

Vile 661

Chapter 661: Prelude to Chaos: Echidna's Authority

The Oni King Harjahar 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.

Harjahar 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.

Harjahar 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.

Harjahar 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 Harjahar 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.

Harjaha 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.

Harjaha 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.

Harjaha 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."

Harjaha 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 Harjaha learned about the incident and sent his force to capture Tumko.

Harjaha 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 Harjahir to employ some unconventional methods to pull it off. It depended on sacrifices and the quality of sacrifices after all.

Harjahir 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.

Harjahir 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. Harjahir 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.

Chapter 662: Prelude to Chaos: Kirin

Echidna's Authority.

Harjahir canceled the effects of the monster-controlling artifact after its brief use. Clearly, his intent was only to use it as a deterrent here.

"We need to stay together on one page for Echidna's prosperity. The Oni festival would proceed as per our customs with no changes whatsoever."

Harjahir said in a deep voice. However, he also knew that the iron fist was only so effective. It had its limits. Plus, the sacrifices only worked best when there were genuine feelings attached to them. Harjahir needed the monsters to take part in the process willingly.

Therefore, only deterrence won't be effective. To make the tribe leaders and their tribes submissive to his authority and cause, he had to adapt a carrot-and-stick strategy.

Therefore, he looked around before calling someone who seemed to be absent from the crowd.

"Kirin!

My child. Show yourself."

Harjahir said to nobody in particular. In the next moment, however, a young Oni appeared in front of him and bowed her head.

This was Harjahir's daughter, Kirin. She had two horns attached to her forehead just like her father, attesting to her Oni lineage. But the similarities kind of ended there.

Kirin looked more like a human than a monster. She had clear rosy skin with a distinct red tinge. She had a gorgeous face and a cute nose. Her eyes were golden just like her father's. But they didn't have any cruelty hidden in them.

Kirin had red-as-cherry lips that looked extremely delicate. Her ears were elf-like but not quite as stretched. She had waist-length golden hair that complemented her eyes. She had tied it in a ponytail while leaving the long golden bangs to fall on her forehead, drawing attention to her beautiful eyes even more.

The young Oni had a bodacious figure that was unexpected considering her cute face. She had ample jugs to give Sharon a run for her money. Her slim waist and shapely posterior were enough to make other female monsters have an inferiority complex.

She was tall, measuring more than six feet. But compared to her father, she could be considered young and small.

Kirin was wearing a warrior outfit meant for Oni women. As such, she revealed most of her feminine curves and assets. And yet, nobody dared to stare at her. Everyone liked keeping their heads attached to their necks of course.

Kirin was an oddball in a hall full of monsters. She was exceptionally beautiful. She didn't look like a monster even though she was sporting horns that were the sign of monster royalty. And her glowing green earrings would tell onlookers that she knew how to look elegant and cared for her looks, unlike most monster women.

Kirin was a Monster Overlord. She had just stepped into this evolutionary stage. And yet she could take care of most C-Rank entities with ease, thanks to her high elemental attainment.

Kirin had a hybrid element affinity-- spatial mist. As such, she was proficient with space, fire, and water elemental spells. Her elemental attainment was so strong that ever since she had stepped into the Monster Overlord stage, her body was always surrounded by mist. A mist that interacted differently with the spatial fabric.

With her elemental affinity, she could hide in plain sight by twisting the light and oncoming senses sent in her direction. The mist was part of her behavior. She would remain hidden most of the time until called upon.

Her elemental attainment had been ingrained into her behavior. Or to be precise, her playful yet pure behavior had shaped her elemental attainment in such a way.

Even now, Kirin's feet weren't touching the ground when she stood and bowed in front of her father. She was standing on a cloud-like white mist that would solidify only for her. As if the mist that surrounded her belonged to a different spatial fabric.

"Lord Father."

Kirin replied to Harjaha's summons with simple words while keeping her head down. Harjaha smiled before announcing to the crowd.

"You all must know from your clarity that Oni lineage can be gained with a ritual only known to Echidna's Oni royalty. Your existence as the children of Echidna will get altered when you follow through with that ritual."

Harjaha flashed an evil smile and looked at the young monsters before adding up.

"During the Oni festival, whoever pleases our god the most will have a chance to experience the Royal Rebirth. I'll offer my daughter's hand to the person if and when the festival's champion successfully passes through the process."

