

Chapter 381 Self Intervention

Eren started walking to the apothecary while smoking his Sativa stick. He had been told by the herbalist that the residual smoke might immediately put the mortals to sleep if they were standing close to him.

Novice rankers might also get affected by the passive smoking of the Stellar Sativa, but they needed to stay within a close range from Eren for a certain time for that to happen.

That's why Eren chose a relatively less populated route for his return. He could hear people were a bit on edge everywhere. They were discussing the latest official news that had been announced all over the kingdom.

Eren used his Ace rank senses to listen to mortals talking at the far end of an alley. He stood at a side and kept on smoking as he listened to the group of four men and a woman.

"Did you hear about Ivor Osan? That brat was the Osan Woods butcher! You might not know but that kid was messed up from the moment he was born.

His elder brother Isaac was no different either. Did you hear about Rotohons?"

A lady in her mid 30s asked the group of men who were listening to her like she was their most trusted source of insider news. Eren figured the lady must be working in the inner circle of city administration as he smoked his Sativa stick.

"Hm? You mean Rick Rotohon? The guy who was allegedly looking to change the ownership of the city of Osan to himself? I heard Isen and Rick could never see eye to eye. What about him?"

One of the men in the group seemed more informed than his peers. The lady nodded at the guy's question and responded:

"That's him alright. Now that Isen is not here and the city head's position is empty, he has all the reason to make his presence grander than ever before. He has come up with some dirt on Isen and his family.

Rick says Isen's grandson was not stable from the moment he was born. He had started r*ping young boys of unknown backgrounds before killing them. Rick says he has been sheltering one such victim who managed to survive at the last moment.

Rick also claims that Isen knew about these things but did nothing and protected his grandson instead. He even suppressed many such incidents. They say Isaac also tortured his younger brother. But there are not many details about it."

The group of men who listened to the lady's revelation opened their eyes wide in surprise that Isen, who they had thought of as just a nasty politician, was in fact much worse than they had thought. One of the men sighed and voiced his opinion:

"Then it's no wonder Ivor turned out to be the butcher. He must have killed his brother to take revenge on him for all of his transgressions against him. This is all just messed up. We can only wish that all of the Osans just get purged so that the city of Osan gets to have a new start."

The group kept on talking but Eren wasn't listening anymore. The information he had gained along with the information given by Nina finally created a complete picture for him to understand why Ivor turned out to be the way he was— a brother-hating ball of arrogance.

Eren realized that Ivor's edgelord persona was his defense mechanism to cope up with the abuse he might have been subjected to some years ago by Isaac. The butcher also had another thought as he started connecting the dots.

'So that's why Isaac was so fixated on taking me with him. Heh! The guy was trying to make me another of his victims without any repercussions. Too bad I whooped his ass instead of the other way around.'

Eren started creating a clear picture about Ivor and his past as he thought of many different things at once. The Sativa stick was aiding him in his deductions.

'Hm. That also explains the reason why a stubborn edgelord guy like Ivor would yeild to my interrogation as soon as I scared him by taking my hand near his groin.

The guy is scarred by sexual abuse and his edgelord persona is just a facade. His thought process ir his personality won't change until he thinks he becomes strong enough to rise above his helpless self. Marching ahead in his ranking journey gives him the mental satisfaction because of that.

Ivor is nothing but a victim of his circumstances. A talented victim nonetheless.'

Eren concluded Ivor's profile in his head as he walked towards the apothecary while taking out another of his smokes and using it. He had his vices. He had just controlled his intake to make them not affect him as strived to be a better version of his past self.

He laughed to himself as he looked at the Sativa stick in his hands and had another thought in his head:

'It's not like I'm better than him. The guy is at least trying to fight hard against his circumstances. Meanwhile, I'm just looking for ways to make them work for me.

We have two different mindsets. We are victims of two different circumstances. But unlike me, the guy's will to march ahead in his ranking journey is untainted by all the experiences he had collected.

Ivor's experiences, good and bad, had shaped him to be the person he is. He is still fighting the odds placed against him. When met with the choice of being on the run or becoming a cultist, the time he took to come to a logical decision was applaudable. Not a lot of teens in his position could have done that. I couldn't have done that if it was my previous self.'

Eren stood just the outside of apothecary's gates and inhaled the last puff of his stick before thinking to himself:

'Meanwhile, my circumstances broke me. I'm trying to get my lost pieces back but they just keep on breaking some more. *sigh.

All hope is not lost though. There's a way as long as there's life.

Maybe we both would rise above our circumstances and give this wretched world our flying fucks.'

Eren concluded his self intervention and smiled. He threw the butt of his sativa stick on the ground and extinguished the residual fire with his shoes before entering his house. Unknown by the fact that he was being monitored by a certain military group using its top-of-the-line surveillance artifacts.

The group went away as soon as Eren entered his house. They didn't want to upset the "C-Rank" healer living with Eren after all. The butcher on the other hand found himself alone in the room and rubbed his hands in excitement. Aunt Nina had gone outside for some work. It was time for him to prepare for his date.

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AN: Wanted to describe Ivor's circumstances and the actual reason behind why Isaac did what he did way earlier. But the progression of the ongoing plot didn't allow us to take a peek into the past.

Thankfully, Eren's return to the city of Osan enabled us to get a glimpse of our edgelord's mindset. It also provides us with a different point of view on the same scene that had happened way earlier in VEH's storyline.

Just as Eren has said, Ivor has the potential to rise above his circumstances one day! ;)

Chapter 382 Abilities and Spells

"Welcome, Miss Nina, to this humble abode we both call home."

Eren opened the door and greeted Nina who had just got back from finishing her affairs with her trusted person in the Osan Healers Association. With his gentlemanly hand gesture, he gave her a cordial bow before inviting her in.

The Master ranker smiled and got in. one could see a dash of excitement in her eyes.

Tonight was the duo's second dinner date. This time, Eren had arranged everything at home instead of picking a venue outside. Nina couldn't roam much in the city because she wanted to keep her rank-up under wraps before she reached Nightshade Duchy. So she only met her trusted contact and had her arrange everything she needed to do before leaving the city with Eren.

Nina had been using an artefact to limit the spread of her natural mana fluctuations while also being conscious of her surroundings. It was a simple artefact. But it couldn't prevent someone at that rank or higher than E-Rank from using their mana sense on the user.

