would be because Eren had gained multiple power-ups in a short time and had previous experience as a D-Ranker. The butcher knew that even if he could dominate the guy in the end, the fight itself wouldn't be one-sided.

That's why Eren wasn't surprised that Ivor could survive the tower's first floor. Plus, Ivor was a normal runner. So he guessed that his time in the solo tower wouldn't have been as hectic as him.

Ivor looked up from his seated position and narrowed his eyes on a guy he knew well from LA. he tried speaking up and moving his body some more. But the runic marks over his body lit up and forced him back to his previous position.

Eliza had completely and consciously withdrawn her presence. And she was looking at Eren with a faint smile on her face.

Ivor couldn't speak. Nor could he run back to the only guy he knew. But his eyes were telling Eren what he also wanted to say at that time:

'What the fuck is happening here?'

[Chapter 346 - Slap Fest](#)

'What the fuck is happening here?'

Eren looked at Eliza with the same expressions Ivor had written all over his face. Eliza chuckled before making a few things clear:

"Fufufu! Eren, why don't you ask this kid why he was brought here? I want to see how long it takes for you to realize the sheer oddness of your luck."

Eliza snapped her fingers and the runic marks over Ivor's lips vanished. The latter didn't know what change had taken place at first. But he soon found out that his facial muscles had returned to normal. He opened his mouth and tested his voice before shouting at Eren:

"Eren Idril, what is the meaning of this? Who are these bitches and why have you brought me here?"

Ivor looked at Eren, Reen, and Eliza and spoke up with anger and frustration laced in his voice. Reen was too distraught to care. But Eliza heard Ivor's comment and raised her eyebrows. She pointed an index finger at him while raising her hand slowly.

Eren saw Eliza's actions and had creases on his forehead.

Ivor couldn't have known he was talking about C-Rank demon beast and an old as fuck Sage. But the butcher did. So when he saw Eliza's finger getting pointed at Ivor, he tried to intervene. He is yet to figure this stuff out himself. He couldn't let the guy die before that happened:

"Wait, Sage Eliza. I'll punish him for you. No need to get your hands dirty dealing with a Novice."

Eren purposefully used the word Novice and made Eliza remember the rankers' code of conduct that she had rebutted about some time ago. The latter wrinkled her nose at Eren's comment. But she took her hand down— indicating she had agreed with him.

Ivor always had a loose tongue. But he wasn't stupid. He would only unleash his foul mouth on someone he could afford to offend. So when he saw what had just happened and what Eren had addressed the gorgeous young lady with, he started to process what the situation entailed.

"Sage? Who is Sage here? Eren, my man, don't use words carelessly like that. You might get in trouble one day for saying something so casually like this."

Ivor commented and looked at Eliza again. She looked normal to him. He couldn't use his mana sense because of the restrictive runes. He felt no sense of danger from her or Reen. Plus, Eren was practically nobody in his eyes. He figured the people he'd be with will never be that prominent, neither in socio-political standings nor in their ranking status.

Eren didn't speak. He walked towards Ivor and looked at him closely. Then remembered his task and made a quick work of the fellow student's right cheek.

Pataaaaaaaaaah!

Eren slapped Ivor hard with all his might while not employing mana in his attack. The guy was sitting ducks because he couldn't use his mana core after all.

Ivor's face was tilted to his left. The print of Eren's palm and fingers was slowly becoming visible on his right cheek in the form of a red tint.

Ivor was too shocked to react. He just couldn't understand what was happening to him anymore. But Eren's slap had irked him. He had already lost a fight against him.

"You bastard.... What the fuck are you...."

Pataaaaaaaaaah!

"Saving your life."

Eren slapped Ivor's left cheek this time with equal force before casually replying. Ivor was seething and confused at the same time after listening to Eren's response amid the white noise that was starting to ring in his ears.

"What the fuck do you mean..."

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

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Pataaaaaah!

Eren didn't let the guy speak and continued to slap him. This had turned into less about punishing Ivor for his impudence against a Sage ranker and more about the frustration he was carrying in his heart.

The butcher had to admit that the feeling was cathartic. Beating Ivor senseless made Eren feel like he was transferring part of his bad luck to him. That's why he felt happy doing it. He even wondered if he could transfer all his bad luck to him by doing this.