Kirin was shocked after hearing that her father was planning to wed her to someone from the continent of Anfang. He often referred to the original denizens of the Anfang as well as monsters born here as lowlives.

No matter if the champion turns into an Oni royalty or not, Kirin didn't think her father's point of view would change about the champion. He'd still see him as someone that was born a lowlife. His father's behavior had also shown Kirin that she wasn't as precious to him as she had thought herself to be.

'Is it because I'm not a pure-blooded Oni? Because I was born here?'

Kirin thought of this and pursed her lips in desolation. She was conceived when her father had his way with an elf captive born here, who died after giving her birth. She was born here and yet received clarity that belonged to the children of Echidna.

A progeny between a monster and an elf shouldn't have existed. Therefore, Kirin's birth was an anomaly that might not repeat itself. Her existence was special. Her birth had doomed her to be seen as false Oni royalty in her father's eyes.

Harjaha still treated Kirin as her daughter and gave her every support he could. He awakened her clarity way early when she was small and taught her all the customs of Oni royalty as well as the culture of Echidna. But there was a lack of fatherly love attached to that teaching.

Still, since Harjaha had not completely abandoned her, Kirin had respect for his father. She still believed in Oni royalty customs and as such didn't raise any objections upon hearing her father's sudden decision.

"That's not all. Since the champion would become an Oni royalty, they would be able to travel back to Echidna when the warp gates are opened.

A new world is waiting for those who are willing to put their lives on the line with all their heart and emotions poured into the festival. Therefore, dare to take risks. Don't hesitate to shed blood whether it's yours or someone else's.

The festivals depict the greatness of a culture. Let me see the greatness of Echidna with my own eyes while we are all still here."

Harjahir sat down on his seat and spoke. He then allowed the tribe leaders to make a final decision regarding the Oni festival under his presence. Kirin disappeared from her place after she realized that her role was over. She got back to dueling with her retainers afterward.

Each tribe leader had an agenda. Some tribe leaders were like Borul while others supported the Oni festival wholeheartedly. Borul had hidden plans of his own to make this subspace completely free of Harjahir's control.

However, even he or anybody couldn't have known that the biggest spoiler of the Oni event was about to enter the dungeon.

Chapter 663: Prelude to Chaos: See You When I See You

'Eren... Erni... is that you? Is that you? Is that really you?'

Reen was dreaming. But this dream was special. She was in her usual Elana form while Eren was in his black-haired form. They were both looking at each other while being surrounded by pitch black darkness hidden in the veil of white smoke that kept moving from nowhere to nowhere.

Smoke had also seemed to divide them, preventing them from closing the distance between them. As soon as Eren and Reen moved toward each other the smoke would cover their vision only for them to find themselves away from each other once again.

'Reen? Is this a dream? I never had nightmares after Eliza's soul sense residue vanished on me. This is strange.'

Eren thought to himself. But somehow the Reen in his dreams could understand his thoughts. She seemed to be angry at Eren's statement.

'What do you mean, you selfish master? Am I part of your nightmares?'

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Reen's speech. She had indeed opened her mouth to speak. But the conversation happened telepathically.

'Of course. You gave me nightmares.'

Eren replied seriously, which made Reen upset. She had seen his condition when he was still in Purgatory. She couldn't deny that her existence had a major role to play in it.

But before he could get any more downcast, Eren chuckled before replying.

'You gave me nightmares, Reen. but not in the way you are thinking. I have already said. I don't regret forming a bond with you. No matter what happened.

But separation from you was bound to affect me somehow. The nightmares were only a part of the symptoms.'

Eren said while looking around him. He was trying to figure out what this place was while having a talk with the first existence he had truly confided in after his new lease on life. His true confidante. An inseparable partner.

Reen's conflicting expression eased before breaking into a smile when she heard Eren's words. She must have asked this question many times by now. But each time he would tease her before opening up to her. She liked the routine they shared even after such a long time of separation.

Eren opened his eyes wide when he understood what this place was. He also understood why he could access this place.

'This... this is the soul space Alephee had talked about. My soul sense! Its awakening has allowed me to pull your consciousness here. I see. So access to this space is required to cast soul spells.'

Eren then remembered the last activity he did before coming to this space. He was taking a nap in his Orc tribe before starting his journey to the Oni dungeon. The tribe was in the process of moving to a new home.

Reen didn't understand what Eren was saying. But now that she had realized that this was real Eren and not some dream, she wanted to ask him something.

