

Vile 351

[Chapter 351 - Mark Of The Seven Sins P1](#)

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

Simple as that."

Ivor's face turned red in anger when he heard Eren's answer. But Eren raised his hand in a stopping sign before explaining what he wanted to say:

"Let me rephrase that. You and I both have a few choices to ourselves here, Ivor. My choice is to be honest or to be smart. Tell me, what would I choose? I'd rather complete the task given to me by Sage Eliza in silence than worry about being hunted. I'm not sure my survival rate is above 5% if I proceed with this option.

Would you like to know what your choice is? Be a cultist and stay in the shadows for the time being.

Or... die.

Sometimes in life... our intentions don't matter. Our pasts don't matter. What matters is the number of choices we have at the time. Now choose, what will it be?"

Ivor narrowed his eyes and said in a cold tone:

"You killed my brother."

Eren nodded and accepted the charges straightaway:

"I did. But that jackass came at me first. And from the way you spoke with him, I'm sure there's no brotherly love lost between you two."

"That doesn't mean..."

Ivor tried to rebuke Eren's statement but the latter interrupted him once again:

"Ivor, you don't need to pretend anymore. I can see that your ambition to become a high-ranked entity is much stronger than any of your emotions. I may be your brother's killer. But I don't kill without a reason. Or unless someone comes in my way. Otherwise, I wouldn't be talking to you.

I don't know what torture Isen or Isaac must have done to you. But I can identify a damaged man trying to hide behind his grand-scale ambitions when I see one.

Look me in the eye and tell me you cared about your brother or his death."

Eren looked at Ivor in the eyes when he said that. The two maintained eye contact for a while before the latter asked another query he had:

"Why are you telling me this? It's not like we were close in LA. I'm pretty sure I must have pissed you too along with most of the hypocrites there. So why the soft spot all of a sudden?"

Eren just shrugged his shoulders and got up. He started walking towards the throne and said to Ivor without looking back:

"My reason to keep you alive is simple, Ivor. I may have some use for you.

That day, when we first met, you had told me about your aspirations. That was a pretty rambling speech, yes. But it was also something I found to be spoken with passion from your heart.

Now I wonder.

Do you have the guts to survive the odds and rise above everyone? Or do you want to call it quits because the road you had planned for you has now been blocked?

What will it be, Ivor?"

Ivor looked at Eren's departing figure and then closed his eyes. He spoke up when he raised his head and opened his eyes full of determination:

"I am ready to walk on the path of cultists."

Eren nodded his head when he heard Ivor's resolve and spoke to Eliza:

"Sage Eliza, you can keep Ivor here till the heat on him dies down. It won't be anytime soon. But you'd at least have some entertainment, right?"

Eren bowed at Eliza after he said it. The latter chuckled and looked at Ivor before speaking up:

"Fufufu! Eren, are you sure? The boy is naturally more talented than you. I feel multiple binding contract marks placed on your soul—telling me you are at your limit in taking slaves. So you won't be able to sign a slave contract with him anytime soon. Do you still want to risk it?"

Eren smiled mildly and looked at Eliza and said without batting an eye:

"Well... we all like to have strong pawns at our disposal, don't we?"

Eliza understood the hidden undertone behind Eren's statements and chuckled. She had to admit that she had found someone with the same mindset as her after all these years in Eren. She only dared to deal with him this way because he was still an Ace ranker. His powers were too weak to affect her.

Ivor heard the duo refer to him as if he were some sort of common good. He wanted to hate Eren and Eliza. But he had to admit that whatever they said was true.

'I need power. More power. I'll think about whatever I have to do only after I gain enough power.'

Ivor thought to himself before taking a long breath. He hoped he wouldn't have to return to the first floor of the tower again. But his hopes were bound to be crushed for Eliza's entertainment.

"Is that it? Shall I leave now?"

Eren asked after getting up. He was talking with Reen for hours on end. She had moist eyes. But she had stopped crying when Eren pacified her with his glib tongue. Finally, when everything was said and done, he decided to move on.

"Don't you want the reward first for clearing the first floor of the tower?"

Eliza said and looked at the seven-headed serpent statue.

Eren followed her gaze and observed the statue in detail for the first time. It measured three times his height. The statue was laterally enlarged towards its top. But it had a smaller size at its bottom because all seven-headed serpents shared a single torso.

"What is it? Don't tell me I need to take this home with me?"

Eliza shook her head as if she was expecting Eren to hide his disturbed mental state with witty remarks. She spoke up after looking at him keenly:

"This is the true reward for clearing the first floor of the tower, Eren. You will receive a mark as you keep on clearing the floors.

... The mark of the Seven Sins."

[Chapter 352 - Mark Of The Seven Sins P2](#)

"This is the true reward for clearing the first floor of the tower, Eren. You will receive a mark as you keep on clearing the floors.

... The mark of the Seven Sins."

Eren caressed his chin after he heard that. He was about to ask what the mark was. And how would it benefit him? But turned out he didn't need to because Eliza told him about them on her own:

"The marks let you tap into other planes and use their mana powers for your own. As for the specific benefits or disadvantages, they grant to the ranker, they may vary as per the rankers themselves.

Fufufu! I'm sure you'd be more compatible with using the mark than anyone else I've known. Because you were already seen using another plane's mana as your own."

Eliza clarified and created more questions in Eren's head. He decided to ask the most pertinent question first - what was its purpose. The Sage answered right afterwards:

"Each mark manifests differently within each ranker. So I can't say for sure how it would manifest for you. But the use of these marks would expand as you keep on ranking up. Provided you don't get consumed by them in the process.

The mark of the Seven Sins can also aid rankers in progressing much faster with their proficiency in the way of the elements. This was the reason Arthur wanted the true reward of clearing the first floor."

Eliza sighed and got up from her throne. She walked up to the statue where Eren was, stopped beside him, and spoke up once again after folding her hands:

"*Sigh! It's too much hassle to talk about them when you won't understand the majority of what I'm saying. So just consider them as a way to boost your powers with a bit of repercussion every time you use them.

Be warned though. As I said, there are several risks involved in using the mark. So only use them when you are in a pinch. And don't activate the power of the mark consecutively. It'll only harm you more.

Plus, the use of these marks outside Purgatory will be considered as you walking on a heretic path. So you need to make sure you don't use the mark on normal rankers or make sure there are no witnesses to avoid any trouble."