Although the city of Osan didn't have many E-Rankers and above, Nina didn't want to risk it. She was already done serving the kingdom. She didn't want to swim in the murky waters of political matters again.

Nina raised her right hand in front of her and allowed Eren to lead her in. Holding her hand, he closed the door behind him. Then he led her to the vast living space he had just emptied of all its furniture.

The living space featured a dinner table along with the food trolley that was placed nearby. There were a couple of chairs. A bed was placed near the window at the far end of the living space.

Nina saw an array disk lying in the middle of the living space. It was also an E-Rank artefact that was used to recreate the recorded audiovisuals stored on it in the form of 3D spectral form.

Nina looked questioningly at Eren. She wanted to ask him what the disk contained. But she held back and let Eren lead her and reveal his plans at his pace.

Nina was wearing a white mini dress with green floral patterns printed over it. She had worn strappy heels, making her appear a bit taller.

Nina's waist-length hair was creating a cascading visual appeal behind her back. The pair of petite golden earrings she had worn complimented her overall outfit. Plus, she was wearing the same perfume Eren had gifted her some months back.

Eren had worn a simple grey blazer and white shirt underneath it. The grey coloured pants boded well with the blazer and coordinated with the dash of white highlight he had underneath the blazer. His leather belt and cognac shoes completed the ensemble.

"What are we having for dinner?"

Nina asked as she was guided to her dinner table seat by Eren. The latter brought the food trolley near her and started serving her the exquisite ranker-specific dishes he had ordered from Soiree Gracieuse.

"We have some mouth-watering dishes on our menu tonight, Nina. First, we have lobster meat from an F-Rank monster-sized lobster that has been garnished with herbs and spices. Then we have pastry twists that would have an E-Rank concoction to stimulate your mana circuits. Then there's..."

Eren lifted the lids over the ranked cuisines he had ordered from Soiree Gracieuse. He introduced them to Nina one by one as if he was the restaurant's staff working his usual shift. There were also mortal cuisines he had included in the menu to enrich the variety even more.

Nina was impressed. She told Eren which cuisines she'd be having for now. The latter nodded and served the selections before picking a few items from the trolley for himself. There were also a couple of E-Rank and C-Rank wine bottles that he uncorked and poured for both of them respectively.

"How did you like Stroganoff made from the meat of the D-Rank beast? I can't eat it so you'd have to describe the taste to me."

Eren said this while eating the roasted beef of the E-Rank beast. Nina took one more bite out of Stroganoff and inspected it with her taste buds before passing her judgment:

"Not bad. But the beast's meat doesn't contain much mana essence. I guess the beast was on the verge of death. Plus, the cooking techniques performed on it are mediocre.

The city of Osan really can't compete with some of the big-league city-states. Trust me, Erni, the food here would look pale to you as a ranker when you eat for the first time there."

Eren nodded and started talking about other topics of interest with Nina. He didn't have a rich lifestyle in his past timeline. So even when he had visited the so-called big-league cities in the past, he had only eaten the cheapest food from there. And he didn't stay there for more than a couple of days because of the expenses they had.

One of the reasons Eren was thrifty in the timeline was because he was always running short on money in his past timeline. That feeling of despair he had because of his lack of money had pushed him to become the man he was today.

Eren and Nina chatted with laughter in the air. They had their share of double innuendo jokes they both dished out at each other. The night was turning out to be one filled with fun and eroticism at the same time.

Eren knew things were about to become cosier once they started with the main event of the date. Therefore, he thought of asking the Master ranker a bunch of questions he had for a while before things progressed further. As eager as he was to spend time with Nina, he hadn't forgotten that he still had to gather information for his plans ahead.

"There was something else I wanted to ask you, Nina. I'm not sure how much you can share.

But since you have crossed into the B-Rank, and haven't signed any official binding contract with any institutions yet, this is as convenient a time as any for me."

Nina got a bit serious and nodded at Eren. The latter gathered his thoughts for a while before asking:

"Nina, what are the inherent spells? Can humans have them in their arsenals? If yes, then how?

There's one more question I have. How do we differentiate between inherent spells and abilities?"

Eren was thinking about the answers to these questions since his fight with Renar. He also had an innate spell of his own now. But he had only used his abilities subconsciously when his life was in danger or by instinct. He couldn't control the spell the way he wanted to unless extreme conditions were present around him.

Eren wanted to have complete control over his innate spell and his abilities. Therefore, he needed the Master ranker's guidance. Someone who he could count on.

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Nina pondered for a bit while looking at her wine-filled glass. She sent a bit of sangria down her throat before replying:

"It is indeed a good time for you to ask me these questions, Erni. The previous restrictions that were placed on me have been loosened quite a bit if not completely disappeared. Plus, we are going to leave the city of Osan. The origins of our knowledge become vague when we change our locations.

But..."

Nina took another gulp from her wine glass after stirring it a bit and continued:

"That doesn't mean you and I are out of the system. Especially you. During your on-field assignments, you may be questioned about your knowledge.

Plus, sometimes gaining knowledge that isn't relevant for your rank can become detrimental instead of helpful. Therefore, I'll withhold certain details so that you and I would have plausible deniability. Will that be okay?"

Nina asked Eren who was already executing this. He nodded his head immediately and gestured for her to continue:

"Alright then. About innate and inherent spells. Distinguishing them is simple. Innate spells are bloodline locked spells that are bound by the genesis of your blood. Only mana beasts and demon beasts have it.

There was a large group of rankers who had access to innate spells like that in the past. You know who, right?"

Nina stared intently at Eren after she said it. The latter understood that she was talking about half-blood clans. Nodding his head in agreement, he encouraged her to proceed ahead further.

"Good. Inherent spells, however, are almost like innate spells. The only difference is that you don't need a bloodline to make a spell of your choosing as an inherent spell.

In short, when you master a certain spell to such a degree that your mana core or your existence, in general, gets imprinted with the runes that embody that particular spell, then it becomes your inherent spell.

Almost always, inherent spells can only be the spells of the elements rankers have an affinity with. Unless a ranker stubbornly practices and executes a spell they don't have an affinity with all his life, it is near impossible for them to make that spell their inherent spell.

Simply put, when you make a spell your own, it becomes your inherent spell. Low-level human rankers don't usually have inherent spells because they are not proficient enough in any of their spells to make any of them their inherent spells.