'Eren... how are you? Are Eliza's tasks bothering you?'

Eren was pulled from his chain of thoughts when he heard Reen's statement. He knew that he wasn't in complete control of his mind while he was in this space. It was making him forget things. He needed to concentrate hard to remember things.

'Hm? Don't worry about me, you silly slime. I'm fine. I'm more worried about you. Tell me all that the old hag is doing to you.'

Reen was pleased when she heard about Eren's well-being. The connection she shared with him was very faint and often distorted. Therefore, they both couldn't keep tabs on each other. But now that they were together in this isolated space, she could understand and feel him just like she used to.

'I... I'm fine as well, Eren. Sage Eliza is very patient with me. For her research, she takes a portion of my body, just enough so that it won't hurt me and can regenerate quickly. But recently, her experiments have been getting a bit serious.'

Reen said before clenching her fist and speaking authoritatively for a change.

'Erni, you have to find a way to get us both out of this mess. And fast. I... I haven't seen anything yet. I want to be with you.'

We should just get the hell out of Edinburgh when we meet. I know you'd do everything right. I just want you to do it faster. Ugh. I... I'm so frustrated these days.

I have already seen everything that is allowed for me to see here. I'm so bored of having the same type of mana beasts served raw to me as a meal just because I'm slime.

I mean don't mind that most of the time. But I'd like a proper dish once in a while, you know. And then there's...'

Eren's smile grew wider when he saw Reen finally being honest about her feelings of frustration. He didn't disturb her though, allowing her to vent to her heart's content. He spoke only when she was finished.

"Haha. Don't worry, Reen. When the time comes, we won't stop after leaving Edinburgh.

That old hag can't eavesdrop here. So this should be an ideal place for us to stay in contact. However, I'm not sure we can have a chat like this anytime soon until I get firm control over my soul space. So listen to what I have to say here regarding my plan."

Eren spoke up with a serious expression. Reen nodded at him and listened to his plans and what he was up to with keen interest. She was also made aware of her role in his plans.

Eren and Reen talked for hours on end like that. Having finished their serious discussion, they resumed their casual conversation. They both knew this connection was special. Eren's awakened soul sense and the unique bond they shared had enabled them to blur the spatial boundaries for them to have this talk.

When the smoke started getting denser and the visibility started getting a lot hazier than it already was, Eren and Reen knew their time was up. Reen had a tinge of wetness in her eyes as she saw Eren waving at her.

His smile assured her that he was still as strong and determined as before. As such, she left everything to him and trusted him before disappearing from the soul space. Eren's smiling expressions turned into that of wrath post-Reen's disappearance when he realized how he was forced to stay away from Reen.

As the white fog surrounded his body, he clenched his fist. The next thing he knew, he was sleeping in his spacious bed in the later afternoon. His treasures had already started working in the tribe and allowed him to sleep some more.

Eren looked outside the window and stared at the clear blue sky. He inhaled the air of the wild and drew energy from its freshness.

'Hm. That was a good talk. But meeting her in person would be much better.

Chop chop. Time to move.'

Eren said to himself and got up. He jumped from the first floor's window and headed to a natural waterfall he could use to freshen up. The tribe was busy packing their gear and using space artifacts for ease of travel. It was as if the entire town was being dissolved into various artifacts.

Eren met four of his treasures while he was passing by and invited them to have a bath with him. He needed a thorough cleansing and massaging after all.

"My liege, our preparations are done. We will start our journey when the next day's sun breaks. What will you do?"

Baran addressed Eren while the latter was feeding Argo in his eagle form. Unlike Baran and the tribe, who had to wait for the next day's sun to rise, a lone wolf like Eren was okay with traveling in the evening. Especially when he had Argo.

Baran was in a better mood than before because of Eren's generosity. He didn't claim Kilaba's treasures for himself. Instead, he allowed the Orcinus and the Orc Leaders to find themselves a match within his tribe.

Might make right. Since Baran was stronger than Orc Leaders and second only to Eren in the tribe, he welcomed five Orcinas to be his treasures. One of them was Resha, who was the last Orcina Kilaba had been with before his eventual abduction and killing.

Resha now handled the tribe's affairs along with Baran as the most trusted treasure he could count on. The old orc found a new flame to feel the warmth again. He felt like his luck was not so shitty anymore.