Eliza warned and elaborated on the mark's attributes. Eren listened and was amazed by such a thing existing in the rankers' world. He cursed the previous him because he was akin to a frog in a well.

"The Mark of the Seven Sins" refers to a series of marks that are etched onto the ranker's existence as they keep on clearing the tower's floors. Therefore, you need to clear another floor of the tower to receive your second mark and so forth.

There are seven marks in the Sins series. They are the mark of pride, the mark of greed, the mark of lust, the mark of envy, the mark of gluttony, the mark of wrath, and finally the mark of sloth.

This is the statue of a seven-headed serpent. It contains the conscious will essence of seven planes connected to each of the seven marks.

As I said, the seven-headed serpent has its collective consciousness. It has observed your performance on the first floor. And since you've cleared up the first floor, you will be qualified to receive a mark."

Eren listened carefully before asking another set of questions that came to his mind:

"Which mark will I be receiving first? Is there any order?"

Marks can be received in any order. It all depends on what the seven-headed serpent statue thinks you are apt to receive at the time.

As the ranker receives more marks, the burden on the ranker's body to act as the conductor of the foreign mana increases. Their souls would also get affected. You know what that means, Eren?"

Eliza asked Eren who was standing beside her. Eren answered after carefully processing what was said to him:

"It means I need to keep on moving forward in my ranking journey to receive more marks of the Seven Sins."

Eliza nodded before explaining further:

"That's right. That's why the tests also get tougher with each floor. You need to have a ranking status of at least the solid stage of the Ace rank to attempt the second floor. The requirement only increases as you move up the tower.

It is foolish for you to think about clearing the second floor or beyond with your current powers, Eren. You'd die on the second floor and above even before you had time to curse this place or me."

Eliza said and then turned her head to look at Eren. He was still staring at the statue. But she could tell he hadn't looked at anything and was lost in his thoughts. She continued without waiting for him to respond:

You need to consider whether you want the mark with all its repercussions and benefits right now. Or you want to skip on it. The tower's usual rewards would open up for you if you voluntarily give up gaining the mark.

I'd rather you accept the mark. Because the tasks I'll be telling you won't be a walk in the park. The mark may provide you with a chance of success and ultimately help me get the vessel I need that much faster.

But I won't force you to take the mark. Because the marks need acceptance from their bearers to make them work. The choice is yours. What do you want to do?"

Eliza said and waited for Eren to respond. Eren smiled after Eliza finished her sentence and started to circle the statue. He came to his previous post and stood before the Sage and declared what he felt from the bottom of his heart:

Sage Eliza, I had the notion that Sage rank was the limit for rankers. I believed that being a Sage would grant me the liberty to act freely in the world. Enjoy its riches and all that it had to offer without worrying about anything.

But meeting you has broadened my horizons. My ambitions have risen along with them.

It's not like I'm not scared of you anymore. My heart still quivers in your presence. I'm probably going to have nightmares after today.

But there's something else mixed in along with that fear.

A desire...

A desire to be freer than the current you.

A desire to surpass Sage rank and beyond."

If walking on the path of sins would allow me to fulfil my desires that much faster, then so be it."

[Chapter 353 - Part Of The Process](#)

"A desire to be freer than the current you.

A desire to surpass the Sage status and reach beyond.

If walking on the path of sins would allow me to fulfil my desires that much faster, then so be it."

Eliza frowned when she thought that Eren was underestimating her status too much. But she then felt the changes in his presence. As she gazed into his eyes, she felt the desire to surpass the current shackled-by-fate Sage ranker that was her.

Eliza also felt that each of the words he spoke had come from the bottom of his heart. She snorted her nose to show her displeasure. But it wasn't like she didn't get the meaning behind what he was saying. She had the desire to surpass her Sage rank too after all.

'This boy has yet to walk. But he is already dreaming of flying high in the sky.

Heh! I need to strengthen my resolve as well.'

The last surviving Samael thought to herself before speaking up:

"Alright. Remember, this is something you've chosen for yourself.

Now stand close to the statue. I'll activate the array."

Eren nodded after he heard Eliza's instructions. He walked near the statue and stood in front of it with his hands behind his back and his head tilted upwards.

The butcher could hear Eliza's voice from behind as she activated the array and spoke in a strange tongue that didn't look like it belonged to this world. The array started exuding bright light before dimming them down the next moment— as if it was breathing.

A strange pressure was felt by Eren. He felt like the scene in front of his eyes would change if he closed his eyes now. It looked like whichever place he'd be seeing after his eyes got closed was not rejecting his presence.

"Things are moving faster than I thought they would. Don't close your eyes, Eren. Keep them open."

Eliza's voice was heard just when Eren was about to close his eyes. He furrowed his brow at the strange instructions. But followed them anyway and waited for her next set of instructions.

"Eren, draw a drop of your mana-imbued blood and let it fall on the ground. Then raise your left hand in line with your shoulder and maintain the position."

Eliza spoke and resumed her incantations. Eren nodded blankly before retrieving Diceror's Left blade. He consciously retracted his mana defence layer and let an F-Rank weapon hurt him.

Droop!

A few mana-imbued blood drops fell on the ground. The array beneath Eren's feet absorbed them up as a result. An otherworldly mana pulse was released at the time.

Hiss!

The seven snakes opened their eyes together and hissed at the same time while looking at the sky. Then they looked down and focused their gaze on a young Ace ranker who was standing inside the array with his now-cut palm.

'Something is wrong. All seven snakes have been awakened at the same time.'

Eliza thought. But she wanted to see what was happening so she held on.

Soon the array lit up brightly— indicating the awakening process was complete. One of the seven snakeheads got closer to Eren's face and looked him in the eyes.

'Thank the devil I have been stared by a dragon before. I don't fear the snake as much now.'

Eren thought to himself as he started back at the snake without batting an eye. The snake stuck his black tongue out and flicked it. Then it opens its mouth and shows its two sharp fangs.

Before Eren could feel the fear of being stung by the animated beast again, it moves rapidly and bit his left hand that had been raised and maintained before.

"Aaaaaaaaargh!"

Eren felt like a layer of black had suddenly appeared before his eyes. He experienced immeasurable pain coming from his entire being. At the same time, he felt like he did not have his usual body anymore.

