

Vile 651

Chapter 651 Prelude to Chaos: A Terror Inducing Ability P1

The city of Silvermoon. Lionheart Duchy.

Carren Estate. An open field in the middle of Carren forest.

The evening sun was making the sky very picturesque as it was about to set. But there was someone who could form miniature suns of their own.

The first things to be formed in the air were drop-shaped lights that looked like miniature suns. These drop-shaped suns were radiating yellow light. But they were so bright that they would look like white balls levitating motionlessly in the air if someone decided to stare at them directly.

This bunch of mini-suns, each about 2m in diameter, were at a fixed distance from each other. They each gave distinct and strong mana pulses. They contained so much purified mana that each of them would deliver 10 times the damage of a normal fireball spell of their size.

And yet, this was not why they were conjured. It wasn't the most effective use of their existence. After all, they were not made of fire-element mana. They were running on the light element mana, a derived element from the fire element.

An elf was looking at these floating balls of lights with curious expressions. She could feel the heat radiated on her skin even when they were about 10m away from the ground. She looked at these mini-suns and found that the formation wasn't making sense.

This sun elf had a golden brown skin tone— indicating her Suryakht or sun elf lineage. She had green eyes and a moderately sized nose. Her lips were fuller and bright red. And her relatively tall stature and shapely figure made her stand out as beautiful even among the elf population which was known for being blessed in that department.

'This ability is very powerful. I just don't know how to handle it. And Gramps Dan won't tell me.'

The young lady stared at her grandfather who was sitting on a large rock about 20 meters from her, looking at whatever she was doing with a stoic expression. Unlike the older generation that was known for guiding the younger generation, this old man preferred to stay on the sidelines and just observe the youth making countless mistakes.

The old man who was busy looking at the miniature sun realized that the young elf was asking him for guidance with her cute expressions and a pout. But he chuckled and didn't budge. To convey his no, he shook his head in denial.

As the young elf girl sighed, she decided to finish casting her ability. She raised her hand and closed her eyes to concentrate. She opened her closed eyes in the next moment and made her mana do her bidding.

Something unthinkable happened at that time.

The miniature suns started getting covered by the frost that soon turned into round-looking ice balls. Then these ice-shaped caskets were stretched vertically and started looking like lenses made of ice. Ice lenses that had light-element balls within them.

As soon as they were covered by the ice element lenses, the miniature sun began to dim, only to grow brighter a moment later. They started getting dimmed and brightened at regular intervals— as if they were breathing.

Snap.

The young elf snapped her fingers with her right hand and the miniature suns suddenly glowed. A buzz sound could be heard coming from the ice lenses in the next moment. This created an echo of the same sound by producing audio waves of the same wavelength.

Bzzzzzzzzet!

A bright light beam was emitted from a random ice lens and sent to the ice lens in front of it. The light seemed to disappear into the ice lens as soon as it hit the surface. It then came out from the opposite direction with twice the brightness and speed.

One could tell that brightness wasn't the only thing that had gotten intensified within the light beam. The density of light mana had also shot up— just waiting for the right opportunity to turn into fire mana and combust the first thing it hit.

The second ice lens did the same as the first one. Harness the light and shoot it to the Ice Lens while enhancing the volume of light mana contained in that light beam. The cycle repeated until the last ice lens emitted the last light beam into the distance, away from the caster and the field.

Shoot. Hit. Kaboom.

Everything happened fast. The old man had just chuckled at the young elf's struggle. In the next moment, she detonated a bomb-like spell into the horizon. The sound waves of that blast took some time to reach their audience. But the light generated by that spell had already made its presence known.

This blast was akin to at least 30 potion bombs in the Ace rank exploding off at the same time. If the young elf heightened the intensity of the light beam a bit more by adding a few more ice lenses, she could take down an Adept ranker like it was no big deal.

Even now, no Adept ranker who knew her and her current battle potential would be crazy enough to challenge her without any countermeasures. Even among the most dreadful rankers, this young elf was very dangerous despite her cute and charming looks.

"How was it, Gramps, Dan?"

The young elf asked while scrunching her nose. She wasn't happy with the way her ability worked. It felt a bit off to her. And the fact that it caused blasts instead of personal attacks made her worry about her battle potential as a ranker who would be paired up with a squad.

"That was just great, Lensa. I can't believe an Ace ranker can cast something like that. Hahaha. I guess they're right about what they say.

The next generation will always surpass the previous one."

Old man Dan Carren clapped when he saw Lensa's ability firsthand once again. He knew even without her conflicting state of mind, her ability was only strengthening. As if it was still evolving into something greater than it already was.

Chapter 652 Prelude to Chaos: A Terror Inducing Ability P2

"Tch. I know that, Grandpa Dan.

I want to know if this is all I can do with my ability? Aren't there any other uses you can think of? You know about both sun elves and snow elves. I'm sure you can think of something that I can make use of."

Lensa said with dissatisfaction written all over her face. Dan raised an eyebrow and pursed his lips before asking a curious question to this young lady.

"Hm? Why do you want your ability to produce something different in the first place? You are a ranger and you are going to break into Adept rank soon.

This is the right time for you to transform into a mage, Lee. And the transition won't hamper our growth in any way. I'll guarantee it."

Lensa shook her head before replying.

"This detonation-inducing ability isn't my cup of tea, Gramps. I don't know how I got this. Or who I was thinking about when I was in the state of epiphany."

Lensa's state of epiphany was very peculiar. Her body had been trapped in ice for a long time. At that time, her body was glowing and producing the same type of breathing effect as the miniature suns trapped in the ice lenses produced.

Lensa's ability made each miniature sun akin to a bomb floating in the sky. The light beam that was produced from each such lens would be like the bomb's detonation compressed in a high-density beam form before getting passed to the next ice lens. The effect of detonation would only get enhanced the further it was processed through the ice lens system.

"Hmm. Don't think too much about it, my child. Although I have a few ideas, I'd rather you come up with your own ways to use this ability you have gained."

Lensa's face brightened when she thought Dan would guide her. But her expressions sank when he completed his sentence. The potion-junkie Dan smiled mirthlessly before explaining.

"My dear, I don't want to taint your elemental attainment with my knowledge or understanding. I think the way you are doing it is pretty admirable. It's fine if you have to perform a few trials and errors. The answers that you'd find after reading through those would be better than mine. That's for sure."

"But..." Lensa wanted to raise a bit of objection. But Dan nodded at her before adding up.

"I can understand your concerns, Lee. What you have is a pretty powerful ability. But it is indeed overkill for your current rank. You won't be able to make much use of it in personal combat.

Plus, it expends too much of your mana and would force you to run on fumes in a few minutes. So the only option you'd have is to depend way too much on your team to have your back after you perform to your ability."