"Hm? I am preparing to get a monster army for us of course. Take care of the tribe, old man. You know who to look out for and who to target in Monster Canyon, right?"

Baran nodded before answering.

"Slaughter the vultures that come to take whatever and whoever that belongs to our chieftain."

Eren smiled at Baran and looked at Resha before nodding at her. If Baran was his general, she would have to be one of Baran's lieutenants. This Orcina was very capable as well.

Eren climbed on Argo's back and looked around. A once-thriving tribe town looked desolate now that various things that made it live were no longer there. Only Baran, Resha, and a few other Orc Leaders had come to see him off as the rest were assigned different tasks.

"*Cough* Old man, don't overdo it, alright? I'll be leaving.

See you when I see you."

Argo was told to take a flight by Eren. The demon beast had a mind of his own. He morphed his head into that of a lion and roared at his audience before flapping his wings.

Baran looked with keen interest at Eren as he flew away. Only when Eren and Argo were no more than an unrecognizable dot in the sky did he turn around. The Orc Lord with new vigor at the Orc Leaders who were waiting for his command. Their skin was tingling because of Argo's uncalled-for intimidation.

"We have got ourselves a troublesome chieftain.

Get to work, my people.

This is just a prelude to chaos!"

Chapter 664: Espying: Final Sacrifice

The river of time.

Unceasingly flowing through the past, the present, and the future. It irrigates all worlds with its reality.

It connects the beginnings with the ends seamlessly. It pairs up with space and supports the existence of all that exists in the multiverse.

The river is ever-flowing. The time is ever-changing.

The river of time flows through all the fabric of existence and allows things to be born, prosper, and die in an endless cycle. Without its ever-flowing nature, everything in existence would be nothing but a lifeless oil painting.

Everything living and otherwise is akin to a small fish in this ethereal river that gets carried by its currents and eventually reaches its destination.

There are rules for traveling in the river of time. Nobody is allowed to swim in reverse or swim ahead of the current. Nevertheless, there are always exceptions to every rule.

Exceptions that break the known norms and leave a distinct mark on the ever-flowing river of time. As if they were whirlpools that bent the currents in their direction.

What happens when these ever-flowing currents are bent by one of these whirlpools? What happens when such exceptions take place?

It would allow one to re-experience the past. Or give a glimpse into the future.

The events from this point onwards serve as one of these glimpses.

The Oni dungeon.

At the peak of the only giant pyramid located in the middle of the subspace. The sacred telesterion.

The monsters of various races had climbed the pyramid and occupied various floors that existed as the steps of the pyramid. There was almost no societal hierarchy among monsters while they were being part of the festival. They were all the children of the Echidna after all.

The usually lonely and desolate pyramid felt like a world of its own as the monsters gathered over it and interacted with each other.

They had cheered and jeered at the worshippers who had played their part and fought with their opponents. Almost all of the losers of the mortal combat had already died.

The pyramid would draw unknown energy from the emotions of these spectators and sacrifices. This energy would then be shared with the winners of the duels.

As the festival progressed, more cheers were heard in the surroundings. More emotions were stirred. The unknown energy began to accumulate over the winning worshippers. The energy would then be amplified when the worshippers received it, fusing with their very existence.

These winners would then be pitted against one another, resulting in the winner getting stronger than ever in the process and the lower losing their lives and the unknown energy that had been part of their existence not long ago.

The cycle of winners fighting against other winners continued. Finally, two warriors had accumulated a crazy amount of sacrificial energy in their bodies.

The result of the battle between these two warriors, also known as worshippers by their audience, had just been decided. A powerful ogre had lost against an even more powerful orc.

This ogre was the only worshiper who had been left alive and not killed immediately. That was because he was the final sacrifice. A sacrifice that would summon a vestige of divine presence among them.

The festival would end when the loser ogre gets sacrificed at the sacrificial altar that had replaced Har Jahar's throne in the Sacred hall. The kill shall be done by the final winner of the festival. And he will receive Kirin's hand in marriage as well as the blessing from the divine.

The Oni festival had almost ended after days spent selecting the two final worshippers. The winner of the festival would kill the loser finalist and become an arch worshiper, worthy of receiving the blessing.

This was the moment of final sacrifice.

While the monsters were present on various floors of the altar, their tribe leaders congregated on the top floor of the pyramid. The festival's final moments were witnessed by them.