Reen saw and felt that Eren was in pain. She tried to approach him but was immediately frozen in her steps by the Sage ranker's intangible force.

"Calm down. It's part of the process."

Eliza said to Reen before refocusing her attention on Eren. She saw Eren on his knees with his eyes closed. He was crying his heart out. But Reen and Ivor couldn't hear his cry. Only Eliza could because she had activated the array.

His left hand was bleeding with two large gaping holes. The fangs of the snakehead had completely pierced his arm. Two distinct holes could be seen on Eren's arm— one near his wrist. The other was on the upper arm.

"Aaaaaaargh!"

Eren kept on yelling with his eyes closed. Eliza knew that since the array was complete and stable, Eren's soul was now bound to the place. It wouldn't get pulled inside any plane. So it was okay for him to close his eyes now.

The first snakehead returned to its previous position. Eren on the other hand started to change. He assumed the appearance of his Life Drain mode. His hair had turned white. His eyes turned dark blue. The array then began exuding dark blue mana from its inscriptions above ground.

The dark blue mana started to converge around the two gaping holes on Eren's arms. It seeped into his arm and as it did, the wounds started closing up.

Eren's clear and pale-skinned arm started getting etched with abstract lines and symbols while the wounds inflicted by the snakehead were getting healed. The mystic lines started to expand and spread over his entire arm, shoulder, and neck before travelling to the other parts of his torso.

'First mark is completed.'

Eliza commented to herself and breathed a sigh of relief. She wanted Eren to have the mark because her plan needed Eren to be as strong as he could be.

But maybe she let her guard down thinking the process was over.

Hissssssss!

Another snakehead showed signs of activity and moved at lightning speed.. It reopened the healed wounds on Eren's wounds by biting him the same way, at the same place.

[Chapter 354 - Unique Monster](#)

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh!"

Eliza heard another of Eren's screams and opened her eyes wide open. She couldn't believe the second serpent head had also bitten Eren right after the first head was done.

'I... I should wait and see. Maybe he'll survive. I hope so.'

Damn it. If the boy is gone, it'd be tough to find another suitable pawn. Or go back to my flawed vessel plan.'

Eliza cursed herself after realizing she had let the second snake bite Eren. This was not supposed to happen at all. In her era, a lot of rankers had gone through this procedure. Nobody would receive two sins marks at the same time.

But it was already too late to stop the process. Eliza saw as the runes lit up differently and foreign mana of a different origin had started to pour through the array runes. This mana was purple coloured.

It seeped into Eren's open wounds and birthed its own mystic lines over his skin. The runic symbols also spread across his torso before disappearing.

'That's it.... Right?'

Eliza asked herself... unsure of answering her own question. But then she saw the third snake moving and opened her eyes wide in surprise.

'Oh hell no!'

Eliza was on alert this time. She used her soul sense and manifested two large dragon hands. And sent them to grab Eren's body and defend him from being bitten by the snake.

The third snake hissed at the dragon hand that had come in its way and created a mana ripple that destroyed it instantly. But by that time, the other hand had managed to drag Eren out of the array and close to Eliza.

The scion of Samael saw that Eren's appearance had changed again a bit after going through the second bite. His eyes had turned purple and his hair turned whiter than before.

Eren's small stature was rapidly altered. From 5ft 7inch, he went 6ft 3inch in one go. The muscles on his body were compressed and he displayed a lean build that was devoid of any fat.

Eren had been relieved of his misery after the bites were done. At least he wasn't yelling or moving his body uncontrollably anymore. His eyes were closed shut. And he had been clenching his fist.

Eren's eyeballs were moving inside his closed eyelids— indicating that the guy was having a really disturbing dream. Pressure on Eren was relieved as soon as the array vanished and the snakes turned into statues again. She came running towards Eren and brought his head over her lap. She caressed his head, her tears falling on his cheeks and over his eyelids.

Eren called out to him. Both audibly and through her mental connection with him. But Eren remained unresponsive. She could only feel that he was safe and in no immediate danger.

She used her palm to wipe the sweat that formed on Eren's face along with her dropped tears. Then she looked at Eliza and asked in an accusing manner:

"Sage Eliza.... Wh... what have you done? Where's the rankers' code of conduct you had previously talked about? He... Eren is just an Ace ranker, you know that right?"

Eliza looked like she would pop the vein on her forehead when she heard Reen's accusatory remark. She raised her finger to speak but ultimately decided not to say anything. She sighed before bringing her hand down and started walking towards her throne.

'What... What was that? The third serpent head was ready to bite that boy too.

What kind of unique monster has this boy turned into?

Will he survive the two consecutive bites all at once? Had I not intervened...'

A swirl of thoughts started brewing inside Eliza's mind when her soul sense manifestation was moving towards her throne. She looked at Eren again and felt his vital signs. They were in disarray but he was safe. His soul was still intact. And his mana core had not been ill-affected.

But everything else about Eren had gotten foggy for Eliza now. She couldn't read his immediate thoughts anymore. Nor could she completely identify him as one like her own— a half-blood.

'Maybe I'm thinking too much. Of course, someone that was blessed by my clan's legacy was going to cause surprises like these.'

Eliza thought and vanished from her spot along with her throne and the serpent statue. She also had too many preparations to do now that her planning needed to be changed. She also needed to meet Layla and give her a specific set of instructions.

There were only three live people left in the gigantic and dimly lit hall— prisoner Ivor, stressed Reen, and sleeping Eren. The prisoner Ivor was going to stay in a separate dimension for an indefinite time.

Reen's occupancy status in Purgatory wasn't that different from the prisoner either. But fortunately or unfortunately due to her role in constructing Eliza's new vessel, she would be looked after well.

Eren on the other hand would soon leave the place along with his two henchmen— Renar and Viper. Thankfully, he had already asked Eliza to ensure their safety. They had been teleported back to the ground floor of the tower just when they were about to fail to clear the tower's first floor.

'Erni...'

'Hehehe! It's Shamrock!'

'Don't fear the ripper.'

'Someday you are going to tell me all your secrets over a couple of beers.'

'You... you are an abomination.'

'Oh, Ronny... you are driving me crazy....'

'Listen here you brat, we don't care if your name is Tumko Darata or Humko Darata...'

'A purge will begin anew when I light my Enderflame.'