She nodded in understanding at Dan's perception of her weakness with rapid head movements. Dan disappeared from his seated position and appeared in front of Lensa in the next moment before lacing his right hand's palm over Lensa's head. He ruffled her dark brown hair that had a golden hue and said encouragingly.

"Don't worry too much. If this thing bothers you long enough, we'll take you on a trip to the entire kingdom. We could visit Badlands from another duchy. That trip should provide you with plenty of inspiration to solve your current problem."

Lensa didn't like Dan ruffling her hair, so she backed away after a while. She straightened her hair with her hands before responding with a curious glow in her eyes.

"Then we will go to the Nightshade duchy, Gramps. The city of New Beginnings. I want to visit that place."

Dan chuckled before answering on the spot.

"Where are you guys going?"

Someone else joined the duo when they were busy chatting with each other. It was Devon Carren. Lensa's uncle.

"Uncle Devon, we were thinking about traveling to the Nightshade duchy to have a change of space. Would you please come as well?"

As she hugged her uncle, Lensa pleaded for him to come with both her words and her endearing actions. The hot-tempered elf was equally soft-hearted when it came to his niece. He immediately agreed and added.

"Sure... sure. Would you like me to drag that Ken brat's ass with us as well? He is technically your fiance. This is his responsibility as well."

Lensa smiled mirthlessly when Devon brought up Ken's topic. For some reason, it felt very wrong to her to associate herself with him.

She hadn't said anything to anyone regarding her conflicting emotions. So she was waiting for her advancement to Adept rank to settle this matter.

"Uncle Devon, Ken has been dispatched to Lehan Duchy for his on-field assignment."

Lensa had kept tabs on Ken and a certain someone. She had planned to visit LA before the academic year's end. But she suddenly got the news that a certain someone she was planning to see there had gone ahead and settled himself in the Nightshade duchy.

Her decision to go to Nightshade was not random.

Devon and Dan both could tell that Lensa felt uncomfortable talking about Ken. So they both looked at each other. The old man criticized Devon with his gaze for bringing his subject up when she wasn't ready. The latter coughed a bit before adding up.

"*cough. Never mind then. We are heading to the Nightshade duchy for you to fine-tune your ability right? I don't want to taint your elemental attainment as this old man has said.

But I have an idea how you can naturally mix up your spells. That way, you can have something to rely on until you figure out a way to use your ability. We can opt for that option before traveling to Nightshade Duchy."

Lensa and Dan both were puzzled when they heard Devon's statement. The latter didn't take long to answer.

"Demon beasts!

We'll get one for our dear Lensa. Dan, you'd better cough up your money instead of getting high on your potion vials. Do you hear me?"

Dan started arguing with Devon when he brought up the topic of his potion usage. It was uncalled for according to Dan's logic.

The latter would only say a few words under his breath only for Dan to get angrier at him. Because he thought Devon was dissing him. Lensa didn't know or understand which side to pick. So she chose to remain as a bystander.

As the evening sun began to set, the trio began discussing their Nightshade duchy trip.

Chapter 653 Prelude to Chaos: Catching Up P1

Lionheart Duchy. Lionhearts Adventurers' Academy.

2nd Year Monthly Ranking Wars.

Recent spells cast at various locations seemed to have stirred up the battle ring set up for second-year students.

The rankers involved were panting. Some more than others.

"We... we accept defeat."

A group of LA students had fought against another group. The match between the two groups had barely started. Yet, the results came in just a few minutes. The spectators weren't surprised.

"Lionel's Lions are defeated by White Ravens."

The referee announced the result with an impartial tone. And some spectators in the audience became wild. And yet, those who had won barely smiled at each other before retiring from the stage.

This was going to be their last match together for a long while. They would be sent on on-field assignments on some days. That's because they all had broken into the Ace ranks.

"Damn. Isn't White Raven getting better with each match? Especially Ace Renita. How is she just a ranger with all that close combat experience?"

An audience member asked another viewer who was just as impressed with the White Ravens. They were first-year students after all. It was natural that they would get impressed by the performance standards set by second years. But there was something else that had attracted the audience. Something that was beginning to set White Raven members apart from the rest of the second-year students.

Renita Diabreo. Bel Longstone. Oriana Amaris AKA Anna. Ramy Richards. And Rebecca White AKA Becky. These were the participants in the match that had just concluded.

"Ace Renita is indeed a show-stealer, Sunny. But you know who else has improved tremendously?"

Sunny pondered a bit when he was asked that question. He looked at the departing figures of White Raven members and zeroed in on one particular figure.

"Ramy Richards? The guy just cracks me up every time he speaks. But hell, I couldn't have imagined that the sound element could get this destructive. I think he could have soloed his opponents if he had the right defensive artifacts to wear."

Nax chuckled a bit before responding.

"Hehe. Yeah. The guy's hilarious. And he is making full use of his affinity for the elements of sound. But that is expected from a class like his. He is a Knight class, Sunny. So it's not a surprise when he performs this well."

Nax also looked at the almost disappeared White Ravens and couldn't help looking at the spectacle-wearing guy with geek vibes who was seen laughing awkwardly with his team. It was as if he was getting shy because of the praise he was receiving from his team members.

"What I'm surprised by the most is the prowess of historian Ace Bel. It's a non-combat class, Sunny. How did he conjure those powerful apparitions is still beyond me. If I didn't know any better, I would have taken him for a ranker with a summoner class."

Sunny opened his eyes wide in surprise when he was reminded that Bel was a historian. White Raven had insisted that Bel fight the fight despite the norm that historians would stay away from their team's ranking battles as much as they could.

They were told that Bel should generally be included in the White Ravens' formation by someone in the team who had left the Lionhearts duchy for a while. He didn't want a historian on his team that could become a burden. So he had pushed Bel to have real combat experience. The fruits of that decision and Bel's efforts were now showing.

Becky and Ana had already become famous. Becky had stepped up her game by a notch ever since she had come to know that her team's de facto leader had left her in the dust. With an Adept ranked mage guiding her, her journey as a mage became streamlined.

Becky would complete missions in Besanc to pay for the tuition fee of an Adept-ranked mage. She had been busy with missions, daily practice, and tuition all this time. And now she was gearing up to go on on-field missions to broaden her horizons.

Renita Diabreo had gotten even more serious in her ranking journey than she ever was. She had focused more on her elemental attainment than breaking into the next rank. As a result, it took some time for her to break into the Ace rank.

As a result, she advanced directly to the liquid stage of the Ace rank when her breakthrough came. Students had started calling her a prodigy because of that. So for the most part, she would be alienated from comparisons. People wouldn't compare prodigies with any other rankers.