A sacrificial altar had been raised using the flesh and bones of the defeated worshippers' bodies. The remains of the dead worshippers had dried up before fusing to create a dried and almost-dead-like tree trunk with no tree leaves present on it.

The tree trunk gradually became the sacrificial altar as more worshippers kept on dying. At this point, the altar's platform had been raised some 7 meters away from the sacred hall's floor. There was a series of steps that one could use to reach the top platform of the altar.

The top platform of the altar had a large bowl of fire serving as the hearth, which held an azure flame. The flame was set against a hazy blue water-like spatial fabric that seemed to connect to a different world.

Distinct otherworldly mana-pulses were emanating from the fabric of space, which had stopped being intangible and invisible for some reason. The water-surface-like spatial fabric would stretch sometimes and would trace various shapes and figures before returning to its normal state. It was as if someone was trying to reach this side of the fabric from the other side.

Har Jahar was standing at the bottom of this sacrificial altar with his hands behind his back. Kirin was beside him.

The Oni King had acted as the overseer of this festival. It was his responsibility to ensure the rebels did not do as they wished. He handled festival matters as the king of this place. He was to make the festival a success.

Kirin was standing silently beside her father. But her eyes would quickly scan over an Orc Leader before looking away.

This Orc Leader was special because of the incredible feat he had achieved. He had defeated an Ogre Lord while still being evolutionarily at a lower stage than him.

His battle performance had pleased the pyramid as well which seemed to have a mind of its own. The energy originating from sacrifice, which was accumulated in the winner's body in significantly higher amounts than the Ogre Lord, had a hand to play in his win.

His mute status had worked in his favor and had given him mysterious vibes. His audience became his voice as they shouted and yelled at his opponents.

This Orc Leader was about to be the first child of Echidna in the Oni dungeon to receive a blessing while only being at his second evolution stage. Therefore, the audience praised and cheered this orc warrior.

Monsters or not, the spectators always liked underdogs. The dark horse of the event. The show-stealers made the audience stand in its seats and cheer for them with all their might.

Kirin was no exception to this rule either.

Chapter 665: Espying: Destiny

The Orc Leader was standing in front of the defeated Ogre leader who was on his knees. They were standing directly in front of the sacrificial altar not too far from Har Jahar.

The other tribe leaders who had survived the festival were surrounding the altar in a circle. Everyone was watching the final moments of the Ogre Lord with keen interest.

The Orc Leader had an atypical look for his kind because his skin was not as green-colored as the rest of the orcs. Yet, nobody would dare to question his race because his orc bloodline felt purer than the rest of them. Almost as if the worshiper had performed some kind of ritual to radiate such an unadulterated presence of his kind.

This Orc Leader had a relaxed posture and expressionless face as he looked at the Ogre Lord he had not defeated not too long ago. He was supposed to decapitate the final worshiper and offer his head to the azure flame that was flickering over the sacrificial altar.

The Ogre Lord too seemed different from his kind. He almost looked human with his light brown skin and human-like face. He had shaved his head from the sides, leaving only hair for the ponytail. Except for his ears, the rest of his face resembled that of a human or elf. Yet, he was a pure-blooded Ogre.

He was as tall as the Orc Leader. He was carrying a large broadsword attached to the back of his waist by his belt. The Ogre Lord liked his sword it seemed. He wanted to spend his final moments staying attached to the weapon he had been carrying all this time.

The Ogre Lord was wearing beastly leather pants, a shoulder guard on his right shoulder as well as an armed guard on his left arm's wrist.

The Ogre Lord looked tired. He had downcast expressions on his face. But he wasn't scared. It was as if they had already predicted his fate. His father, on the other hand, was a different case.

"My King, please, I beg you."

A shaky Ogre voice resounded in the surroundings as another Ogre begged for something from his knees. This was an Ogre Overlord. And the final sacrifice's father.

"Please spare my son. I have served you with all my heart and soul. I only ask one thing in return. Sacrifice me in place of my son."

This Ogre Overlord was none other than Ror— Har Jahar's right hand that had served him even before their arrival on the continent of Anfang. He was speaking to his king in a shaky voice, his eyes full of tears, his expressions distorted. As a father, he was more upset by the turn of events than by the final sacrifice himself.

Har Jahar looked at Ror with an expressionless face and his signature dead eyes. Ror's outburst was preventing him from concluding the festival. He looked at his most trusted servant before responding.