'We are different, you and me. Always remember this, my boy.'

'Look at this loser... Oi... grandpa... Why do you want to join the Escalon Guild? We don't keep any leechers in our midst.'

'I think you've got some wrong ideas, brat. We are not into young boys.'

'Remember the name that will be the reason behind your ruin. It's Sienna Slughorn.'

'Devil... Stay... stay away from me. What do you want to know? I'll tell you. But just stay the fuck away.'

'You need to learn how to torture people, do you understand?'

'Eren, stay with aunt Nina for a few days. I'll come to pick you up after I find your father, okay?'

'Eren...'

'Eren...'

'Eren...'

"Erni..."

Eren felt his consciousness gaining senses after what he felt like years had passed. It felt like he had lived his whole life once again. But the order of the events that had come to pass had gotten whack.

Even before he could open his eyes, Eren felt that he had a nasty headache. He also felt something different about his body. It didn't feel like his usual body anymore.

"Where.... the fuck...."

Eren was about to ask about his whereabouts when he saw a huge dragon head looming over him. His eyes were opened so wide that he felt that they might pop out of their eye sockets.

Screeeeee!

Eren also heard the dreaded sounds of wraiths' screeches all around him. There were also various sounds of yells and incantations mixed within them.

"I..."

I'm dead."

[Chapter 355 - New-Normal](#)

"Shit! I... I'm dead."

Eren was about to get up but found out that his body had been frozen.

"Erni... Ereni... can you hear me?"

Are you alright? What happened? What are you pointing at?"

A familiar sound in Eren's ears. He blinked once as he thought all his thoughts through. When he looked again, the dragon's head was nowhere to be found. The screeches of wraiths also vanished.

Even though he did not want to, he kept searching for the same dragon head and wraiths. However, it turned out his neck was stiff and his headache was agitated because of his futile attempts to move it.

"Erni... take it easy. How are you feeling?"

'This is... Reen!'

Eren recognized Reen right away. Instead of turning his head around, he adjusted his gaze and saw that she was staring back at him with worry written all over his face.

Since her mana core had been sealed, it would take efforts from her end to shift forth and back between her slime form and human form. So she had maintained her human form to take care of Eren during the time he was unconscious.

"Where are we? I feel like I had a lifetime's worth of horrible dreams."

He responded with slight difficulty in raising his voice to audible levels.

"That's it... we are safe for the time being. How are you feeling?"

Reen didn't want to dissuade him from waking up by telling him they were still in Purgatory. So she gave a vague answer and asked for his well-being.

"Hm? Well.. my... My head hurts. And my body... it feels like it had been collided with and wrecked by the biggest and worst Earth Sudae boar.

"Where are those damn wraiths? And where is..."

"Erni, what are you thinking? It must be a dream. There are no wraiths here."

Reen took Eren's hand in her hand and caressed it. Only then did Eren try to look around again by getting up slowly.

He sat straight and found out that he had been sleeping on a simple-looking bed. He looked around and found out that he was in a large and spacious room with a ceiling as high as 10 meters. There was almost no one in the room beside the bed.

Reen was sitting beside Eren's bed on a chair that looked worn out. She had changed clothes and was now wearing a white top and light green pants.

There were no windows or doors visible in the room. Only a faint light emanated from the teleportation array's runic symbols.

"Shit... we are still in Purgatory aren't we?"

Eren asked with a grim expression on his face. He was half expecting that everything he had seen in the dream was just that— a dream. But reality struck him after he woke up and made him go back to sleep again. Almost.

Eren felt his bones creaking and his muscles aching as he tried to sit up. He looked down and observed his body. And for a second, he thought that he was looking at someone else's.

His skin had turned paler. His legs seemed longer. He just felt different than before. He used his mana sense on himself and couldn't believe the feedback he received.

'Wait a minute...'

Eren looked at Reen and had an idea. He closed his eyes and used his mental connection with Reen to see himself with her eyes. He saw a young man in his early twenties naked from the waist up. He only had white pants from the waist down and they looked afresh like they had just been changed.

This young man had sharp facial features. He had voluminous white hair that had grown to his shoulder length. He had slanty eyes with light red irises. His relatively small nose and his V-shaped jawline added to his charm. Plus, he had a sort of otherworldly vibes around him.

"This... this is me? How?"

Eren closed his eyes and re-examined the status of his body. He could tell that he was not using his body alteration innate spell. That meant this was his natural state. Or more like another natural state had been added to his previous "normal" state.

Eren activated his mana core and felt the Ace rank mana circulating in his mana circuits. He used his transformation skill to turn into his natural state and found that it had also changed a bit.

His shoulder-length. Jet black hair now had a lustrous shine. His green irises looked to have taken on a darker shade. The rest of his features remained the same. But he looked more mature now.

Additionally, this state also maintained Eren's enhanced stature. He looked to be about 6 feet now. Coincidentally, his normal height was now similar to the alias he was used to using— Ronny.

Eren felt like he had not eaten in months and was starving. The new appearance also raised another doubt in Eren's mind. He asked his beast companion to confirm:

"Reen, how long have I been out?"

Reen pressed her lips against each other as her eyes became moist.

"At least six months. Maybe more. I... I stopped counting after some time. You were out for so long, I thought you'd never..."

Eren raised his eyebrows again. He couldn't say he wasn't surprised. But it also made sense to him after checking up on his condition.

"Stop.... Stop. I'm fine now. And perfectly alright. You don't need to worry.

How did I survive so long without food though? And wait... Purgatory! Did it get closed?"

Eren asked with some nervousness. Reen replied shortly:

"Sage Eliza told me that you were kind of in the state of epiphany. So your body didn't need food to sustain itself.

She also predicted the time you would need to wake up. So she turned this room into a time chamber and adjusted the dilation of time accordingly. So that you won't miss out on your schedule. There are a few hours left before Purgatory closes."

'She didn't want me wasting HER time.'

Eren thought to himself and tried to get up. His muscles had been atrophied. But it only took him a few minutes to get the situation back to normal. He could still access his ID storage.

Eren took out his choice of clothes. He was about to wear them when he realized they no longer fit him properly.

'Heh! Bye-bye shorty Eren Idril.'

Eren whistled and said to himself. Then he threw his short clothes on the ground. For the time being, he was okay only wearing his pants and getting accustomed to his taller stature. He would wear clothes that were suitable for his alias later on.