Do you have any doubts so far?"

Eren had once again begun eating when Nina asked him. This time, he started eating lobster meat that was laden with herbs and spices. Nina wondered where the guy was keeping all that food around.

"Only one. Does that mean the demon beasts that take human forms would develop inherent spells apart from their innate spells if and when they reach certain proficiency in them?"

Nina applauded Eren for asking her the right question. She nodded and chose her words carefully before replying:

"That's right. That's why a successful taming of a demon beast who can or has the potential to assume human form is strictly regulated. Thankfully, only high-grade demon beasts could do that. Like, the beasts who are in the B-rank and above.

But at that point, the rankers who can tame demon beasts of that calibre are already absurdly stronger. So handling the demon beasts at that rank doesn't seem like a big deal."

Nina's half-filled glass was refilled by Eren when she stopped. The latter also filled his glass up with wine suitable for his rank.

'Heh! My Reen did it when she was in C-Rank. Guess she's a special case.'

Eren thought proudly to himself and nudged Nina to continue. Nina verbally marched forward after feeling a bit pleasant and tipsy as the wine's effects were starting to kick in:

"If you don't already know, innate and inherent spells incorporate the way of elements by default. They are easier to cast, less burdensome on your mana storage, and provide enhanced outputs or effects.

In some cases, such spells can become so powerful as to bypass the ranking boundaries, allowing the rankers to produce, let's say, 120% of their original power. You know what that means, right? Two rankers of the same rank. If one of them has an inherent spell while the other only has access to normal spells, then the former would easily be able to dominate the latter.

That's why "those" groups of people were feared by normal rankers. The sheer potential they possessed as rankers must have been terrifying. Because compared to those people awakening the innate spell hidden in their bloodlines, the probability of normal humans acquiring inherent spells was much lower."

A lot of Eren's doubts were cleared at this point even when Nina didn't get into the nitty-gritty of the whole thing. He then asked another pertinent question that he wanted to ask.

"What about abilities then, Nina?"

Nina saw Eren finish his dinner, gulp down his glass full of wine, and light up a Sativa stick to smoke. She didn't like that he was smoking like some hooligan in front of her. But she knew that it was part of his treatment. So she sighed and continued:

"Abilities are something that only rankers who have innate or inherent spells can think of. In a way, they are the next evolution of spell casting. The main difference between spells and abilities is that the latter stops using your mana circuits to cast its intended effect. Entirely.

Can you imagine? Employing mana without using your mana circuits? Casting something like that would be as effortless as breathing. That is what ability is.

In short, the ability is when a spell ceases to be a spell.

Nina's explanation made Eren realize that his half-blood powers as slime and his newly acquired power Life Drain were in fact abilities. Because they ignored employing his mana circuits. His Sins series powers were also going to be abilities by that logic.

And yet, Eren didn't know how to use Life Drain and Devour. They didn't work on mana circuits or mana points. That's why they didn't have a specific way with which he could activate them the way he wanted to when he wanted to. Nor could he tweak them as per his needs, the way he used to do with his spells.

"Nina, how do they activate abilities if they don't use mana circuits?"

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"Nina, how do they activate abilities if they don't use mana circuits?"

Eren asked while smoking his Sativa stick. He made a mental note to get an ashtray because Nina was giving him the stares for occasionally dropping the ash on the table.

"There is no specific way to activate the abilities, Erni. the activation either gets imprinted on your consciousness or you define them on your own."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard that. He didn't understand what Nina meant by defining the ability's activation. So Nina expounded further:

"I don't know why you are asking about abilities when you are only E-Rank, Erni. I suggest you don't focus on these things as they would waste your time. There are some lunatic rankers out there who actively pursue these things and neglect their ranking practices.

Abilities are granted naturally when you have reached a certain point in your ranking journey and the way of the elements. So it makes zero sense that you pursue something that is bound to come to you if you just focus on your path as a ranker."

Eren shook his head when Nina thought that he was trying to waste his time pursuing advanced forms of magic. He clarified:

"It's not that I want to delve into the whole thing, Nina. I'm asking because I want to know how that mutant mana beast had so much advantage over it."

A realization dawned on Nina. She understood that he was asking because of the close call he had with the beasts in Besanc. The one that gave him the shakes.

'That must have been one hell of a mutant beast.'

Nina thought to herself before continuing:

"Alright, Erni. I don't want to be vague about it. But it'd be difficult for me to define the abilities in a particular way. They can vary greatly depending on the rankers' elemental nature, their habits, and their proficiencies. Some abilities would turn out to be so crude that you'd rather use spells instead of them. There are times when rankers awaken with such terrifying power that they can dominate all their peers.

In general, high-ranking entities don't share their experiences with other rankers. Because it would be of no use to others. Plus, sharing about how their abilities get triggered is like allowing your opponents to have a trump card on you."

Nina saw that Eren was beginning to show disappointment on his face. So she sighed and thought of sharing her experience.

"Alright. I'll share my experience with you.

Hehe! I was called talented for gaining the ability in my C-Rank. You have seen me performing healing magic with the snap of my fingers. That's what my ability is. It had become my inherent spell first.

An ability needs a trigger for its intended effect to manifest. If the way to activate them is not imprinted on your consciousness, then the only thing you can do is make a conscious effort to define that trigger.

The same thing had happened to me. I had to make conscious efforts to trigger my healing ability with the snap."

Nina finished another glass of wine after staying there. She felt it was boring to continue discussing the topic, especially when "good things" were planned ahead in the evening. But she decided to satiate Eren's curiosity for the moment, lest he become distracted when it was show-time.

"Abilities can be triggered in many ways. Sometimes just thinking about them is enough. In some cases, just mentioning a word, like its name, is enough to trigger it. Often, a simple gesture would be all it takes to activate your ability.

A snap of fingers in my case. Even simply raising a hand in a certain way would allow the ranker to tap into their abilities if they have defined their activation that way."

Nina's explanation until this point immediately reminded Eren of Eliza's hand gestures. He had seen her raising her hand in a lotus fashion to cast her Enderflames so many times in his nightmares now. He couldn't forget how a single action was all it took for Eliza to cast her flames. It was as easy as breathing to her.

Eren processed all the information Nina had given him and cross-referenced it with his experiences. He had another question he wanted to ask:

"Nina, can low ranked entities never have access to the inherent spells or abilities?"