"You know very well we can't do that, Ror. Your son Kaalmaahen has accumulated sacrificial energy. Only he or this Orc is capable of being sacrificed at the end of the event. And I won't allow anyone to kill the Orc, which could collude with the sacrificial energy we have accumulated."

Har Jahar said in a heavy voice that was devoid of any emotional fluctuations. Ror clenched his fist and looked up with a sense of determination written on his face. He was about to address the Oni Kind when his young son's voice came from behind him.

"Father. Enough!"

While maintaining his position on his knees, Kaalmaahen spoke. His voice was low and unspirited. But there was determination mixed in it somewhere.

"Just like you told me, we are children of Echidna. And if sacrificing me is for the greater good of the Echidna, so be it. Don't say anything more. Don't do anything more."

Kaalmaahen said and looked at his father before flashing a genuine smile.

"I'll just like to tell you one thing before I go. You have been a great father. Thank you for the life you have given me so far."

Kaalmaahen said, his voice breaking for the first time. Nevertheless, he controlled his emotions and glanced at Har Jahar before adding up.

"My king, please forgive my father's outburst and proceed with the ritual. I have nothing more to say."

The Ogre Lord said and bowed his head. He then closed his eyes and controlled his heartbeat, which had become erratic for some reason. When the darkness engulfed his vision, it brought some relief to his restless psyche. He had so many things to achieve in his life. Yet, at this point, they didn't matter anymore.

The darkness that he was seeing with his closed eyes was going to become his new reality. He wondered if the relief that he was feeling right now would last forever when the darkness completely claimed him.

The Ogre Overlord was about to throw some vicious words at his king. But his son's voice stopped him. The Orc Leader who was looking at this scene had a shine in his eyes as if he was reminded of something similar. As if something like this had already happened to him.

Feeling powerless against someone stronger than oneself. Being helpless in the face of circumstances.

Har Jahar was tolerating Ror's behavior for quite some time at this point. However, he decided to display his powers when he saw the disrespect flashed in his subordinate's eyes.

Ohm.

A sickening and dreadful feeling spread in the entire sacred hall as Har Jahar released his mana sense coated in his aura. In the next moment, the entire crowd who had been whispering all around stopped their mumblings and fell to their knees.

Even Kirin was no exception. Everyone quieted down when they saw Har Jahar's vicious smile. Before saying anything, he looked at Ror.

"Don't get cocky with me just because you are about to enter your next evolution, Ror. I have tolerated your insubordination enough.

The children of Echidna need to abide by the rules. I fear your clarity is working against you if you think you can just anger our god just because you are in a different continent."

Har Jahar spoke authoritatively. He then looked around him and challenged the audience to question him on his stance if they had the guts. Nobody came forward.

Har Jahar raised his eyebrows when he saw the Orc Leader standing on his feet still even after feeling his aura up close. However, the Oni King ignored it for a moment before concluding what he wanted to say.

"Let me put it clearly for you. Nothing can change Kaalmaahen's fate as the final sacrifice to our god.

Another god would have to appear here in person and stop the process themselves if they want to change his destiny."

Chapter 666: Espying: Thriving Evil

"Varhan, sacrifice Kaalmaahen and end this charade."

Har Jahar ordered Varhan in a callous voice. The latter nodded casually at the Oni king before walking towards the final sacrifice.

"War drums!"

Har Jahar demanded in a stern voice. There were various-sized war drums placed everywhere on the pyramid. Har Jahar's demand spurred the crowd and the monsters assigned to the war drums manned their positions and started doing their job at the same time.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump Thump Thump.

The war drums started throbbing in unison as they played a mystic sound. The bass of that sound was stirring people's emotions, making them more lively than they were before Ror's breakdown.

Varhan took out a weapon that he hadn't brandished in the festival— a space element dagger that he spun around in both his hands artistically. His steps matched the beats coming from the war drums.

'This orc...'

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Har Jahar looked at Varhan's carefree attitude as he approached Kaalmaahen and looked at the orc keenly. This orc hadn't bent his knee in front of him earlier. As if he didn't view entities of his level with that much importance.

Varhan kept his cool despite the vestige of Anfang's world manifesting itself. This was an exceptional mental fortitude only had by those who had already seen and experienced things that they felt were worse than this incident.

Har Jahar couldn't punish Varhan even if he wanted to because he had the power of sacrifice and faith accumulated in his body. The accumulation would get tainted if he comforts him now and the worshiper starts treating this procedure as something detrimental to him.