[Chapter 356 - Exiting Purgatory](#)

"It's almost been a month, Renar. Our dry food ration is about to run out. And we can't find an exit from this place. What should we do now?"

A nervous voice sounded in an empty and humongous space. The ambiance of the space was maintained by the runes over the ceiling. The luminance was just enough to walk around the space without having to use mana sense.

"Just be glad that we were pulled away from danger just when we were about to die. Those blood-starved beasts were too horrible. The month is about to be over.

According to that bitchy witch Zee, we would be automatically ejected out of the separate dimension as long as we remain alive. So hand on and stay on your toes. We can't really relax here even though it looks safe."

The duo that was conversing in the gloomy space was none other than Renar and Viper. They had spent their days post their first floor battle failures here— waiting for the day they got out of Purgatory. But both of them were feeling nervous and bored because they had nothing to do.

They had been battling with each other to pass time. But they would stop after a few minutes and maintain their energy reserve in case any emergency arises. Just when they were about to start another spar to pass time, they heard a known voice from behind them:

"There you are. I have been looking all over for you guys."

Renar and Viper looked around and saw a familiar figure closing on them out of nowhere. It was Ronny who they recognized instantly. But when they spread their mana sense and checked up on him, they felt something was off.

"Ronny? What... happened to you? You were on a solid stage of the Ace rank before... now.. You seem to be in a liquid stage.

How did you regress in your ranking status?"

Ronny pressed his temples with his right hand as he was getting close to the duo and replied shortly after:

"Errr... let's just say that the tower whooped my ass. I'm glad I survived the first floor at all.

Never mind that. Are you guys ready? You need to be if you don't. Look behind you."

Eren gestured with his eyes and made Renar and Viper look behind their backs to see an array had been lit up. Eren didn't wait for them to make a decision and started walking towards the array. Viper and Renar looked at each. The latter shrugged his shoulders and followed Ronny— leaving Viper to do the same.

"Did you kill the rest of the Isen's spies as well?"

Jerry asked his new subordinates. The old ones had been taken care of by Ronny's team when the series of blasts claimed their lives. Only Jerry survived that battle. That too only because nobody came for him when he was under the illusion.

"Yes, Adept Jerry. We killed all the guys that were given to us in the list. We killed all seven of them.

'Seven huh! It seems Isen really pulled all his stoppers in trying to rescue his grandkid. Too bad, Arthur saw it coming.'

Jerry thought to himself and shook his head. Then refocused his gaze and said to his subordinates in a low voice:

"What about that guy Ronny? Did you find that fucker?"

The lead of the subordinates had an awkward time answering the question. He scratched the ars below his right ear and bowed a little before answering:

"Boss Jerry, that was not really part of our original assignments. Still, we did as you asked and tried to track them. We found the trails leading to the solo towers. We couldn't do anything more. We don't have any power in the solo tower after all."

The creases on Jerry's forehead increased when he heard his subordinate reply to him. He felt like admonishing him some more. But he saw that a teleportation array had appeared behind them— indicating it was about time they all left Purgatory.

The teleportation arrays would appear in front of every alive participant when it was time to leave Purgatory. It didn't matter whether they were in the tower or somewhere else in the Separate dimension. They would just have to step into the array and they would all be teleported to the entrance of the underground cave.

Not using the teleportation array was dangerous. After a certain time, if the participants don't use the array and try to remain in Purgatory, they would be ejected out of the Separate dimension through

spatial tear. The participants' safety wasn't guaranteed when they had been ejected through the spatial tear nor would the location of the teleportation be fixed.

Therefore every sane participant would use the teleportation array as soon as one appears in front of them. Jerry had to do the same too if he wanted to get out of the place safely.

"*Sigh. Never mind. If we couldn't kill him here. We would kill him outside. Heh! We'll see him soon. Follow me."

Jerry started walking towards the teleportation array and planned another way to kill Ronny off. He had deceived him, killed all his subordinates including Gerish who was very close to him from his Novice ranking journey.

But most of all, Ronny had a transcendent-grade time element treasure on him. All his losses would be justified if Jerry could just get his hands on that item after killing the guy.

"Oh look who do we have here? You guys survived the... "towers" after all. Good for you."

Ronny, Renar, and Viper heard a known voice right after they were teleported to the entrance of the underground cave. They had appeared right in front of that voice's source after all. It was Lady Zee who smiled at them most graciously while welcoming them with perfunctory words.

"Ronny... you are safe. I was worried about you."

Julie Ekheart rushed towards Ronny and hugged him. She softly said to him while hugging him:

"I... I didn't know. You have to trust me."

[Chapter 357 - "Help Will Find Us!"](#)

"Ronny... you are safe. I was worried about you."

Julie Ekheart rushed towards Ronny and hugged him. She softly said to him while hugging him:

"I... I didn't know. You have to trust me."

Jules could tell that Ronny was in a sour mood. She tried to clear the air around her name- lest he thinks she was involved in the "clean up" operation.

Ronny didn't say anything. He just lightly tapped Julie's back and gestured to her to give him some space. Renar on the other hand couldn't keep his cool for longer.

"Lady Zee, you sure..."

Just when Renar was about to confront an Adept ranker, he felt a tap from behind him. Ronny had stopped him from worsening the situation. He pulled him back and walked ahead towards Lady Zee. He stopped a few meters away from her and looked her in the eyes before saying:

"All that you have done for us, all your efforts, Lady Zee, I'll be sure to remember it."

Ronny also flashed Adept Zee his most innocent smile. Her skin had slight goosebumps when she faced him. This was even though she was a whole rank ahead of the guy. Somehow, Ronny looked like he had regressed into his ranking.

"What happened to your mana core? Why did it regress?"

Lady Zee narrowed her eyes and asked Ronny. The latter simply chuckled before answering:

"People happened. Monstrous people. Never mind that. We only wish to get out now. Tell us where to drop the goods we are bound by the contract to drop it for you guys."

Lady Zee sighed and directed the group towards a separate place meant for the participants to drop their agreed portion of the rewards they had committed to share with the Illuminati. Ronny and his henchmen stuck to the contract and shared some of the fortunes.

Ronny had mostly shared the loads of Extols he had gained from the underground dungeon along with relatively less significant potions. Every other participant did the same.