Nina chuckled lightly at his question before answering:

"Don't feel despair, silly. A ranker's journey gets tougher the further they progress on it. Everything will eventually come to you. I'd say you are doing pretty well considering you were rankless before joining LA.

But there are always exceptions to every rule. Sadly, ordinary rankers cannot compete with the prodigies of their generation. People who are struck by epiphany might get lucky and accomplish everything they can when they are in the state of epiphany. Something that would normally take you years to achieve with sheer diligence and hard work.

The world is not fair, Erni. You just have to figure out how to make effective use of the opportunities you have. Even the unluckiest of rankers would have the days they could use to get further ahead than their past selves."

Eren nodded when he heard Nina try to cheer him up thinking he was just traumatized by the danger he faced during his mission. He smiled lightly and held her hand that was resting on the table before replying:

"Don't worry about me, Nina. I'll not waste my time trying to obtain something that isn't meant for me yet. I was just curious. That's all."

Eren said while caressing Nina's hand. Next, he drew another drag from his cigarette and asked another question he had been thinking about ever since he received marks for the Sins series.

"Nina, do you know anything about ranking entities using foreign mana?"

Nina had a surprised expression on her face when Eren asked that question. She wasn't sure how to answer the question. But she had understood that he was having these doubts for a while now. So she sighed and responded:

"What do you know about the source of the existing mana, Erni?"

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"What do you know about the source of the existing mana, Erni?"

Nina asked Eren who pondered on that question for a bit. He had finished up his Sativa stick by now. He didn't find it appropriate to light another stick in her presence right after he finished the first one, lest she thinks he had gotten addicted. He had gotten addicted to his vice. He just didn't want the Master ranker to know about it.

"From what I have learned so far about mana, the genesis of mana is a mystery. We don't know how the races came to harness the power of mana.

The source of this world's mana is bound to this world's residents. Maybe there are other worlds out there. Worlds that might be completely different or exactly similar to this one. But the mana those worlds would have would be different than what we have here. Am I correct in saying that?"

Nina nodded when she heard Eren's answer. She was glad that he wasn't obtaining any dubious information. She clarified it further.

"That's right, Erni. I don't think we should talk about the world at large at this point. Besides, even I am not qualified to talk about things at that scale. But let's talk about the source of mana itself.

You know that we communicate with higher consciousness whenever we are in a state of epiphany. This higher consciousness is often influenced by the world's will in general. The mana this world contains also has the world's imprint on it.

The difference between native and foreign mana is that both will have different imprints on them that would correspond to their respective worlds. There were heretics in the past who could tap into the foreign world's mana and use its power to gain an overwhelming advantage over their opponents.

The use of foreign mana is part of old paths of magic that are not practised anymore. At least not openly anymore."

Eren nodded his head and spread his mana sense in the room. He knew he was stretching his luck by asking questions like these on his dinner date with Nina. So he decided to move forward with his next set of plans before asking any more questions.

The array disk that had been kept in the middle of the living space was activated after Eren operated on it. Immediately the scenery in front of the duo's eyes was changed.

Nina noticed that her surroundings had changed visually. She found herself near a medium-sized lake that was reflecting the well-lit sky laden with sparkling stars. The blue hue of the sky made it look otherworldly.

Among the many sparkling sources of light, the half-moon was visible in the sky. She could see that there was a range of dunes surrounding the space in the distance. The lakeside where her dinner table and Eren were, was covered in light purple and blue vegetation along with a bit of regular green.

The pier by the lakeside tempted her to take a dip in the water. The entire scene looked gorgeous and had a touch of a fantastical vibe about it.

The array didn't rely solely on creating a visual impact. It also incorporated various other arrays based on multiple elements to add other effects to the scenery. Nina could feel a light breeze that carried the scent of the wild. The sound of the lake's mildly moving water was also added to the mix.

Only the elements of reality that Eren had chosen could make it to this fantastical land. The dinner table was one. The bed in the distance was the other.

This array created a real-life atmosphere in the duo's living room, causing them to feel like they were in an unknown land. Of course, if they use mana sense now, their vision would change and they'd again find themselves on the ground floor of their apothecary. Then again, Nina and Eren wouldn't use their mana sense here and ruin the mood for themselves.

This was not all. Eren operated the array disk again and immediately a soothing flute tune started playing in the background. The tune was soon accompanied by other instruments that complimented the flute tune while it was being played slowly.

This was a slow dance number Eren had played with the help of the array disk. The beats were apt for a romantic Waltz.

Nina flashed a very gracious smile after finding out Eren had taken efforts to arrange a date like this for her. A part of her knew that she was being a bit selfish by demanding something so "extra" from him. But she thought she should at least ask for something like this from the guy she was with.

Eren got up and walked near Nina. He asked for Nina's hand for a dance. The latter was already pleased with his arrangements. She didn't waste time in offering her hand while getting up from her seat.

"My my, Erni. This is quite a nice setup you have here."

Nina said and approached Eren. The latter placed his left hand over her waist while his right hand was locked with hers. Eren smirked before responding:

"Follow my lead."

Eren began a slow waltz. Nina followed his lead while smiling at him. The music in the background was soothing to hear. The gentle breeze produced by the array along with the overall visual atmosphere set a new definition of romanticism for Nina.

"M'lady, would you be kind enough to answer some of the last questions I have while we are dancing together?"

Eren asked Nina politely. The latter chuckled because Eren couldn't pull off being polite. The formal mannerisms and etiquettes would always sound awkward coming from him. But she didn't mind now that they were near each other— slowly dancing and touching each other.

She had also understood that instead of boring her by asking questions plainly, Eren had started this dance earlier than he had planned. So that she doesn't feel bored. The healer liked that her guy was aware of her moods and was taking measures to keep her mood uplifted. Therefore, she responded positively:

"Alright, Erni. Go ahead. You'd have as much time as this song plays in the background."

Eren grinned and asked his next question:

"How does using foreign mana affect a ranker?"

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"How does using foreign mana affect you?"

Eren asked as he swung Nina round on the tune. The latter gracefully returned to her previous position after completing the spin. She replied as she followed Eren's lead again.

"First of all, pulling something like that can't be done by normal methods. As a second consequence, using foreign mana without any pre-arrangement would cause your mana core to burst. Rankers would die if they used foreign mana without knowing what they were doing.