Eliza smirked at Eren's actions. She understood what was going on. But didn't intervene. Her irritation towards Ivor was placated. But she wouldn't miss an entertaining scene unfolding in front of her. She was also expecting to see fun reactions from Eren when he found out what Ivor's role was.

This was a welcome change in Eliza's routine after many years of solitude.

"Haaah! Ivor, you fucking numbnuts, you have been too much of a loose cannon and a pain in the ass. Like, for fuck's sake, understand that the world doesn't revolve around you. You hate your brother and his stupidity so much. But you are walking on the same path as him."

Eren spoke while grabbing Ivor by the collar and looking down on him. The latter couldn't take blatant disrespect from a commoner like Eren and spoke while gritting his teeth that had been bloodied by the slap fest:

"You are dead, Eren. Did you hear me? You are dead. Do you know who my grandfather is..."

Pataaaaaah!

Eren slapped Ivor again before

"Your status as a LA student and your background as Isen Osan's grandson mean shit to me here, at this place. Try to read the mood here, would you?"

I have had it at the academy with your naked threats and your edgelord behaviour. The slaps are a way to teach you to keep your tongue on a leash for the rest of your life, however long or short it may be.

Now answer my question concisely and truthfully. Otherwise, you'd be forced to face another round of beatings. This time it won't be limited to your face though. I have a few questionable habits, you know. Plus, I'm not in the right mood right now. I might take that out on you. "

Eren stared at Ivor coldly before looking at his crotch. The latter shivered when he heard the butcher's warning. For some reason, he believed the threats to be true.

"Wha... aaaah... Ptui!"

Ivor spat accumulated blood in before continuing:

"What... What do you want to know? Let me make it clear though. I would have absolutely no idea about half of the stuff you'd be asking. I have questions of my own, damn it."

[Chapter 347 - Spoiler Title](#)

"What do you want to know? Let me make it clear though. I have no fucking clue about half of the stuff you'd be asking. I have questions of my own, damn it."

Ivor said and looked at Eren with expressions that screamed that he was feeling wronged. The butcher thought about it for a while then turned his neck back at Eliza. The Sage had an amused expression on her face.

The butcher realized that he couldn't get any answer from the witch anytime soon. So he focused on his slap-fest victim at hand:

"First of all, I can understand Jason coming here. But what are you doing here? This isn't a place a baron candidate like you would visit carelessly."

Ivor replied Eren with a question of his own that was soaked in his feelings of irritation:

"Oh yeah? You are not even important enough to know about this place. So what the fuck are you doing here?"

Ivor looked Eren in the eyes and said with a voice that was a mix of anger and frustration. His feisty nature wasn't something Eren could straighten up with one round of slapping.

In response to Ivor's question, Eren maintained eye contact with Ivor and held him by the collar with his right hand. Then with his left hand, he tried to reach for Ivor's crotch.

The slap-fest victim looked down and saw that Eren's left hand was getting dangerously close to his little Ivor. A primal fear overtook him before he shouted as quickly as he could:

"Ho... hold on, you pervert. I'll tell you.

Jason insisted that we come here. I wasn't sure if I should join this Purgatory expedition. So I tried contacting my grandpa about it. But no matter what I did, I couldn't talk to him.

There would always be some fringe problems present no matter which mode of communication I tried using. When Jason's pestering almost turned into low-key threats, I decided to relent.

He had told me he'd take care of our security in a separate dimension. And I believed the guy. Why would a bastard scion of house Renar lie, right?

Don't tell me, were you also invited?

Ivor asked and puzzled Eren even more.

"You said your Isen couldn't be reached. He must have assigned you a few men as your detail, right? Where are they?"

Ivor said without a moment's delay:

"They all suddenly left a note to me saying they had an urgent matter to look after. And they abandoned their duties at the same time."

'This kid is still wet behind the ears. Leaving notes for urgent matters, all at the same time? Looks like... they are dead.'

Eren thought to himself. The more answers he got from Ivor, the more confusing it became for him. So he just narrowed his eyes and said:

"Go on. Tell me everything that has happened since then."

Ivor spoke up right afterwards:

"I was going to complain to my grandpa, but that geezer had already left our place in the city of Osan along with the rest of my family."

Hm? What makes Isen Osan feel like he has left his barony with the rest of his family? That too without informing his grandson? What the fuck is going on? What has happened outside?'