Oriana Amaris had seen steady progress. She had broken into the Ace rank before Renita. But now the tables had been turned after the latter's breakthrough.

The White Raven members who were absent from today's team formation had also advanced to Ace rank. Jake had already received his on-field assignment regarding potioning. The guy was mostly focusing on his potioning stuff while treating his position as a tank as his secondary profession.

The most outstanding member among the White Ravens was none other than a certain berserker who had surprised everyone with his performance a few months ago. With his exceptional battle skills, he had managed to surpass his teammates and almost all second-year rankers.

"Guys... the Boar Berserker.... He has arrived to meet White Ravens."

Out of breath, someone approached the waning audience. To get here, he had used his movement spell with all his vigor.

The first-year students who had decided to go about their affairs suddenly turned around and started heading in the same direction White Raven members had walked.

Boar Berserker.

This was the title given to Steve Austin by the first-year students after they saw his battle against Rudy and his team. And that was not a one-off. He again outperformed his opponents in another ranking war and bested dual berserkers by battling solo.

His beastly performance in these battles was the main reason behind his title. Another reason was the fact that he now had bonded with a boar-type demon beast.

Chapter 654 Prelude to Chaos: Catching Up P2

"You did a good job, Bel. I think you are redefining what historians can or can't do for our generation. Hehe."

Becky praised her team's historian. The group was going to have a meal together before setting off in their respective directions. Despite their wishes to hang out together, all of them were busy with their work. So compulsory ranking battles like these also became their respite to meet and greet each other.

"Hehe. I just followed Eren's advice and started conjuring apparitions every time I had some free time. Well, my roommate complained because he started hearing ghost noises.

In the end, she... she left me alone before cursing me. Saying that I would marry a ghost. I... I guess it was all worth it now."

Bel scratched the back of his head and adjusted his specs while he said that. Becky and Renita looked at each other and sighed after they heard Bel's roommate had left him. They knew that the guy had started developing a crush on her. And yet, he didn't stop his practice of conjuring even at her behest.

Some sacrifices were necessary to walk steadfastly on the rankers' path. Bel had his sacrifices. So did others who had tasted the fruits of success.

"Bel, my man. Don't wowwy about that hoe. I'll hook you up with this big boobs chick I know. She'd be the pewfect match fow you."

Ramy Richards chimed in after hearing Bel's story. Becky scrunched her nose and Renita coughed when they overheard the loudmouth speak some derogatory words. Becky was about to reprimand Ramy once again. And Bel was about to register his willingness to embark on such a blind date with Ramy's contact in a low voice. Just then, they heard a familiar voice.

"Yo. I heard you had a ranking battle today. So I came by to say hello."

Someone had used mana to make their voice travel long distances without getting loud. White Raven members turned at 3 O'clock to the source of the voice and saw a huge boar strolling in their direction. Someone was sleeping on that huge boar's back while drinking from the wine pot.

Boar Rush.

In the next moment, the boar that was away from them came within a few meters of distance from them and stopped walking. It blew its nose and let its master know that they had arrived at their intended spot.

Steve jumped from his demon beast and landed in front of his friends with a broad grin on his face. Ramy was the first one to reach, seeing his team's fabled berserker.

Steve's demon beast was a ferocious-looking boar who acted tamed when he was surrounded by his teammates. He had a mix of orange, white, and dark brown fur, as well as two huge tusks. His eyes were red and menacing. Add to the fact that he was 3 meters tall and some four meters long. Intimidating was the only word the first-year students could describe Steve's demon beast with.

Despite his wild looks, the demon beast had received a cute name from Steve. Wilbur. Wilbur received pats from Renita and the rest before going away a bit to eat fresh green grass that was growing not too far from the group's rendezvous point.

"Hahaha. Steve, let's fight. I want to see how much I impwoued. A knight versus a bewsewkew. I was looking fow you anyway.

A wowthy opponent. Ouw battle will be legen..."

Steve had creases on his forehead as he listened to Ramy's naked challenge. The creases increased each time he spoke words that had R in them.

"DARY.!"

Steve spoke the last part of legendary himself so that he wouldn't have to listen to Ramy's version. Then he sighed and let the matter go. He had heard Ramy speak even worse words with his speech impediment after all.

The rest of the White Raven greeted Steve with almost equal enthusiasm as Ramy. The guy had become an overnight sensation when he successfully bound himself to a demon beast.

Steve had gotten his hands on a beast contract spell in the first year. After the battle against the boar horde, he decided to sign a contract with one of the mana beasts.

He needed a suitable mana beast to sign the beast contract with. Therefore, he had decided to visit the same place where his team had fought the boar horde in the past.

When Steve reached the place, his luck peaked. He was able to bind with a demon beast who was trying to evolve into the Adept rank. Of course, he had to take some risks in achieving this feat. And he was heavily injured because of having to penetrate deep into the woods surrounded by mana beasts. The demon beast kept these animals there as perimeter detail so he could go through his evolution in silence.

But at the end of his ordeal, Steve had gotten his hands on the demon beast who was a whole rank ahead of him. Add to the fact that the demon beast was a deviant of its race, which enabled Steve to boost his body stats as his tamer.

The demon beast was an apt fit for a berserker like Steve. It also had its unique powers that allowed Steve to dominate the battlefield spectacularly even without getting his demon beast directly involved in fights.

It was not that Steve depended heavily on his status as a demon beast tamer. He had also worked hard to earn the title given to him. The guy had made an impression on everyone who saw him fight with his tireless efforts and his luck.

Several first-year students followed Steve's actions since he was thrust into the limelight. Somehow they had come to know that Steve liked eating burgers and fries before going off on missions.

Steve's followers had somehow convinced themselves that this "warrior diet" was one of the key ingredients behind his success. So they started eating mortal food too.

But then, most of them started gaining weight despite being rankers because of the sheer quantity of the food they ate. In summary, Steve's followers determined that the diet only suited Steve.

Steve had already fought his battles. He was scheduled for his on-field assignment too. Eren was very particular about White Raven members getting real-life battle experiences. Steve was sure that the guy would have forced them to take on-field assignments one way or the other if any of them showed disinterest.

The White Raven members decided to change their meeting location since the first-year students had started to gather around Steve. The life of a celebrity wasn't something Steve was comfortable with.

"So guys, when are you leaving?"

Steve asked his team members while having a burger and fries. The members had gotten used to legend Steve's not-so-legendary eating habits at this point.

"I'll be leaving in 3 days. Lufthansa Duchy."

As Renita ate her fill, she said. Her assignment was there. Others reported their respective timeframes and locations. None of them had been appointed at Nightshade Duchy because other duchies had been prioritized by the kingdom at this point.