The third hurdle in using foreign mana is one of the biggest reasons why nobody shouldn't try heretic methods like those. Foreign mana is imprinted with the will of its respective world, and so it should place a heavy burden on the user's consciousness. The effects of the foreign mana would progressively affect the rankers as they used more and more of it.

I don't know much about this field either. Just consider that it would be problematic for the ranker when the burden exceeds a certain limit."

'So that's why the Seven Sins series requires you to rank up and strengthen one's soul before another mark is bestowed upon. I need more information about these things but I won't get it from Nina. Alephee is in slumber. And I can't count on Layla.'

Eren kept on dancing with Nina while talking with her on random topics. He would often joke with her or throw cheesy lines at her to keep her from getting annoyed with him. His hands were also starting to get active. They were brushing over Nina's breasts and derriere. He was trying to make it look natural to maintain his gentlemanly demeanour. But Nina knew him better.

Eren asked the Master ranker another question after some time while trying his best to lead her.

"Nina, what would be the advantages of using foreign mana then? Using foreign mana comes with many risks, but I'm sure their benefits will balance them out if not outweigh them altogether. Otherwise, it makes no sense that the rankers of any era partake in these activities."

Nina nodded and responded while not missing a beat in her steps:

"Before you understand the benefits, I want to know how much you know about spells and their origins. Tell me how you would categorize spells and their origins."

Eren and Nina's bodies were almost sticking to each other now. It had stopped becoming a Waltz and now they were more focused on feeling each other out.

Eren took his time to answer.

"There are various schools of spells present on the continent of Anfang that have been said to come from various places. Each school has its own way of employing mana circuits, spoken or non-silent

incantations, somatic actions, material components, and focus components to produce different forms of spells.

The language we employ in the spells' incantation only indicates that they originated from a distinct place somewhere. The history of the continent of Anfang has been blurred for a while now. So it's difficult to track the exact source. But it is safe to assume that some spells did not originate from here.

But we don't have to find the source to categorize the spells. The same spell effect can be obtained in a variety of ways. The most appropriate way to categorize the spells would not be by the school they come from. It is better to consider the effects the spells produce to classify them."

As he spoke, Eren placed his left hand on Nina's right buttock. The latter maintained a knowing smile on her face and nudged him to continue— both with his actions and his speech.

"The rankers consider a few main categories of spells as their go-to spells while the cultists have their own way of looking at this thing. For example, most of the rankers' spells fall under conjuration, transmutation, divination, evocation, illusion, or enchantment types.

There are other types of spells like binding magic, ritual magic, and necromancy. But they are either banned or limited in their applications. Binding magic for example has been limited to making binding contracts.

Wait a minute. Are you saying that employing foreign mana gives you the ability to branch out from the main forms of magic?"

After Eren asked Nina, his left hand stopped grabbing Nina's left bun. The latter didn't like that he was processing her hints in his mind and ignoring the current tasks at hand. But she replied anyway.

"That's right. Usage of foreign mana has been said to birth novel forms of magic. The manifestation of that magic would be extremely personal. So we wouldn't always be able to fit it into the categories we know of.

This would be one of the biggest advantages of using foreign mana. Known forms of magic can be countered with known solutions. But how would you counter something on the spot if you don't know what kind of form or effects it would have?"

Eren nodded and decided to ask a few brief questions before dropping the subject completely before the background music had finished. He then focused on his time with Nina as another romantic music started playing in the background.

The butcher now had basic information about everything that had happened to him. He had come to know that somehow he had received two Sins marks. He decided it was paramount for him to understand them before he could use them.

Eren doubted that the nightmares he was having were all solely due to Eliza's soul sense affecting his soul. He guessed that it could also be connected to him receiving Sins marks. Especially when he received two Sins series marks at once.

Eren thought that Eliza had done it merely to keep him under her leash. Unbeknownst to him though, Eliza was equally surprised by the way that ceremony had ended.

'No point thinking about what that old monster is planning. I'll find out about it eventually. Meanwhile, I need to find a way to activate my second mark as soon as possible. I need to come up with my plans. There won't be more Ivors I could count on every time I found myself in a mess.'

Eren was having a whirlpool of thought in his head when he heard Nina's slightly irritated voice.

"Erni, stop thinking about these things now. I've already told you enough. Now... live in the present, mister."

Eren was snapped back to reality after Nina's mild warning. No matter how cosy he was with the Master ranker, he didn't want to offend her in any way after all. He smiled and used his mana sense to control the array's spectral projection.

The illumination of the surroundings suddenly got a bit dimmer as the music in the backdrop changed to something soothing. The gentle breeze carried notes of white musk and ombre rose.

Nina was pulled into Eren's embrace soon after she experienced the subtle changes in the surroundings. She rested her head on his chest as they stood there enjoying each other's warmth for a moment.

Things were about to get heated from this point on.

Chapter 387 A Dash of Creativity P1*

"Why did you choose Nightshade Duchy, Erni? What are your plans there?"

Nina asked while she was resting her head on Eren's chest. The latter was busy kissing her neck when he heard her speak. He paused from his task and answered her:

"You remember me telling you about my discipleship under Master Levine De Montmorency, right? I talked with her before she entered isolation. Let's just say she can be very helpful to me where I am heading.

Master Levine was still isolated when I left the LA grounds. But she'll contact me once she gets out of it. I'll tell you about my plans when that happens. They are related to potioneering, of course. Therefore, I could use your assistance as well.

But enough about that... where were we?"

Eren asked Nina and planted his lips on hers before she could answer. The healer felt her body shiver with delight as she felt like she was melting in Eren's arms.

"Ummmmmm!"

Nina's heart raced as she responded to Eren's smooch with equal enthusiasm. She bit his lower lips while tightly hugging him. The latter felt the force with which she was hugging him was lowkey hurting him. But he channelled his Ace rank mana and negated its effect.

'Heh! This time, my balls are about to get emptied for real. It'll be me who'll be asking for breathers.'

Eren pondered this and smiled internally. He grabbed Nina's buns and gave them a firm squeeze. He had to admit that the goods he was handling were quality products.

"Why do I feel like your buns have become mushier than before? Not that I'm complaining. Hehe!"

Eren broke his lip lock to compliment Nina. The latter smiled and clasped her arms around Eren's neck before answering:

"Well... you like puns, don't you? Here's one for you. All my assets are yours for the taking."