Ronny talked with Jules some more and told her when and how she could contact him. The group parted ways with the rest of the Illuminati.

It seemed that unbeknownst to Ronny, Renar, and Viper, a group of rankers followed by an Adept was on their trail. They kept on maintaining their distance for a while. Things soon took an ugly turn.

"What... What is happening? Why is there an earthquake?"

Some days before Ronny's exit from purgatory. An earthquake took place that could be felt in the vicinity of Purgatory's entrance. A group that was camping in the vicinity became alert because of the sudden event.

"Calm down, Ari. It might just be something natural. No need to panic."

Marie said to Arizihana while still skewing a few pieces of meat on the campfire. Ari shook her head before replying:

"Then what about the strange mana pulse setting off? Can that be a coincidence too?"

Ari asked. But this time it wasn't Marie who had answered.

"This seems to be the consequence of... something forbidden taking place somewhere. But it's weird. It's not as prominent as it should be. Is there.... Any separate dimensions nearby?"

A man who looked to be in his 60s said to himself. He had his eyes closed and his palms were touching the ground as if to get a read on the earthquake that had just happened.

"What should we do then, Grandpa Tai? Try to follow the source of the disturbance or stay on the trails of those anthropes?"

Marie asked while carrying a few pieces of meat on a plate for Adept Tai to eat. He stood from his position, took the plate, and shook his head before saying:

"No need. We stick with the rats. I have a feeling they might lead us to something significant. Besides, who said following Renar and following the source of this disturbance are two different things?"

After stating his prediction, Tai began eating the meat. Ari and Marie looked at each other with their eyebrows raised. They had followed the trail of Renar, Viper, and Belar till here because of the tracking potion Marie had Ari use on them.

But the trial ended in the vicinity of the underground cave's entrance. And there was no sign of Renar and the company yet. So Tai concluded that there was an entrance to the separate dimension nearby.

There were other rankers nearby the campfire too. They all belonged to a different branch of Beast Bloods. Grandpa Tai was their leader on the mission. He told them to spread out so they could wait patiently for a few days. Their prey eventually came to them.

"I don't see anyone following us. Are we really being tailed? Your deductions just might be your paranoia, you know."

Renar said to Ronny while they were using their movement skill to traverse through the forest. They would go to the nearest city first and then take a colt service from there.

Ronny had already told Renar and Viper about the next set of actions they were supposed to take. They would part ways with him after finding the city and following his instructions after their separation.

But Ronny insisted that they should not reveal their true intentions just yet. They were now heading in the opposite direction from their destination. The reason Ronny gave to the duo was simple— they were being followed.

"You can bet your furry ass that we are being followed. Hehe. don't worry though. Help is on the way."

Renar raised his eyebrows when he heard another of Ronny's predictions. He was a simple man. As a result, he didn't like to calculate so far ahead as his leader. He sighed and wondered out of curiosity:

"Where is that help then? How can we find it?"

Ronny smirked at Renar's question and narrowed his eyes in front of him while maintaining his speed. He nudged Renar and Viper to look ahead and said in a calm tone:

"No need to find it. The help will find us.

In fact..."

[Chapter 358 - "I Got What They Waitin' For!"](#)

"Someone's coming. Get your asses ready. Arizihana, tell the other rankers who have spread out to circle the place and not let anyone pass the perimeter. They can call for backup and fight to delay until all of us reach the scene.

Marie, check your tracker and see if it has become responsive again. We'll head towards the mark without taking detours."

Tai dished out a series of orders right after he sensed a sudden foreign presence using the artefact worn as his wristband. He would use it along with his earth-element mana and sense vibrations from miles away. He would do that by touching both his palms on the ground.

Marie and Arizihana both got to work. Marie took out a flask and drank the content stored in it. Immediately, her vision changed. Everything around her turned dark and she could only see two yellow apparitions moving at a rapid pace 2 O Clock from her location.

"There. But one member is missing. Should I look for him more thoroughly?"

Tai shook his head in denial and replied:

"No need. We'll focus on the ones we can track. Arizihana, you know what to do?"

Ari nodded and contacted other members of her team to circle the area they would be soon heading to. Meanwhile, everyone else present at the scene got ready to head out under Tai's lead.

They soon saw what they were tracking. A group of three men were heading straight at them without the care in the world. They didn't change their directions even when they sensed Tai's group coming in front of them.

"Heh! Today's youth has gotten bold it seems. It looks like I need to humble the young. Haha! It would be fun."

Tai had a rare smile on his face as he saw Ronny coming to meet him fearlessly despite his early-stage Ace rank. He was reminded of his rash behaviour as a young ranker because of him.

'Sir Ronny, do we need to fight?'

Renar asked Ronny using his ID storage. The latter denied the suggestion and said only one word in response:

'Stall.'

Tai stopped moving when he saw Ronny and his group was only a few meters away from him. He opened his mouth to speak:

"Where do you think you are going, young..."

"Thank god you are here. We were trying to look for you all over the place. Did you bring enough force?"

Ronny said in a hurry with a voice laced in anxiety and excitement. Tai was confused by the guy's behaviour and speech.

"What are you talking about..."

Tai wanted to stall for time too. He wanted his perimeter getting secured. So he didn't mind having a conversation with the strangers that they were supposed to confront. But Ronny spoke before letting him finish again:

"We, the Beast Bloods, finally found the entrance to a separate dimension. Hahaha! We expect our achievements to be celebrated with plenty of rewards."

Oh yes. We also thank you for giving us the opportunity."

'This guy is talking rubbish. But wait...'

Tai raised his eyebrows when he processed the words: separate dimensions. He couldn't help asking:

"Brat, tell us where that separate dimension is."

Ronny nodded affirmatively with a smile on his face. He started to respond with hope laced in his voice:

"Of course, master. It is..."

"Kill that fucking man!"

This time Ronny was interrupted by another voice that sounded familiar to him. Jerry had appeared at a distance from behind Ronny. He used his movement speed to close the distance and was about to jump on Ronny and his team.

'Gotcha bitch!'

Ronny thought to himself and headed straight to Tai as if he was asking for his protection. The latter was confused at first. But then he replayed the whole scene and felt like the nerve on his forehead would pop up any second:

'That brat... Tricked me.'