"That scheming bastard left early. I don't know how many people he must have swindled by now in the Nightshade duchy."

Steve chuckled when he remembered Eren. Renita had a frown on her face when she heard Steve talk about Eren in a derogatory way. Steve saw her face and commented.

"It's fine, Renita. It's how we address each other. Err... Just don't tell Eren I called him that maybe."

Steve said and chuckled. Becky comforted Renita too by rubbing her arms and adding on.

"Don't worry. We will all be able to see each other by the end of the second year. "That" event is coming. We better be prepared.

Otherwise, the ones Eren will be scheming against will be us. Hehehe"

Renita chuckled when she heard Becky's remark. She knew that Becky had said this thing in passing. But there was some truth to it too. One had to be extremely diligent in their ranking progress to stay with a driven man like that "scheming bastard".

'I must catch up with him.'

Unbeknownst to them, the White Raven members present and absent at the scene had the same thought at this instant while doing whatever they could to progress in their respective ranking journeys. Progressing at their own pace.

Chapter 655 Prelude to Chaos: The Missing Ingredient

A well-lit potion lab somewhere in the Lionheart duchy.

Various arrays had a range of cauldrons from big to small placed right at their array eyes. There were test tubes, scrolls, and various ingredients scattered across many tables and platforms placed at multiple corners of the lab.

Sounds of potions bubbling. Smells of various kinds could make the inhaler wonder whether what they were inhaling was aromatic or not.

Suddenly, a cauldron exploded. The concoction it held within itself was going to spill everywhere. Just then, the array beneath the cauldron lit up and created an energy shield around the cauldron, preventing the potion from spreading everywhere.

The same thing happened with the second cauldron. Then the third. Then the fourth.

This was a regular day in this potion lab. It was run by a halfling after all. A halfling potioneer who was trying to combine an elf's way of making potions and human recipes.

So far, the results weren't promising.

"Fuck balls. I was this close this time."

Someone mumbled after they saw the state of their failed experiments. They were standing not too far away from the cauldron and array setup. The raised platform at 5m from the ground helped the observer look after even the distantly placed cauldron with ease.

The platform also served as the control center for the arrays. The control center could be used to spatially transfer the ingredients into any of the cauldrons present in the lab.

The observer had spent most of their time over the last few years developing this array-driven setup. They had worked tirelessly in this endeavor even at the cost of being undermined by their organization for all the effort they took.

One could imagine the level of frustration they must have felt at that time. This halfling smiled mirthlessly and took a long breath before controlling the smaller array-prints that served as the control of this big setup of 50 cauldrons.

"Marie, you shouldn't overwork yourself, you know."

After a long wait, someone finally opened the big door behind the control room and entered the potion lab, bringing fresh air in. The halfling paused what they were doing and chuckled a bit before turning back.

"Ma Cherie, I'm glad you finally decided to come here and meet me."

When Arizihana Agnoth saw Marie look at her with her mild smile, she also returned the gesture and smiled. She quickly closed the distance between them and embraced her.

"I missed you too. The city of Silvermoon has been put into disturbance once again. This time by a different cultist organization. So it took me some time."

Ari explained the reason behind her delay while being embraced by Marie. The latter ignored everything and kissed her lover on the lips. And released her from her hug only after planting a peck on her cheeks.

But then the duo got serious.

"Do... do they know?"

Marie asked Arizihana. Upon which the latter shook her head in denial before responding verbally.

"I don't think so. Otherwise, their attacks on the city would have been more daring. I think they are just probing. Not sure what they are looking for."

Marie nodded before sighing.

"Beast Bloods tried to eliminate you by giving you a spiked recipe since they knew you were let in on this by me. But they can't keep this thing a secret from everyone forever."

Sooner or later, someone will find out."

Ari nodded at her lover's statements and followed her towards the control room. Knowing that Marie was busy with her potioneering, she did not stop her from finishing what she had started before their time together.

"How are the experiments coming along?"

Ari asked worriedly. She didn't care if the experiments failed. She was just worried about the impact failure would have on Marie. The latter also understood what Ari meant and what she was asking about. So she clarified it for her.

"I was kind of expecting these rounds of failures anyway, Ari. It's not easy mixing two schools of potioning, you know. I can feel that I'm doing everything right. I can feel that my research is heading in the right direction.

It's just that I think I'm missing an ingredient. Something that would act as a pacifier between these two methods."

Marie spoke passionately with a glint of mad scientist madness in her eyes. She closed her eyes and adjusted herself before reassuring Ari.

"Don't worry Ma Cherie. I'm not downhearted by my failures. If anything I'm even more excited than I was the last time. Because I can feel that success is within my reach.

Hehehehe. I'll end elves' monopoly over elven ales if my experiment succeeds. I'll also show teacher Levine that her decision to cat me out just because of my halfling status was not the right one at all."

Marie sighed and was about to begin the last step of her experiments when she heard Ari speak of a different matter.

"How's Beast Bloods faring against the Illuminati?"

There was a cold war between two cultist groups, the Beast Bloods and the Illuminati. At this point, both sides had forgotten what they were fighting for. But the ones who were present at the scene that had started the whole thing couldn't help remembering that scene over and over again in their minds.

"Illuminati shouldn't be underestimated. Instead of directly combating the Beast Bloods, they have employed roundabout tactics. They are making the local forces under the control of various city lords take action against us.

Beast Bloods are especially getting targeted in various cities despite there being cultists from other organizations present as well. And the net is getting cast wide."

Ari just nodded at her but didn't say anything. She knew Mari would add more.

"That being said, Beast Bloods has a few tricks up its sleeves. The backer behind the organization is also trying to increase its presence in the kingdom of Edinburgh it seems.

The Ancients are not leaving any stones unturned in their quest to have a complete grip over the kingdom's scattered local forces. It is employing the same strategy as the Illuminati. But nobody knows what their true motives are.

The Ancients supporting Beast Bloods was not a revolutionary thing per se. However, they have increased their support for the Beast Bloods after the conflict with the Illuminati. So we'll have to see which sides come on top and stay on top in this whole matter."

He added some ingredients to the last 4 cauldrons that had not blown up yet. She knew that these cauldrons were going to burst too. She just wanted to know how much time they would take before that.

She needed to find out what she was missing in her potioneering.

Chapter 656 Prelude to Chaos: Eternal Hardships for Eternal Growth

"Are you planning to take part in the conflict between the two organizations?"

Ari asked worriedly as she watched Marie slaving away at her project. The latter stayed busy operating on arrays while answering her.

"Well... I don't want to. But there's nothing I can do if there's an order from above. I've already upset my superiors by not finding any clue regarding that wretched Ronny."