Eren chuckled when he heard Nina hurling him the crass humour he often used to serve her. He lifted her into a princess carry and carried her to the bed located a distance from them.

He gently placed Nina over the bed before climbing on top of her without a moment's delay. They kissed again while feeling each other's bodies. Eren was glad his stature had increased. He thought his misfortune was a blessing in disguise at least in this department.

"I won't lie, Erni. Your sculpted body has made you a kind of hunk. Plus, you are becoming a more responsible adult. I feel blessed to have you.

Sometimes, I wish we could just stay here, forget about everything, and spend our lives in each other's company like this.

My life was empty and colourless before we got together. But at least during that time, I had you all to myself. I might sound selfish. But I want that to happen again. I want you all to myself."

Nina whispered her sweet nothings in Eren's ears as he was busy devouring her neck. Then she grasped his hair and guided him onto her petite neck.

"Hmmm! I am all yours now, Nina. And we can never be truly separated from each other.

To be honest, I never cared about this city just because I spent my childhood in it. My attachments are with you. As long as your presence is there, that place will become my home to return to."

Nina smiled mirthlessly when she heard Eren's answer. She had to admit that the guy knew what words to use to keep his women in check.

Nina's nipples tensed when she felt Eren's bulge grinding on her womanhood. She had wrapped her legs around him as he was making a buffet out of her body— devouring her entirely with his kisses, hands, and groin grinds.

Eren slipped his hand under Nina's body and squeezed her left buttock. He didn't like that there were clothes between them now.

"Hatchlings of the flame."

Eren executed his fire-element spell and soon his body was wrapped by two hatchlings of flame. The spell had been used to burn the clothes over the bodies of the duo.

The flimsy fabric didn't stand a chance. Nina had already lowered her natural mana defence— allowing the flame serpents to burn her clothes away as they started crawling all over her body. She felt ticklish because of them.

Eren was sharing his senses with the serpents. He could now feel more of Nina at the same time because of the flame. Even the butcher was surprised that he hadn't thought of using the spell this way.

'Sometimes... all a man needs to spice things up is a dash of creativity.'

Eren's need for burning Nina's clothes had enabled him to step into a new realm of possibilities. He controlled his flame serpents and made them open their fangs and bite all over Nina's now-naked, tempting body.

Eren spread Nina's legs with his hands and went down on her. Meanwhile, the flame serpents climbed over Nina's torso and bit her erect nipples with their mouths.

Eren generated a bit of lightning mana on the tip of his tongue and licked Nina's pink button first. The small jolt along with the attack launched by the flame serpents on her body was enough for Nina to completely give in to her desires.

"Oh, Erni..... That's it. Lick my pussy good baby."

Eren wanted to shout "language" when he heard this. But he chuckled to himself and let the matter go. As his left hand spread the pussy lips, he inserted two fingers of his right hand inside the warm, wet cave.

The inner fold of the pussy was made visible. He didn't want to risk extending his tongue unusually like what he had done with Renita. This was the Master ranker he was dealing with. Not some newbie Novice who was a virgin.

Sedated Perception

Stunning Speed

Eren controlled his spell and made it enhance his perception of time slightly. Then he made his body capable of keeping up with the pace by using a time-element combo. Nina could now reach new heights of ecstasy with Eren's simple buff.

Chapter 388 A Dash of Creativity P2*

Nina felt her entire body had been set on fire, which was technically true as well since the flame serpents were all over her body. She gripped the bedsheets with her hand and threw her head back as she was being eaten by Eren.

"Aaaaaah! Hmmmmm... Oh, yes. More, Erni. More."

Nina had mowed the lawn completely down there. So Eren's tongue had unrestricted access to the inner folds of her pussy. And by now he had made full use of it.

Eren heard Nina's moans so he decided to tease her a bit. He stopped lapping up her pussy and got on top of her. Nina was rudely awoken from her bliss when she felt that Eren was not tongue-storming her anymore.

"Whaaaa.."

"Press your massive jugs together, Nina. I wanna titty-fuck!"

Nina was cut off before she could register her objection to Eren's selfish behaviour. Eren didn't wait for her to respond verbally. He placed his now-hard 9incher thick cock between her jugs and looked at her with a smirk on his face.

"You... you have grown so much, you selfish little rat. Hehehe!"

Eren's package had increased even more than Nina had anticipated. The girth of his cock had also been doubled. She realized that the guy was about to drive her completely insane by his sheer size alone.

She gripped Eren's cock in both her hands and started stroking it before speaking up:

"Alright. Consider this as a present from me. But if you act selfishly again, I'll make you fuck me even if your body turns into a mummy, got it?"

After hearing Nina's threat, Eren laughed aloud. He knew she would not hesitate to make it true if he decided to push his boundaries. But he didn't care. At least not this time. In response, he just started thrusting his cock in her hands—telling her to get on with the program already.

Nina was taken aback when the flame serpents crawled to her pussy and began to excite her down there. Their serpent tongues started lapping her up to her wet cunt. The first snake concentrated on her now-erect clitty while the other started licking the wet valley.

"Aaaaaaaah. This... this... aaaaah.... This is a devilish way to use your spells, Erni."

Nina said amid her moans. She had brought her boobs together with her hands and was getting titty-fucked by Eren. But the latter felt that this was not enough.

"Hmm! You like it though, don't you? Your pussy has opened a water fountain down there, hehe! You need to step up your game. Don't just grab your boobs together. Suck on the tip of my tongue."

Eren tapped Nina's pussy with his right hand, hoping to excite her lady part even more. The flame serpents allowed Eren's touch through without interrupting the mission they had been given.

Before Nina could speak, Eren used his left hand to push her head near his cock. Her mouth was brought closer to his cock as it was getting sandwiched between her globes.

Nina was already on edge because of Eren's multi-front attacks. She opened her mouth and took the tip of his dick in. The position was a bit uncomfortable for her. But she held on and decided to give it her all.

Eren kept on pushing Nina's head from behind. He grabbed her hair and thrust his cock deep inside her mouth. He felt that only the tip of the cock getting all the wet attention was not enough anymore.

Soon the titty fuck stopped and he concentrated on ramming his dick inside her mouth. He placed both his hands over the back of her head and started pushing his cock in and out.

If she wasn't a Master ranker, she would have felt suffocated by Eren's unrestrained actions. And yet, she didn't dislike it. She cooperated completely and spread her legs wider—allowing the flame serpents to eat her up with their agile forked tongues.