Eren had multiple calculations running in his head while Ivor continued:

"I don't know what has happened since then. It seems for some reason, Jason's men have glued their eyes on me. They always stayed around wherever I was heading.

I decided to clear the solo tower first because I wanted some alone time to figure this out. But after I cleared the first floor, these runes appeared on my body and tied me up. I was teleported to a barely lit place that I couldn't even see.

I stayed there for who knows how long. Then I was teleported here and saw you. Now you answer my question. What are you doing here?"

Eren scratched his chin when he heard Ivor's statement.

'They have been keeping tabs on Ivor. Something has spooked Isen Osan and he left his barony. Jason insisted Ivor come here even though the details that were placed on him were nowhere to be found.

What has this guy done?'

Eren looked at Ivor with puzzling expressions. Elize chuckled after looking at the interrogation and gave Eren a hint:

"Fufufu! It was Arthur who told me he had somewhat fulfilled his end of the deal. By dragging this kid here and practically gifting him to me. You know what deal he had with me, right?"

I was looking for the signs of Reen's presence on this Ivor kid. Imagine my surprise when it was you who displayed them instead.

Do you understand, Eren? It took me a while to figure out what was wrong on Arthur's end as well. Fufufufu!"

Eren raised his eyebrows and tried to sum up all the facts he had with him at the time out loud:

"Arthur's deal with you... was regarding Reen.

He was supposed to hand you...

Hold on a fucking moment..."

Eren then looked at the puzzled Ivor and thought of something radical:

"Isen Osan is most likely MIA... probably because he sensed something coming for him?"

Then comes this edgelord.

His bodyguards vanished. He couldn't contact his grandfather. And then he is forced to come here.

Arthur says he has kept his end of the deal by delivering this guy...

He is assuming Ivor has Reen with him...

But how can a bigshot like him assume something like this? Reen is with me..."

Eren opened his eyes wide in surprise and looked at Ivor as if the guy was a hidden wonder of the world:

"Wait a minute. Reen is supposed to be with the Osan Woods Butcher..."

Eren turned to Eliza and Reen while pointing a finger at Ivor— shock and disbelief were written all over his face— before speaking up in a loud voice:

"Those sods think Ivor is the Osan Woods Butcher!"

[Chapter 348 - Slap Fest 2.0](#)

Eren turned to Eliza and Reen while pointing a finger at Ivor— shock and disbelief were written all over his face— before speaking up in a loud voice:

"Those sods think Ivor is the Osan Woods Butcher!"

Eliza chuckled for a while before nodding at his statement. Eren looked back and forth between Reen's, Eliza's, and Ivor's faces. The slap-fest victim was also confused about what Eren had said for a while. It took him a while to process half the stuff Eren was saying and immediately had a frozen-in-fear look painted over his whole being:

"What... What nonsense are you sprouting? I'm no Osan Woods Butcher, you dimwit. And who are you guys? Who is this bitch Reen..."

Ivor was about to curse Reen some more. By then Reen was also too shocked to feel down about her separation from Eren. And when she heard Ivor cursing her, her anger exploded. She disappeared from her spot and appeared right next to Eren before continuing the slap-fest again.

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

Pataaaaaah!

Reen smacked Ivor hard. It was all thanks to her suppressed rank that the guy was alive. Otherwise, his face would have become a meat patty.

"Haah! That.... That felt good."

Reen felt her palms go numb after she kept on slapping Ivor for a minute. But instead of noticing the sore palms, she felt a lot of her stress had been released. One had to say that Ivor's entry was an apt mental relief for both the demon beast and her master.

Reen's stressbuster slap-fest on Ivor kinda altered the sorry state of Ivor's face for worse again. It made Eren laugh a bit.

Technically, the butcher wasn't in a healthy mental state at the time. But seeing Ivor do worse than him in almost every way soothed him a little. He forgot about his problems for a while and just enjoyed laughing at the guy's misery.

"Hahaha! Ivor, meet Reen. You made a pact with her within the Osan Woods.

Baah! This is hilarious. I thought my luck was terrible. But dude, you've outperformed me. Hahaha!"

Eren said to Ivor while trying to control his laughter. Osan Jr had started to realize that he was being framed for something he wasn't part of. But he still wasn't aware Reen was the same ill-famous demon beast that the OWB had tamed. He wasn't even aware that he was standing there.