Marie commented and her expression changed into that of anger. She and Ari had both come to realize that they had been played by Ronny into following him. It was because of this pursuit that the Beast Bloods had come into conflict with the Illuminati.

The guy had just disappeared from the face of this world after he had done what he did. It was he who made two cult groups fight each other for something the Beast Bloods weren't even sure what it was.

Ari pursed her lips before commenting.

"Yeah. We shouldn't have followed him. He baited us into doing exactly what he wanted us to do. But that was in the past, Marie. What's done is done.

And I have an idea where we can get our new start."

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Just then the remaining four cauldrons were imploded and Marie stopped operating on the controlling arrays. Despite her failures, she had a mild smile on her face as she mumbled to herself.

'Hehehe. I'm more sure of it now than before. This procedure works. It would work if I can get just the right neutralizer.'

Marie dusted off her hands and shut off the potion lab's experiments. She used the kill switch array and all the runic inscriptions on the apparatus and arrays stopped glowing. The mana fluctuations in the lab almost disappeared.

Marie then used a wind-element array to clean the foul air within the lab before replying to Ari with a smile on her face.

"Are you talking about Minerva's Utopia, Ma Cheri?"

Ari nodded before replying.

"That's right, Marie. Minerva was a Sage potioner. Her Utopia would surely have a solution for your problems. Or point you in the right direction.

Let's visit and check it out. I've heard that the guild that's handling the entrance to the Utopia would make the Utopia open to every adventurer for a set fee on some days. There's no reason for you to not try your luck. If you need me, I'll be there for you."

Ari said while playing with the empty test tube that was kept on the array control platform. Marie looked at Ari playing with the test tube intently before responding.

"Hehe. I had been planning to do just that ever since I heard that it was a Utopia created especially for potion makers. I can tell Beast Bloods that Ronny's trail ends near the city of New Beginnings.

We'd have a valid reason to visit the place after that. We would also avoid all the problems. There would be no need for us to participate in the conflict between two cultist organizations fighting it out.

But what about your duties as the guardian of the city of Silvermoon?"

Marie walked near Ari as she said that. She took Ari's test tube and began to play with it in the same manner. Ari smirked at Marie before answering her.

"Meh! I'll just quit. Let those elf fogies sort out their business. I can just say that I'll have to set off on an exploration."

It was decided that Marie and Arizihana would visit the Nightshade duchy and Minerva's Utopia in the future. But at this point, they had more pertinent things to do.

The borders between Besanc and LA. 3 PM.

A spacious check-post-like facility that featured array controls of all the nearby security and surveillance arrays. A ranker was sipping Frostfoam ale inside the spacious room with various amenities.

Drinking ale even before the day is over. This woman was used to a laid-back lifestyle.

She was assigned as the middle person between the Amazons and LA. She was also in charge of this check post.

This D-Rank woman had a very attractive and cute face. She had a curvaceous figure that never ceased to garner attention.

Her leisure hours were spent imbuing her mana sense into a runic stele to improve her elemental attainment while drinking Frostfoam. Usual stuff. Usual day.

Knock. Knock.

A knock was heard on the door and she let the visitor in with a loud "come in."

A young woman entered the room. She had dark brown hair and a cute face. She was in her complete ranger attire. Something she found comfy in.

"Adept Marla, there's an encrypted message that has come for you."

Almera gave Marla an array disk that she had collected from one of LA's facilities. It was an encrypted message intended for Marla.

Marla raised her eyebrows before taking the array disk from her and putting it in front of her on her desk. She scanned it with her mana sense to see who had sent it.

Almera was about to leave the room. But Marla stopped her.

"Almera, you might want to hear this."

Marla said and imbued the array disk with her mana. In the next moment, the array disk projected a miniature, spectral body of a young man with black hair and green eyes.

Marla knew this person. He had served as her apprentice for a while. And now he had sent her this message.

"Greetings, Adept Marla. I don't know where I'll be when this message reaches you. But I know where my guild would be when it does. Hehe.

You must have heard about the White Raven guild by now, I'm sure. Remember the opportunity I talked to you about at the time of my departure? I'm glad to announce that the time has come.

White Raven is my guild. And I would appreciate it if you could join my guild. Please consider this offer from your humble apprentice."

The mini Eren smiled and waved goodbye before his spectral image stopped floating above the array disk.

Almera was a bit surprised when she saw it was Eren who had sent Marla this message. She had heard about the commotion that had been caused by Minerva's utopia. She hadn't dug deep enough to discover Eren was the founder of the guild. The almost nameless guild master of the White Raven guild was just seen as something that was put in place by either House Derringer or House Montmorency.

Almera was about to ask Marla for something when the spectral message was played once again.

"Oh! By the way, if Adept Almera is listening, please allow me to extend the same invitation to you as well. I would like nothing more than to have a ranger like you onboard in my guild.

Right now, I'm not much. My guild has nothing to show for it.

I also know that I and my guild have been undermined in all of this. And I'm fine with it."

The spectral Eren had a smile on his face. The kind of smile both ladies had seen on his face before he would come up with his schemes. But this smile had another facet to it. As if he was speaking something extremely personal to them.

"I won't promise you anything right now because that would only come off as a sales pitch. Just know this. My guild and I won't be undervalued forever.

What's so fun about staying in a comfortable place all the time? A ranker's path demands eternal hardships for eternal growth.

That's it. Looking forward to seeing you both in the Nightshade duchy.

And yeah. White Raven would have plenty of Frostfoam in stock, Adept Marla. Just letting you know. Hehe."

Marla started laughing when she heard the scheming fellow's last words in the message. With an excited-for-adventure voice, she asked Almera.

"Almera, what do you think?"

The ranger had so many questions in her mind. But in the end, she just dropped them all for the time being and smiled before responding.

"I'll follow you in your decisions, as always."

Chapter 657 Prelude to Chaos: Paladin of Pain P1

Kukenan Plateau.

A newly constructed facility that was placed further away from the White Raven guild building. It was underground and didn't have any conventional entrances or exits.

There were various spatial arrays placed at one corner of this large facility that served as the entrances or exits. This large hall held nothing but what seemed to be raw ingredients for alchemy and potioneing.

This hall was also used as a facility for monster taming. Monsters that were captured from Minerva's Utopia by Levine and other B-Rankers who were onboard with White Raven City's construction plan.

Load. Aim. Shoot.

A ranger-class ranker shot a syringe of potion on a plant-type monster using a runic blowgun. The plant-type monster was trapped in an array as if it had been waiting to get shot at.

The plant-type monster was known as Mega Mandrake. It was a 14 feet tall monster made of roots when it was in its Monster Soldier rank. These monsters wouldn't have fixed shapes. So their evolution would be different from each other.