Eren had decided to turn wild because of her ranking status. He couldn't keep up with her for as long as she could with him. So he had decided to make his time count.

"I'm... mmmm.... Close. Keep at it."

Eren grunted as he felt like he'd burst soon. He completely took control of Nina's face and used his legs to push his dick down her throat. He nutted inside her mouth soon enough.

"That... that was amazing!"

Eren felt good going wild on Nia. He laid next to her and let her take charge. Nina didn't wait long. She saw that his dick was still stiff.

Thanks to those ever-restless flame serpents, she was now feeling the fire in her pussy literally as well as metaphorically. So she got over him and sat on his groin before holding his dick with her hand from behind and guiding it inside her slippery cave.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaah... this is a good dick!"

Nina's eyes widened in surprise and excitement as she welcomed Eren's cock inside her. Before she could slowly accommodate the little guy that was Lil-no-more, Eren grabbed her by the butts and pushed it deep inside her in one swift move.

"Raaa... raaascal!"

Nina's eyes grew wide in surprise as she felt Eren's dick digging deep inside her. She threw her entire weight over his torso and hugged him as she felt the dick moving.

Taaaaap!

Taaaaap!

Taaaaap!

The sound of flesh meeting flesh was a synchronous rhythm in the couple's ears. Eren squeezed Nina's buns with both his hands as he drove his cock deep enough before almost popping it out of her. His balls had gotten wet because of Nina's pussy juices trickling down on them.

The musky smell of her body filled the room. It got mixed with the pleasing scent of the array-produced environment and created an aromatic symphony of its own.

"Stay... stay... with me!"

Nina rode on Eren's dick as she pounded her ass over his groin. The latter was now grabbing her tits in both his hands while using his propped legs to push his dick upwards to meet Nina's descent.

"Aaaaaah... aaaah... it's... coming."

Nina felt a dam bursting inside her pussy- cumming heavily on Eren's dick. She shivered as all her pent up sexual desires were being satisfied so far with this act.

Eren was about to get up from his position. But he was forced to resume his stance when Nina pressed her hand on his chest in an authoritative manner.

"I.... haaash!.... I'm just getting started, Erni!"

Chapter 389 A Dash of Creativity P3*

"I.... Haaash!.... I'm just getting started, Erni!"

Nina tied her hair in a bow after she said that. Eren laughed. But in his laughter, there was a slight mix of fear. Maybe he teased Renita too much. Now Karma was coming to bite him in the ass.

Eren's dick became flaccid after he cummed twice in a row, even though he was able to maintain erections for longer. He didn't want to give the Master ranker too many ideas. He feared he too would become a mummy-like Eliza if his erection prowess was discovered by Nina.

Nina started kissing Eren on his neck while his flaccid cock slipped out of her slimy pussy. She bit his earlobes before marching downwards. She started sucking on his nipples as she kept on grinding her ass on him.

'This woman is in heat.'

Eren thought and decided to counterattack Nina. He controlled his fire snakes once again to excite her groin, while he fondled the globes before him.

"Aaaaah... more... more..."

Eren let his dick turn hard again after some time. By then, the snakes had made all the residual bodily fluid turn into thin air with their controlled heat treatment on the couple's bodies.

And yet, Nina's pussy started producing more love juices when she felt the snakes' tongues were getting to town down there. She felt excited and thirsty at the same time.

Eren knew what was going on so he retrieved another wine bottle from his storage and handed it to Nina. This was the same elven ale that Marla had given him for his consumption. The wine's name was Frostfoam. Her favorite.

Nina smiled as she took hold of the bottle. She uncorked the lid and drank straight from it. As a result of the hurried action, the contents of the bottle spilt all over her.

"Hmmm. Your nipples look even more tempting now that they have been flavoured with wine. Come'er!"

Eren pulled Nina towards his face and got her boobs on top of his face. Nina chuckled at his action. She understood her task well and started pouring the wine from the top.

Eren sipped on the wine as he sucked on Nina's nipples. He immediately felt his body slightly freezing. A thin layer of ice started forming over his skin as he gulped down more and more of the win.

This was Eren's first time trying Frostfoam. He understood that Marla had ordered a custom concoction for him to drink. Because the effects were too prominent to be sold to the general populace.

Nina didn't have such effects on her body because the ale was lower ranked. It did make her feel rejuvenated and slightly chilled though.

'Hmmm! I need to tap Marla's ass too in the future for pranking me like this.'

Eren thought as he continued to ravish Nina. The latter felt that Eren's dick had resumed its previous glory once again. She started rubbing it between her butt crack as she kept on pouring more wine on her titties— ever so slowly, one tiny stream at a time.

Nina drank the rest of the wine herself and threw the bottle away. A distinct sound of glass breaking was heard. But the couple didn't care.

"Are you ready?"

Nina asked. But she didn't wait for him to respond. Eren's cock was already wet by the pussy juices by now. She reached for it by slipping her hand between their torsos. She stroked the adorable little beast a bit before making the tip knock on her rear door.

"Go ahead!"

Eren said confidently. His dick twitched in Nina's hand to show his affirmation. The healer flashed a grin and lowered her pelvis slowly on his dick.

"Aaaaaah... the thickness... is too much for this.."

Nina commented with tightly shut eyes. She then pursed her lips and used her hand from behind to control the penetration. She now knew Eren would try to psyche her and drive his whole shaft inside in one go if she left him unchecked. That's why she was using her grip to control his movement.

Eren watched Nina slowly adjusting to his girth for anal penetration. He decided to let her have her time. He retrieved his Sativa stick from his storage and called out his flame serpent to light it up. After lighting it, the flame serpent climbed back over Nina's torso. It wrapped itself over her waist and bit her nipples. The other serpent was doing the same.

Nina slowly started stomping her ass up and down on Eren's rod as he smoked. She was kinda irritated because of his cocky attitude. But she also had to admit internally that he was driving her even crazier than before.

Taaaap

Taaaap

Taaaap

It was the fleshly melody Eren heard that made him exert some effort. He started driving his dick upwards as he drew in drags after drags from his Sativa stick.

"Will you... Aaah... stop... Aaah smoking already?"

Nina asked as she was getting pounded in her ass by Eren's long and thick rod. The latter chuckled and offered her his smoke instead of obeying her demands.