Since Ronny and Renar were already ready and knew what to do, they first headed in Tai and his group's direction before quickly taking a hard turn at the left side. Jerry's group and Tai's group both were going to follow him. But then they saw each other and expected worse.

"Attack."

"Kill them all."

Jerry and Tai both gave commands to their respective subordinates. A battle was going to ensue between both groups.

The cause of that battle was now running away from the battlefield along with his two subordinates. He saw the rankers securing the perimeter heading his way and gave only one command to the two Anthropes with him.

"Let them have it."

Eren drew a new set of Katars that he had gained from the underground dungeon. The runes on the weapons lit up when he imbued them with his Ace rank mana.

Stunning Speed

Sedated Perception

Blitz Bolt

Blitz Steps

Eren activated his spell combos and immediately two heads flew high in the sky. For a guy always trying to hide behind the rankers' code, he was pretty savage in cutting two Novices' heads up.

In Eren's defence, there was no Ace ranker present within them. Not that it mattered to him.

Renar and Viper also worked their best and took care of the rankers Eren left behind for them to deal with.

'Leave one behind. Keep him half dead and pretend you hastily confirmed his death. Then leave with me.'

Renar heard Ronny's weird instruction over ID communication. But this was no time to question the guy's motives. He okayed it and kept one guy barely alive before moving to the next one.

Ronny and his team quickly left the place and headed straight without looking back. They soon disappeared from the crime scene they had just created.

"Why did you tell me to leave one guy alive?"

Renar asked while trying to match up with Ronny's speed from behind. The latter smirked before replying coldly:

"Because that guy would act as the messenger and tell the rest of the guys that we broke the perimeter. That would make the guys on perimeter duty either chase us or focus on the battle that is currently happening in the middle of the area they secured.

I bet the leader would try to prioritize the battle at hand and call the guys off on us. He'd use them as reinforcement soon."

Renar had a weird face after hearing that. He wanted to ask his next question but Ronny filled the blanks for him:

"You want to say that it doesn't affect us because that was bound to happen? That we only prevented a few rankers from chasing us?"

Heh! I don't give a fuck about Novice ranker or even Ace rankers chasing us anymore. What I wanted was for them to focus on the battle with Jerry's group.

And.... create an opening for me."

Renar got tensed when he heard Eren's cold voice. He could feel the guy's aura sending a chill down his spine. He asked to confirm:

"What... What do you mean? What opening?"

Ronny stopped moving abruptly when he heard Renar's question. The latter was going to clash with him from behind but he changed his stride in time and went ahead of him. Viper did the same. They both looked back to see Ronny staring at them with his murderous gaze. A gaze that was not directed at them but for someone far in the distance.

"You need to leave. Do as I said and then contact me. We'll talk after a few days."

Renar could feel what Ronny was going to do. So he massaged his temples and tried to dissuade him:

"Don't. There are two Adept rankers present there."

Ronny flashed an evil grin at Renar's suggestion. He then seemingly disappeared from his position. But his voice could still be heard by the duo.

"Those two are the reason I'm going in there. I got what they waitin' for."

Chapter 359: Little Witch

"Those two are the reason I'm heading there. I got what they were waiting for."

Renar just sighed and took a long breath. They started to head towards the city that Ronny had chosen for them. From there, they'll start working on the plan they had been given by him. He had offered a major part of the remaining Extols to them for them to use. They also had their shares. So it wouldn't be a problem for them to start executing Ronny's plans.

"Will he survive? Why do I think that we have been enslaved by a low-key maniac that uses a facade of calmness to fool everyone around him?"

Viper asked Renar as they started moving. Renar smiled lightly before replying:

"Hahaha! It could be reversed as well. A cold-blooded psychopath shows a wide range of emotions just to throw his audience off. You can never really know about that guy.

But I'll admit one thing about him. The guy has the will to walk the talk. Our first meeting was right after we were freed from the city of Silvermoon's slavery. He had told me he'd destroy my mana core. And he did, even if partially. He didn't care about the cost of the potion that can pull something off like this.

It is still possible for me to remain an Ace ranker at the solid stage. But I would never be able to break through beyond it. That's the condition of my mana core right now.

But then he comes and tells me he'd destroy my mana core for real, which can enable me to resume my stagnant ranking journey.

Would you believe him? I know I would. Simply because I want to. Hahahaha!"

Viper saw Renar laughing like he had heard the joke of the day while running away from their potential pursuers. The latter continued even before Viper asked him anything further:

"The guy gives me hope, Viper brat. That's why I'm gonna trust him. If we could believe in Beast Blood who did almost nothing for us, we could believe in a guy like him."

Renar spoke as he moved forward with his movement spell. He loved the thrill of doing something so unimaginable to normal humans. He also found exhilaration in exploring the separate dimension and breaking away from sieges like this. Renar felt more alive than he ever was while spending his time doing menial work in the city of Silvermoon.

Renar had told Marla that he was okay with being rankless and living a peaceful life. But he'd be lying if he said he wouldn't miss being a ranker. The promise of being able to resume his ranking journey lled his mind and body with newfound excitement.

"Can we trust Ronny? I mean look at what happened to Belar? Ronny used him..."

Viper was about to continue but he was interrupted by Renar right afterwards:

"Don't go there, brat. We are both alive because of that, not just him. In a way, we are equally guilty of killing Belar o even if we weren't part of Rony's previous plans.

You understood it then. The moment the guy is dead, you try to shirk responsibility. Should I call it cowardice or petty consciousness born out of convenience?"

Renar's words turned Viper's mood sour. He asked in a low voice:

"So are you saying we should spend the rest of our ranking lives enslaved by that man, big bro? How can you be so malleable is beyond me."

Renar understood that Viper wasn't only talking about the deal with Ronny. But also about the way he handled his capture by Marla. He was also reminded of

the torture he was put through by the vile man named Eren. he shook his head to relieve the painful memories before continuing:

"You'll learn a thing or two as you progress further in the ranking journey, Viper.

Shit happens. As simple as that. It is up to us whether we want to move or stay in the same ditch. It's not like I'm saying Ronny is all good and we should completely trust him.

I'm saying exceptional rankers like him are also somewhat predictable. From what I've gured about him, as long as we keep on being useful to him, he won't try to harm our interests either. That's all I need to be honest.