"Eren, what is going on? How... How did I get tagged as the Osan Woods' Butcher?"

Ivor asked with a trembling voice. But unlike before, his eyes were calm. As if he had been snapped out of his sorry state. In the ranking war, he had become the same cold-blooded novice who had become famous in LA for his bold battles.

"How, you ask? I don't know much either. Sage Eliza, please tell us how they get this wrong with the OWB?"

Eren redirected Ivor's question to Eliza because he wasn't aware of it himself. The Sage ranker smiled before answering:

"I'll tell you what Arthur told me. He told to me how the research facility that was used to artificially create Reen was attacked by a monster horde one day. Of course, the facility was protected so nothing happened to it.

But that disturbance somehow caused a malfunction in the mana supply and maintenance array unit that was supposed to imbue mana into Reen's form.

Originally, she was only supposed to have an F-Rank with a reworked mana core. The type of experiment being conducted, along with Reen's constitution and the array's malfunction, enabled her to become a D-Rank in a short amount of time. Fufufu! Can you guess what happened next?"

Eliza would always try to hide her laugh with her left hand, which would suppress the noise of her chuckle. Eren took note of this personal trait of hers and spoke up:

"So they weren't expecting to find a D-Rank entity there. I can guess that Reen must have woken up and wreaked havoc at that place before escaping."

Eliza looked at Reen and smirked before saying:

"This rogue beast of yours almost ate everyone working there. Then she took control of the demon beast to hunt the escaped ones and ate them too. Only then did she leave the research facility.

The research papers my clan had on the supposed creation of an artificial demon beast did talk about the appetite problem of the beast because of her mana-induced rapid cell regeneration. But I didn't think it would be to this extent.

Anyway, Reen escaped. That almost caused Arthur to go insane. He must have expended a lot of his wealth on that experiment.

When he learned about the tragedy at the research facility and the case of Osan Woods' Butcher, he tied the two events together. He concluded that Reen's escape was preplanned by the butcher. Reen ended up becoming his familiar after all."

Eren had a blank face as he opened his arms to receive the hug Reen was giving him at the time. She rested her head on his chest and he caressed the back of her hair before replying:

"That Arthur guy is really... something. Why does he think everything is a conspiracy? Somebody should fucking make him realize coincidences do happen in real life."

Eliza shook her head and laughed before narrating the story further:

"Arthur was pissed at the Osan Woods' Butcher to say the least. He wouldn't have batted an eye had he— or you— killed thousands of people. But this was the money that he had put on the line. Plus, the deal with me was not something he could or would willingly break. He was already running behind schedule.

So he used various methods to hunt the butcher. I must applaud you for the way you covered your tracks because you remained in the shadows even after he hired a panel of historians to track you down."

Eren couldn't figure out whether the applause was genuine or not. But he bowed his neck a bit to receive it. But Ivor almost screamed at Eren after hearing Eliza's explanation so far:

"Ho... hold down! Who is the Osan Woods Butcher here?"

[Chapter 349 - Unlucky](#)

"Ho... hold down! Who is the Osan Woods Butcher here?"

Ivor shouted and started looking at everybody. Then he started looking in the void as if trying to see someone that could be hidden. The more he learned about the incident from Eliza's mouth the more his heartbeat kept on increasing.

"It's Eren, little eel. He almost fooled an entire kingdom of yours with his performance. Get on with the program already."

Eliza said to Ivor in a reprimanding tone. Then she pondered a bit while looking at Eren and said in a casual tone:

"I was once a Novice ranker too, Eren. So I can understand how cunning and smart you'd have to be to pull off what you did."

'Heh! I wasn't even a Novice by then.'

Eren thought to himself in the deepest part of his psyche. But he didn't interrupt and let Eliza continue

"Let me tell you one thing. I regret trusting Arthur. And I regret that Reen got away instead of being sent to me the way she was supposed to be.

I'll be blunt here. I may end up killing you in the future. Although highly unlikely, you may end up backstabbing me too. But I'm glad it was you that took Reen away instead of some half-assed ranker.

Reen represents my clan's genius in the field of genes and mana-related studies after all. I would have killed you without worrying about the consequences if you didn't impress me with your performance on the tower's first floor.

I won't let my clan's legacy be used by some dim-witted nobody."