The Mega Mandrake trapped inside the array was of Monster Lord rank. It had a humanoid body from its waist up. But it seemed like his torso was stuck inside a gigantic blue flower. The various thick roots below the flower served as the monster's legs.

"Aaargh!

Seref likes to be freeeeeeee. Why bother Seref? Leave... Me... free."

Seref the Mega Mandrake spoke his words in human language with some difficulty. It was obvious that he didn't like getting trapped inside an array. He was personally captured by Levine and was brought here to be tamed.

But in the next moment, the Monster Lord stopped speaking and his eyes got diluted. The syringe had injected a very potent concoction that served as a way to control the monster.

The one who had shot the syringe at the monster was also special. His name was Will Evan. And he was not a normal human.

Will belonged to a race of humans known as mini giants. Will himself was 12 feet tall; an average stature for the mini giant race. He belonged to Levine's faction and was brought here to aid in the city's construction matters.

Will's father was a Montmorency clan member. Therefore, he was considered a descendant of the House Montmorency. This 12 feet mini giant was an Adept ranked ranger who was tasked with handling these plant-type monsters.

Will had shoulder-length hair that cascaded down his long face. He had black eyes and a square-cut face. He didn't have any stubble showing. Plus, he had a cleft chin that gave him distinct looks.

Will was wearing a typical adventurer outfit with an overcoat made of bear-type mana beast. He also had a necklace that featured a monster nail as its pendant. He also had a long knife attached to his belt.

"Adept Will, is it done?"

While looking closely at Seref, Renar, who was standing behind Will, asked the ranger. They said that Mega Mandrakes were not aggressive monsters. But Renar didn't like to take chances.

"Um... in about a minute."

Will said, after gauging the potion's effects by wrapping the monster up with his mana sense. Only when he confirmed that the potion had worked did he respond to Renar.

"Yeah, it's done. Take this array disk. Imbue it with your mana sense while giving orders to Seref. He should listen to you just fine. The effects of the potion will last for three days. You would have plenty of time to complete your tasks."

Will replied and gave Renar the array disk. The eye of the array disk contained the same green potion that was in the syringe. The array disk served as the way to give the tamed-by-potion monster commands.

Renar imbued his mana sense into the array disk and felt a connection getting established with Seref. He smiled before addressing Seref.

"Don't worry, Veggie Man. You don't have to do much. Help us make this barren land not seem barren and I'll treat you to plenty of water. Haha."

Renar chuckled before nodding at Will. The latter nodded back before dispelling the array trap, letting the tamed monster free.

"Call... call me Seraf."

While still feeling delirious due to the potion's effects, Seraf said. Renar pursed his lips before responding.

"Aaah! I'm sorry. You are a Monster Lord. I haven't dealt with monsters of your caliber. So I get shocked whenever you guys start talking.

Seraf. I'll remember that. Let's go outside. I'm sure we can manage to find common ground by the end of the third day."

Renar said as he led the Mega Mandrake towards the array serving as the exit.

Renar was tasked with creating habitable land nearby the under-construction city that would soon be named White Raven city. And so far, his project was progressing nicely thanks to these plant-type monsters.

Forests and vegetation were the foundation of ecosystems. Every successful city needs this ecosystem to keep prospering.

The Mega Mandrake only had one spell in their arsenal which couldn't technically be called something offensive. It was an earth-element spell that created dense vegetation around it. It was almost like permanent summoning magic that was restricted to only trees and plants.

The vegetation created by the Mana Mandrake was ideal for the soil on which it had cast its spell. The plant-type monster was like a forest-making factory, enabling the rankers controlling it to raise dense forests out of nowhere.

Slowly but surely, the lands surrounding the upcoming White Raven city were changing. Renar was doing his darnedest to control these monsters and employ them the right way.

But too quick a prosperity almost always brought troubles with it.

This time, it was no different.

Rankers from House Derringer and House Montmorency heavily protected the soon-to-be-built city. But that didn't mean the guild land would be completely free of intruders.

"Such a frightening pace and progress. It's almost like somebody predicted the whole thing."

The lady ranker, who stood at the edge of the mountain platform surrounded by newly created dense vegetation, commented after seeing the progress of the city for herself. She couldn't see the city construction itself because she hadn't penetrated deep into the White Raven lands.

However, she didn't have to. The area she was surrounded by spoke volumes about the city's construction progress.

Chapter 658 Prelude to Chaos: Paladin of Pain P2

"Such a frightening pace and progress. It's almost like somebody predicted the whole thing before taking necessary steps to achieve this."

Reva Rain mumbled after seeing the progress of the White Raven guild. She had been sent here from her guild to see how the White Raven was faring. And she had to say that the newly formed guild was doing better than she had expected.

Reva had a medium stature and adequate feminine features. She had brown red hair and a light scar over her right eyebrow. Her nose was kind of big, making her look not-so-ladylike. She also had larger-than-average lips. Her gray eyes shined with subtle cunning as she scanned the whole area for a unique spectacle-looking artifact.

Reva was wearing a black-gray vest on a loose-fitting brown full-body suit. Her dressing sense was odd. But it never hampered her movements and her work.

"Boss Reva, should we delve deep?"

A dusty blonde girl in an assassin outfit asked. Her leather bodysuit displayed her prominent bust and shapely posterior. She always carried a crossbow on her back, which she didn't like to keep in her storage.

This assassin had weird eyes. It looked like she had no sclera. Her blue iris had taken its place in both her eyes.

"This should be enough, Shalen. We are only here to look. The Escalon guild doesn't make rash decisions. We plan things and act when the time is ripe.

And right now, it's not the time."

Reva said in a cold and callus voice devoid of emotion. Shalen Craft nodded at her superior's decision before adding.

"Should I tell the members of the Escalon guild not to follow the White Ravens?"

Reva looked at the void and pondered a bit before replying.

"Just mess with them a bit. We want to see House Montmorency and House Derringer's reactions. Are you done with your recon from your end?"

Reva asked, removing her spectacles and storing them in her storage space. It seemed that the job was done from her side. Now she only needed to report the findings.

"I am. But I often get confused when you say "mess with them a bit". Because your idea of "a bit" is different than all of us."

Shalen commented about her superior's bad habits and waited for her to answer. Reva chuckled before responding.

"Hmm. Let's see. We will adopt a softer approach this time. Chop off one of their members' arms. This should be just the right level of action to test the waters."

Shalen nodded after hearing a clear-cut order from her superior. Although her expressions didn't say much, the blonde girl was satisfied that the orders weren't ambiguous like last time.

"Alright. Let's go. We don't have time to dilly dally."