Nina was slightly angry but also low-key chuckling at the way Eren was behaving. She had to admit that the Sativa stick had soothed all his remaining anxieties away.

Nina took hold of Eren's smoke as she was getting fucked. She adjusted herself a bit and took a drag. While the stuff was too low for her rank, it did provide her with a pleasant sensation because of the novel experience she was having with Eren.

"You... you are... aaaah.... You are about to make me a crass human like you, Erni."

Nina said after she finished the half-finished Sativa stick she had been given. She was also beginning to enjoy her session with Eren a bit more now.

'Heh! I stopped being human a long time ago.'

Eren chuckled as a response to Nina's answer and finally took hold of Nina's buns with both his hands. He channeled his lightning element mana throughout his body and made Nina's skin tickle a bit.

In one swift motion, he made Nina get down on all fours and stood on his knees behind her back. In another moment, his dick was piling inside her anal entry once again. By now, he had another smoke in his hand. He kept on tapping her butts with his empty hand as he enjoyed smoking.

'Aaaah! Good life.'

Eren thought to himself as he burst inside Nina once again. Her anus queefed when he removed his dick from it. His white milk came out from her hole— dripping down on the bedsheets and her thighs.

And yet, Eren knew this would not be the end of Nina's thirst for him. He watched as Nina looked at him with her head tilted and even more hunger in her eyes than before.

"This is going to be a long night!"

Eren chuckled as he got back to hug Nina from behind. Nina welcomed him from behind and pushed her back in his embrace. The couple was going to continue until one of them tapped out.

Chapter 390 Know Thy Enemy

Eren woke up the next day and it was evening already. His eyes were heavy and he felt exhausted.

'Aaargh! My back hurts. My balls ache. And my dick feels like it would fall off.'

The butcher checked on his condition and concluded. Then had used too much mana in his session with Nina and he didn't have any ranking technique yet to actively refill his mana storage. So he relied more on passive mana harnessing now.

He was still in the living room when he awoke. Nina had kept the apothecary closed so there was no need for him to go back to his room again.

There was no array-generated spectral environment anymore when he looked around. He got up from his bed and spread his mana sense. Nina was absent.

Eren found Nina's note by the dining table. She had cooked him a hearty meal before leaving for her work. She had told him in the note that she'd take a few days to return.

The note was burned in Eren's hand before he started to have his meal. He also had some work at the city of Laurel where Agatha was currently waiting for him.

'I need to hurry to the city of Laurel too. Need to wrap all my affairs in the Duchy of Lionhearts before entering the Nightshade Duchy.'

Eren thought as he decided to catch up on some reading while having his food. Taking a worn-out book from his storage, he opened it up using its bookmark.

This was JJ Edgar's journal that he had obtained from the cultist hideout he had looted. He started reading the contents of the books as he took a bite out of his first roasted chicken leg.

"Demi-humans. What were they? Why did they vanish from the continent from Anfang completely? Are they extinct for real? Or are some of them still hiding somewhere?

My interest in the demi-humans has been piqued from the moment I discovered that demi-human skeleton. I feel that..."

Eren kept on reading and found out that Edgar was used to making and noting down a lot of conjectures. They may or may not be relevant to the butcher anymore. So he decided to speed-read the contents to save time.

My helping hands have discovered another bunch of old documents scattered about this wretched kingdom. They shed light on the era before Anfang's redacted history, if only in a small way.

I have to admit that I had been using the wrong term to describe the entities that have fascinated me. I now understand that demi-human is more of a general term. They were referred to as half-bloods in the past.

The half-blood rankers were able to pass their bloodline powers to their progeny— enabling them to establish half-blood clans. It seems that they were a force to be reckoned with in their era.

The house of Samael has been mentioned multiple times in these documents. Their bloodline's powers remain a mystery to me. But it seems it was one of the strongest half-blood clans in existence."

Eren was stunned as he continued reading. The rest of the parts about House of Samael were Edgar's conjectures so he would have to take them with a grain of salt. But it seemed that Eliza wasn't lying when she said that her clan was special in her era.

Eren flipped a few pages and kept on reading.

"Mutagen. The component of the blood that allows the half-bloods to tap into their bloodline powers. But what is mutagen at its core?

My research into this field has been refined, thanks to my experiments and my extensive reading. It has allowed me to form a hypothesis that is based on a lot of research-oriented data.

Mutagen is, in my opinion, a key to unlocking pre-established innate spells bound by nature itself. The key was given to the mana beasts first. But someone down the line found a way to get it for humankind as well. Thus, the half-bloods were born.

One particular thing about the human species is that it doesn't have its innate spell by birth. A pure human bloodline doesn't have any key that can unlock any pre-established spell. But surprisingly or unsurprisingly, it can act as an ideal host for one.

With this key, the half-bloods can acquire their innate spells faster than normal humans obtain their inherent spells. The time with which they turn their innate spell into their abilities should also be mind-boggling when compared to normal rankers.

The key also helps the half-blood progress faster in the way of the elements because it contains the very secrets of the element the mutagen is compatible with. I can now see how this might have been seen as an unfair advantage by normal human rankers."

Eren had come to realize that a lot of this Edgar fellow's conjectures were right on point. He applauded the guy internally as he had his third chicken leg and kept on reading.

"It seems that the house of Samael was once a normal pioneering clan who had gotten their hands on the bloodline of some mythical creature. Since then, they have become a half-blood clan. Its research into mutagens was further enhanced after obtaining the bloodline.

Several documents hint at the calamity that took place even before the redaction of history. It seems that the house of Samael was in charge of coming up with methods to aid all the rankers of that time in dealing with the calamity at hand."

Eren finished another roasted chicken leg and cleaned his hands with the napkin placed beside him. He then lit up his Sativa stick before pondering over what he had read so far.

'Hmm. Know thy mummified enemy!

I need to learn more about this tragedy. But since even this Edgar fellow couldn't find much about it, I might have a hard time just scratching the surface.

If only I could get my hands on the rest of Edgar's journals. Or perhaps meet him in a friendly manner, if he is alive that is.'

Eren thought to himself. Then shook his head negatively.

'Naah. He would be a high-ranking entity even if he is alive if I'm not wrong. Why would he help me?'

The butcher finished reading Edgar's journal.

"Heh! This House of Samael was made up of a bunch of visionary rankers."