Eren had a stoic expression on his face as he heard Eliza's blatant way of saying things. He also realized that the Sage ranker was being serious about everything she said. He didn't try to reassure her that he wouldn't betray her. Instead, he just nodded before speaking up:

"So what did Arthur do next?"

Eliza smiled and started walking towards the place the giant's skull was at. She summoned her bone-made throne next and sat on it leisurely before continuing:

"Arthur couldn't track you down. So he used some external help. An unusual one at that. I believe he must have found someone who could use a Seer array.

The ranker that helped him is either a genius or crazy to use a Seer array. It comes with a lot of repercussions. Some are out there. While the others take some time to manifest. It might be that I've underestimated the dedication of today's rankers or that they are straight-up stupid.

anyway, Arthur got what he paid for. A few clues regarding Osan Woods' Butcher. Or at least he thought he did."

Eliza said and propped her head on her palm using her folded right arm— its elbow placed on the throne's armrest. She then looked at Eren while mischievously asking him:

"What do you think those clues were, Eren?"

Eren caressed Reen's back to soothe her and pondered for a bit. Then he looked at Ivor before saying:

"Whatever the clues are, they made Ivor be seen in a very bad light. I'm guessing the clues were regarding the commonalities we shared?"

Clap! Clap!

Eliza broke her stance to lightly clap towards Eren before continuing:

"Yeah. Here's what Arthur told me had found from some ranker named Garvin Karr. The first was that the Osan Woods' Butcher was a young male in his teens. The second was that he had a lightning-element affinity.

Then there was another peculiar thing this Garvin fellow found out about the Osan Woods Butcher. That he had an active time-element artefact on him.

Another was the fact that he was using beastly transformation powers to raise his body stats. Then there was circumstantial evidence. Like the butcher had been established as a close combat expert who uses daggers or similar weapons due to the way he killed in Osan woods.

Arthur had told me that he made some inquiries in your academy. And easily found out that this little eel was very handy with his weapons. He liked cutting people up.

He was apt for a butcher's profile that was made for you.

Eren, guess who, apart from you, had all those conditions met for him? Fufufu!"

'No way! Ivor Osan!'

Eren thought and looked at Ivor with a lot of surprise and a bit of pity in his eyes.

'Maybe I did pass him some of my bad luck by beating him in the ranking war and now. Should I... beat him some more?'

Eren had a wild thought. But he still couldn't believe he was let off the hook and Ivor taking all the heat for him just like that. He let go of Reen and walked up to Ivor. he raised his downed head by grabbing him by his hair and asked Eliza:

"But why did Arthur and his lackeys didn't apprehend Ivor outside and check if he had Reen or not? Why did they send the guy here?"

Ivor was speechless at that time with a blank look on his face. By now he had realized that he was in deep shit. Plus, only now did he register what Eren calling the young woman sitting on the throne meant.

She was a Sage ranker. And he had called her a bitch. He wondered how he was still alive. Eren's beatings were the least of his worries now.

"Well, Arthur had told me all the details and consulted me. I had predicted Reen's natural abilities and told him he shouldn't approach Osan Woods' Butcher carelessly. First of all, Reen would have the ability to merge with his body. Second, she might commit something terrible if her master gets harmed or gets captured.

We also had to make sure that a demon beast like her doesn't come out in the open and all her powers are not known by the populace. The safest easy to apprehend Reen was to make the Osan Woods' Butcher come here.

That's why I told Arthur that he just needs to make sure that the butcher gets sent into the Purgatory and I'd handle the rest. He agreed with me and arranged everything."

'That... makes sense.'

The real butcher nodded while looking at the blank expressions of the fake butcher. He pondered a bit before asking another doubt he had:

"Still, Sage Eliza, I can say for sure that there might have been a lot of discrepancies in declaring Ivor as the OWB. How did they look past them?"

Chapter 350 - [Bonus] Choice

"Still, Sage Eliza, I can say for sure that there might have been a lot of discrepancies in declaring Ivor as the OWB. How did they look past them?"

Eliza chuckled while playing with the green flame dancing over her index finger and said:

"People see what they want to see, Eren. There were indeed a lot of discrepancies, and Arthur shared them with me. He ignored them after considering one person in his mind.

That little eel's grandfather. What was his name again, hm? Yeah... Isen Osan. Arthur guessed that Isen was manipulative enough to create those discrepancies and throw him off.