Reva said before disappearing from her spot. Shalen followed her lead soon after. It was only after they were gone that a member of the Derringer clan had come to check the area.

The ranker couldn't have recognized Reva even if they had met. But there was someone else in the White Raven who would have recognized Reva Rain immediately.

Reva Rain was the one who had taught Eren the torture methods when he was working for the Escalon guild in the previous timeline. She wasn't called Paladin of Pain for no reason.

But maybe "taught" was not the right word to describe their relationship. She had forced Eren to acquire exceptional torture methods while numbing his feelings for human pain.

"Sis Agatha, I have some news."

Viper entered Agatha's office before commenting. The latter was busy analyzing something on her spectral screen when she heard Viper's words. She raised her hand and gestured for the guy to sit in front of her while she finished reading what she was reading.

"Viper, do you know how many adventurers have registered for our first exploration program into Minerva's Utopia?"

Agatha said with bright eyes and a beaming smile on her face. Viper shrugged his shoulders before replying.

"10,000 rankers maybe."

Agatha chuckled before correcting him.

"Try about 95,000 rankers. Hehehe. The number is so big that we'd have to divide the first exploration program into various batches and allot them an exact time slot.

We received 100 Extols each from each of them. Do you know how much revenue we would have generated?"

Viper opened his eyes wide in surprise when we did the quick math of adding two zeros to the already exaggerated number. He was about to say something to Agatha and had raised his hands to do so.

But then his expression changed to one of confusion. He retracted his hands and tapped his right hand's index finger on his pursed lips before raising a doubt.

"What do you mean by "would have"? Those scoundrels didn't pay us?"

Agatha sighed before shaking her head. Her voice was helpless as she corrected him.

"They did. The registration wouldn't have gone through otherwise. But House Derringer and House Montmorency would take most of the cut according to our agreement.

We'd be left with only 67,000 Extols after their cut."

Viper took a long breath and whistled as he released that air just as quickly. He then looked at Agatha with incredulous expressions before commenting.

"Damn. You are indeed in the big leagues, Sis. You are attaching the word "only" to 67,000 Extols, you know."

Agatha smiled mirthlessly at his statement before explaining it to him.

"Well, our boss has a loan of 50,000 Extols on his head. Even though he says he'll manage it, I'd like to clear his account in his absence."

Agatha said helplessly before asking another question.

"By the way, Viper, what news were you talking about?"

Viper clicked his tongue after he realized that he had forgotten to talk about it. He coughed before telling Agatha what he had come here to tell.

"Sis, the White Ravens are ready to take on the very first big mission into Monster Canyon. They had asked me to tell you. They'll be leaving together in the afternoon."

Agatha stopped what she was doing after she heard that. As a manager, she thought she needed to meet and greet the rankers that were embarking on this mission.

Agatha, Viper, and all the other members of White Raven knew the dangers that existed in Monster Canyon. They had also anticipated probe and retaliation from other guilds.

And yet, they couldn't help but be excited to see how their guild's very first team performs in Monster Canyon.

Chapter 659 Prelude to Chaos: Echidna

Oni Dungeon.

Right in the middle of the dungeon's vast subspace, there was a huge pyramid-like construction. It had various floors and four sides. Each of the sides featured aptly distanced steps that could be used to climb the pyramid to its top-most floor.

This top floor only featured a giant open hall. It was called sacred telesterion by all the monsters that had occupied this subspace.

The telesterion was about 500 meters long and 100 meters wide. It also had a sturdy ceiling that was supported by the equidistant giant pillars, which boasted glowing runic details.

There was a raised platform at the far end of the telesterion. It seemed to serve as a throne platform because it had a throne at the end of its steps.

There was a humanoid monster sitting on the throne atop this telesterion. He was looking at his audience with mild disinterest in his eyes.

This humanoid monster was different from his audience. There were not many like him present in this subspace. He and his daughter were the only two monsters of their races.

This monster had cruel facial expressions even when it didn't look like he was angry or displeased with someone. He had white hair, red skin, and golden eyes. Two prominent horns were jutting out of his forehead.

He didn't seem all that muscular. But nobody would question his strength because he was what humans used to call the Monster King. Someone who could compete with a B-Rank entity.

This was a fully grown Oni. A legendary monster that was rarely found in the Badlands. If Edinburgh knew about such a monster's existence so close to their borders, they would do everything in their power to hunt him down.

He was what could be called monster royalty. A dark crown was placed over his head to emphasize his status. But it was not just an eye-catching accessory. This was a genuine otherworldly artifact.

"How are the preparations for the festival?"

The Oni King asked his audience in a deep and authoritative voice that resonated through the telesterion simply because of the monster's control over his mana. This monster was effortlessly strong. Stronger than most B-Rank entities put together. Closer to becoming the Monster Emperor.

This monster's audience was made of various races of monsters. Each of these monsters was a tribe leader of their respective tribe located inside the subspace.

Orcs, ogres, goblins, gnolls, cyclops, and other kinds of monsters that adventurers seldom come across. There were multiple tribes in each of the races. So there were multiple tribe leaders, belonging to the same race.

The tribe leaders belonging to the same race were positioned together. And all of the tribe leaders were united in the fact that they were all kneeling in front of their king.

"My king, the preparations for the Oni festival are complete. The emissaries you had sent outside have all completed the task assigned to them."

The one who replied to his kind was an Ogre who seemed to be in charge of all the tribe leaders of all the races. He was kneeling closer to the throne platform than the rest.

This Ogre was named Ror. He was a muscular monster in human-like form. His prominent muscle details were intimidating to look at. He also had cruel expressions on his face. But somehow they managed to look pretty in the presence of an Oni.

Ror paused for a while before adding more.

"My king, all the emissaries have completed their tasks. But there's one thing I have to report to you among one of them. We have lost contact with Kilaba. Although he has sent his offerings for the Oni festival, I feel we should check up on him to know more."

Ror replied in the same language that Oni had used. The Oni language was treated as the primal language by all the monster races. So the monsters who had received their clarity could communicate with each other using royal language as the common tongue among all of them.

The Oni's King's golden eyes shined with curiosity as he listened to Ror's report. He adjusted his seating position over his throne and prodded his head over his folded arm's palm before finally responding.

"Let it be. Kilaba had been given a divine blessing before he was sent out at the last Oni festival. If he couldn't protect himself even with something of that caliber working for him, I don't see any point in heading out to check things out for him."

The monster King said and smiled before looking at his audience. His long red horns reflected the moonlight off their smooth surface as he made a popping sound out of his neck. Keeping his right-hand palm behind his neck, he spun his neck a few more times as if bored before making a domineering comment.

"The Oni festival is a sacred event for all of the children of Echidna who live outside it. The land of the faithless is no place for us. It's not our home. But this festival enables us to feel like we never left Echidna, if only for a short time."