The thing is Viper brat, the further you go up the ranking ladder, the more pressure you feel from the high-ranked entities, from the establishments, from your organizations. Some rankers break under that pressure.

I believe Ronny is of another kind. He would thrive under that pressure and outshine the rest of the rankers in his generation. If I have to follow or be under any guy, I'd rather be under someone at least as capable.

That's what I feel. Now you need to gure out something about yourself too.

What do you need, brat?"

Renar slowed down his speed and looked back at Viper who was pondering over something. The latter looked back at him after some time and smiled mirthlessly before saying:

"Ha! It's not like I have a family I can rely on or rely on. You are the only one I know and can trust. I'll just follow you. That's not complicated for me. Hehe!"

Renar laughed at Viper's decision. They both stopped talking and resumed moving ahead at full speed after that.

Eren changed to his white-haired appearance as he continued running toward the eld he had left behind some time ago. But he was using a dierent route to do so. When he was a sucient distance away from his intended location, he

stopped and looked around. There was nobody in the vicinity. But he could still hear faint sounds of battle from afar.

Eren unbuttoned his collar and took out a triangular coloured pendant he was wearing. It looked like a minimal, plain accessory that would mostly be worn by rankers. The glass xated in the middle of the pendant had a bluish-green tint that made it look eye-capturing.

Even upon close inspection, the pendant looked nothing more than an accessory. But it was a storage artefact. A special kind. One that could house a certain bratty girl.

'What do I do to get her out?'

Eren pondered over the pendent and imbued it with his mana. It took a while before Layla appeared, holding a potion book in her hand and a foul mood on her face. It seemed that Eren had disturbed the little witch's reading time.

Chapter 360 Playing Spoiler

"Not even a day outside Purgatory and you already started calling me up? Maybe that Reen girl spoiled you too much, Eren. This is not the way an Ace ranker should behave.

I know what you are doing. But fight your own battles, would you? Don't drag me into this."

Layla said to Eren in a complaining voice. The latter snorted his nose before replying:

"Stop being such a pretentious brat, Layla. What have you got inside that's so significant anyway? Didn't you want to see the outside world?

We are outside, you know. You might as well roam, let loose, and help me at the same time."

Layla hmphed and puffed her cheeks before replying:

"Haah! I would indeed roam the world and see things. But it would not be because you told me to. I will do that on my own when I want to. Right now I'm busy reading. I need to brush up on my skills, you see. Unlike a certain someone, Master Eliza is counting on me.

I don't have time for your silly antics."

Eren rolled his eyes and looked at the book Layla was holding and said in a teasing voice:

"Hey. How many years have you needed to study books like these? If you couldn't grasp what's written to this point, your chances of understanding it completely tonight are practically zero. Am I wrong?"

Layla stuck her tongue and puffed her cheeks. Nevertheless, she closed the book and tucked it away in her storage. She folded her hands below her almost non-existent bosom and said in a low voice:

"What do you want? You know I have a few limitations. So don't ask me to take care of all your problems..."

Eren raised his hands and gestured to her to stop saying anything further. He then clarified what he wanted from her. The latter finally relented and nodded her head.

Tai and Jerry were both proficient rankers and leaders of their teams. They couldn't battle with low rankers on the same battlefield. So they made gestures to each other and chose a relatively open area a few 100 meters away from the main battlefield.

For a few minutes, they fought. It was a sparring match to test the waters for both of them. Since both were Adept rankers, the destruction they caused in the surrounding area was considerable. Yet none of them looked like they were fighting seriously.

Both Tai and Jerry had come to realize that the former had the upper hand because of his superior ranking status. But Tai knew that the disparity of power between levels of the same rank could be filled by using appropriate artefacts.

That's why Tai had been vigilant in dealing with Jerry. There was an unwritten consensus in both the opposing teams that their respective Adept rankers should be left alone. So it was just the two of them in the area.

Tai and Jerry both were close combat fighters. The former launched another round of kicks at the latter. Jerry's effective parry using his forearm as the guard halted the attack. He was about to pull the leg against which he had just defended himself from. But Tai retreated to a safe distance before that.

Tai thought of something and decided to open a dialogue with his opponent.

"Greeting my fellow Adept ranker. My name is Tai Kawan. Why are you guys chasing those three people? And where did you guys come from out of the blue?"

Tai looked at Jerry, who was also looking at him in the same way. The latter snorted after hearing Tai's question. He introduced himself as well before replying in a cold voice:

"Stop pretending like you don't know anything. You prepared such a large team close to the entrance and you are telling me you don't know? Do you take me for a fool?"

Tai frowned and the creases on his forehead increased when he heard Jerry's accusation. He had come to realize that Ronny's statements were made just so that he could create a rift between two teams even without knowing the reason behind it.

But after hearing Jerry's rude reply, Tai had come to realize that it was too late to negotiate now. Even if he could prove that Ronny didn't have their assistance, Jerry would likely not listen.

"*Sigh! Don't say that I didn't try to find a peaceful way after this. I guess I'll have to sweat it out. If there's no use in verbal exchange, let our hands and legs do the talk."

Tai chanted and circulated his earth element mana within his body. The ground beneath him started vibrating and the vibrations soon reached Jerry. He knew Tai was getting serious now.

Jerry channelled his wind element mana and prepared himself. The two rankers used their movement spells at the same time to scale the distance between them and meet in the middle.

Both Adepts were fixated on each other. Almost all their senses were locked onto each other. Only their mana sense could help them identify any threatening foreign presence around them. So far they had detected nothing. As a result, they were sure that both of them were fighting each other alone. And nobody would interrupt their fights anymore.

But just before their fists were about to meet each other, both Tai and Jerry sensed something and looked upwards. Something was getting dropped and was about to hit the ground. They both thought that it was the opponent's sneak attack and didn't try to catch it, lest something happens to their hands.

Both sides were about to retreat. But the drop had already hit the ground before they could do so. They both saw that it was a vial of potion that had broken in front of them. However, before they could exchange confused stares, their vision changed.

Because of that vial break, both Adept rankers had fallen victim to the illusion. It was the same D-Rank illusion bomb a certain someone had received as their reward. Only one illusion potion of the same rank remained in his possession after this drop.

The cause of their current state was watching them from far in the sky, right over their battlefield. Eren had played a spoiler in the battle between two Adept rankers.