Do you know what's funny though? Arthur had decided to ask for help from the person he didn't fully trust. And when Isen supposedly backstabbed him, he blamed the guy for being too devious. I guess he has a love-and-hate relationship with Isen.

Arthur believes Ivor is the Osan Woods butcher and Isen is his backer and protector. That's because it makes complete sense for him. That along with most of the evidence pointing at Ivor sealed the deal for the little eel here.

Arthur tells me Isen ran away along with his whole family the moment he sensed the danger coming for him. So all he needed to do was drop the guy here and wait for my confirmation.

Fufufufu! Now you tell me. What should I tell him?"

Eliza asked innocently but that made Eren frown. Ivor Osan had to be the unluckiest person apart from him. And he never technically hurt him.

That didn't mean Eren cared for him or tried to play the hero—telling Eliza to tell Arthur the truth. Eliza's question had a deeper meaning that didn't escape his mind.

If I tell her Ivor is the butcher of the Osan Woods, then the bull's eye behind my back would haunt Ivor instead. But that would mean Eliza would have the means to control me.

Haha! Now I understand what she meant by not needing a contract. Even if I leave the kingdom and try to reach the farthest corners of this continent, a bunch of high-ranked entities would keep on hunting me unless I become dead or get captured.

And it's not like she had to declare that I'm the Osan Woods Butcher to make Arthur hunt me in the first place. I'm sure Arthur won't think twice about anybody like me even without bothering to ask who I was or what I did.'

Eren caressed his forehead. He felt like he was going to have a killer headache. Too many shocks had been suffered by his psyche. For the time being, he was trying not to think about them to function. But new problems didn't seem to stop popping up.

"Al... alright, Sage Eliza. Please tell him it was Ivor Osan and that you got the beast. Are you planning to keep your end of the deal to him?"

Eliza flashed a bright smile at Eren when he agreed to her unwritten and unsaid blackmail. She knew he would get around. In a way, cautious and intelligent men were easy to predict for her.

"Hehehe. Since he didn't fulfil his end of the deal, I don't have to. But to keep the facade intact, I might have to offer him a piece of the pie he is trying to gobble up."

Ivor who was quietly listening and processing every word that had been said with keen and stoic expressions suddenly yelled out with an agitated voice:

"Wait. Eren, you can't do this with me. What have I ever done to you? My dreams. I wanted to be the most prominent ranker of my generation. You declaring me as the Osan Woods Butcher might..."

Eren's headache seemed to have been increasing. He pressed his temples and spoke up— interrupting the fake butcher:

"Listen here, Ivor. We don't even know if you'd survive past today. What future are you talking about then?"

Ivor was about to argue some more. But after listening to Eren's remark, it looked like a netherworld ice element had been used on him. The guy looked like a frozen statue.

"You want me to kill him?"

Eliza asked casually while raising her index finger again. The green flame she was playing with was still dancing over her finger. Eren knew that small flame would be all it would take for Ivor's body to pass through instant combustion.

Eren looked at Ivor and observed him for a while. The butcher could see it in the latter's eyes that he was struggling to come to terms with his eventual death. The butcher thought for a while before coming up with a plan:

"No. I don't like to leave loose ends. But..."

After saying until here, Eren stopped. Then he sat in front of Ivor who was already on his knees and said out loud:

"I won't say I sympathize with you, Ivor. Sure, I didn't plan this to happen. But am I glad that you have taken a huge boulder off of my shoulders? Absolutely yes.

Will your family suffer because of this? Yes.

But your family has already left you and is probably safe by now. You and I both know Isen Osan is not someone who'd get captured or interrogated by Edinburgh's forces. He must have been on a safe route out of the kingdom. If he is not already out of the kingdom that is.

Will your reputation get plummeted? Yes. But to a ranker, reputation is nothing but a passing cloud. When you break enough ranks, the reputation will follow.

What's so fun about breaking ranks with legal resources? If your reputation has already turned to shit, you might as well plunder all you want for yourself."

Ivor listened to Eren's statements and snorted his nose before saying:

"If being on the run is so liberating, why don't you do it?"

In response to Ivor's question, Eren just looked into Ivor's eyes and said flatly:

"Because, first, I don't want to. And second, I can avoid being on the run. You can't.

Simple as that."