The Oni King stood from his seat. His 12-foot stature towered over the tribe leaders. He started walking in front of him and walked down the steps with his hand behind his back.

The tribe leaders, who were already quiet and motionless on their knees, held their breaths as their king started walking through the path that divided the audience into two groups.

The Oni King was walking on the beast skin that was placed in the middle of the telesterion, serving as the regal carpet. He was looking in front of him into the void as he spoke further.

"Someday, we will have to conquer this continent to spread our faith. And we can't do that if we stay weak and docile.

Our clarity is a precious gift, which is given to us for a reason. We are sent here to open the closed doors from inside.

This sealed continent will one day be open to the gods' presence. And that will be the greatest moment for all of the children of the Echidna irrespective of where they are."

Chapter 660 Prelude to Chaos: Echidna's Authority

The Oni King Harjahir said and stopped in his tracks before looking around him. He then focused on a particular Orc leader whose mana signature fluctuated after he had completed his speech.

Harjahir walked to the orc leader and narrowed his eyes at him before asking.

"Borul, you got something to say?"

The Orc Leader who had been asked the question gulped before answering his king.

"No my king. Your speech has stirred my emotions. Forgive me for losing control."

Borul replied, keeping his head down. The other Orc leaders who were beside him also got nervous because of their king's focus on them.

Harjahir looked carefully at Borul before nodding.

"Very well." He said casually and walked away, enabling the Orc leaders to breathe a sigh of relief including Borul.

Harjahir knew that there would be some resistance to the Oni festival among monsters who had received their clarity a bit too much.

This is because the Oni festival demanded not only the sacrifices of the Anfang's real residents but also the sacrifices of monsters born here. In fact, the festival was nothing more than a sacrifice event for their god, where the defeated were killed. In exchange, the vestige of god that had been summoned would bless a few children of Echidna.

The sacrifice also served another purpose. When enough sacrifice energy was accumulated, it would open a warp gate between the two continents—two different worlds. Children of Echidna, as Harjahir liked to call them, could use this warp gate to get into the continent of Anfang.

The warp gate was unstable. And it only allowed one-way entry. That meant the monsters from the continent of Echidna who had gotten inside the sealed world known as the Anfang couldn't get back to where they came from. At least not most monsters.

Only the Oni kind could use the warp gates two ways. Meaning only the Oni race had the power to go back to the Echidna after visiting Anfang. Of course, the Oni's ability to travel to and fro had its restrictions. Yet, it was what made Oni special in more ways than one in front of a regular monster audience.

The Oni festival was just a convenient name for an event that made these two unthinkable things possible. It did this at the cost of sacrifices by the monsters and native denizens of Anfang alike.

Some monsters like Borul were already against the idea of sacrificing their kind just to please a higher existence who would then offer them peanuts in the form of a blessing. One had to say that monsters who were born in Anfang were starting to get affected by the land's laws. They had started seeing things from a different perspective that wasn't influenced by faith.

Harjahir was no pushover though. He also didn't get angry that the monsters like Borul would play catch and release with what could be considered mutiny. Every king had resistance in his royal court. It doesn't mean he should squash the resistance with brute force. It would only make matters more complicated and allow for even more rebellion.

Harjahir knew how to keep this resistance in check. He just needed to increase the pressure on the resistance group and offer more rewards for those tribes and monsters who were committed to the cause.

Harjahir walked up to his throne and climbed the stairs halfway before turning to his audience once again.

"If the blessed children of Echidna die outside this poor excuse of an abode of ours, it doesn't matter. Basically, it means they were only worth that much.

If the denizens of Anfang kill one Kilaba, we will create even more powerful, stronger warriors than him. Don't run away from the festival. Embrace it. And we would see that some of you become strong enough to step outside this space and conquer the world that's outside."

Harjahaar then imbued his mana into the crown he was wearing, empowering it. In the next moment, all the monsters who were present inside the hall felt like their hearts would burst from within. This was because of the strong vibes they received from the crown.

When the crown cast its powers on the tribe leaders, their minds were overwhelmed by them. They had thought that they were already fearful enough. But the use of the crown made all the tribe leaders realize that there was always some space for more fear.

This crown was the same artifact that was said to be used by Tumko in the previous timeline. The artifact that had attracted hordes of adventurers into the Oni dungeon at that time.

Echidna's Authority!

The children of Echidna inside the subspace were familiar with this crown artifact. The artifact was responsible for so many monsters in the subspace receiving clarity despite not undergoing much evolution.

The artifact was not fabricated by Tumko Darata's team member who was presented as the whistleblower. It really held the power to control the monsters. He had just lied that it was in Tumko's control.

In the previous timeline, when Tumko had entered the Oni dungeon, he had started robbing the monster tribes of their resources by slaughtering them using their army-grade artifacts. But they couldn't do much when Harjahaar learned about the incident and sent his force to capture Tumko.

Harjahaar wanted more human sacrifices so he could make his loyal confidants receive more blessings from their god. So instead of killing Tumko the right way, he gave him a choice. All he had to do was to attract the denizens of Anfang into the Oni dungeon without raising suspicion.

In exchange, he would get to live and be offered a blessing from their god. He also held a chance to travel to Echidna if he stayed long enough for Harjahaar to employ some unconventional methods to pull it off. It depended on sacrifices and the quality of sacrifices after all.

Harjahaar knew that his plan to use Tumko had an expiration date. And that sooner or later, the in-flow of low-ranked denizens of Anfang would stop. But he was fine with it and all the other risks that came with the plan. Because by that time, he would have achieved his goal on the continent of Anfang.

Harjahaar considered the land of the faithless to be a backwater place. He wanted to finish his assignment here and go back to Echidna as soon as he could. Hence the haste.

The other choice for Tumko was to get constantly tortured by the monsters until his will broke. Harjahaar wasn't merciful enough to grant the intruders a quick and painless death.

Things became clear for Tumko once he understood what choices he had. He and his team agreed to help. Who would choose to get tortured when they could get more powerful and travel to a different world and see its riches?

Tumko immediately came up with a plan to attract adventurers of all kinds into the Oni dungeon. He also wanted to take revenge on people who had wronged him while at it. Kill two birds with one stone.

Harjahir approved of Tumko's plans when he pitched them to him. He first made sure that Tumko and his teammates were loyal to the cause by placing curse marks on them. Then he offered them a monster army they could control so they could attack the kingdom of Edinburgh.

Things progressed as Tumko and Harjahir had planned in Eren's previous timeline. At that time, Tumko and his team had managed to travel outside Anfang.

What happened to them afterward was lost in the sands of time that didn't exist anymore.