'Hmph. Even if he gets blessed in the end today, what happens after the blessing is not God's concern. I'll deal with him after the festival's over.'

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Har Jahar decided to kill both Ror and Varhan after the end of the festival. But that would have to wait. He needed the Orc Leader to finish Kaalmaahen.

Ror's death while oath-bound to the world's will would result in backlash for Har Jahar instead. However, there was a simple way to deal with this problem.

Let Ror's oath never come to pass. Har Jahar just needed to kill Kaalmaahen without anyone's interruptions and that should be it.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Kaalmaahen sensed Varhan approaching him amidst the pounding war drums and opened his eyes. He had heard his father's agony through his speech and kept quiet. However, now that his death was drawing closer, he wanted to have a word with his killer.

"Varhan, I have seen your battle and experienced it for the first and last time. You deserve the blessing and any other positive thing coming your way."

Kaalmaahen said and paused. He looked at Varhan's eyes for a bit before asking another question.

"Can... Can I ask you to check up on my father now and then?"

Varhan shook his head in denial before answering in an Oni tongue.

"No," he said simply.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Kaalmaahen pursed his lips before taking a long breath. "Very well," he said and was turning his neck at 4 O'clock to look at his father one more time.

But then something clicked in his mind and stopped rotating his neck. He felt something was weird about Varhan saying no to him. He looked at Varhan with a confused expression as if wanting to know whether the noise he heard from him was his hallucination or not.

Har Jahar didn't really pay attention to or care about Varhan's supposed mute status. So he didn't catch on. However, most of the audience in the sacred hall was different.

Before they could ask Varhan any questions, the guy himself spoke up after looking at Kaalmaahen.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

"I mean you can do that yourself. I'm too busy looking after my own shit to care about anyone else these days."

Varhan said and spun his dagger around his body with his catch-and-release weapon approach. He had said the last statement in his normal tongue.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Eren looked in the distance where Sharog was and spoke up, seemingly to nobody in particular.

"Do it."

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"Yes, my Lord." Somebody in the distance answered.

Borul assigned Sharog the task of spoiling the festival using the array setup that he had been creating for quite some time now. This was what the rebellion was counting on to take care of Har Jahar.

However, the array setup was supposed to be triggered after the festival came to an end. Not before.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump. Thump.

Varhan was using the same setup using Sharog as a trigger.

The audience in the vicinity as well as the monsters who had climbed the pyramid froze once more. This was because the entire pyramid had lit up with runes that are part of a larger array.

"This... this... this... fucking... Sharog... you traitor... Why did y..."

Borul cried in disbelief as he witnessed Sharog's betrayal at a crucial time. He knew what the array was supposed to be because he was the one who had cast it using very careful planning.

And now someone else was using that setup.

Bzzt.

It was too late. The array was fully operational before Borul and other rebels could escape from it. They were locked in their positions and their mana, as well as their life essence, was siphoned away from them.

All the mana and life essence that was being siphoned from the monsters, who were helpless lambs by this point, was being used to stop one existence from acting up as the most powerful existence in subspace.

All these things happened so fast that only those who had known about this setup could get a semblance of understanding of what was happening. Others had been caught off guard— including Har Jahar.

"Hmm?"

Har Jahar found out that he couldn't use his mana or elemental attainment anymore. A small array appeared under his feet that was connected to all the monsters by runic threads. This sight confused him. The confusion transforms into a serious frown

Har Jahar then tried to move only to realize that he couldn't. Only now did he connect the dots and had disbelief written on his face.

"Rebels! Fucking cowards. Release me this instant or else..."

"Or else what?"

Varhan spoke up in a voice that showed a drastic change. He displayed a cunning smile on his face as he observed his plan had come to fruition.

He was hindered by the array's effects. He, Sharog, and her twin assistants present at the sacred hall were the only ones who had not been connected to the siphoning array.

Kaalmaahen who had accepted his death watched as Varhan smiled and played with his dagger in hand. He watched with an incredulous expression as the Orc Leader drove the dagger into his heart.

"Vile rebels! This is a god's sacrifice you are interfering in. This act of evil will be purged by our god..."

Har Jahar yelled with all his might, warning the rebels they shouldn't mess with the ceremony, lest the about-to-be-summoned god get angry.

"Hahahahaha!"

Varhan laughed like he had heard the funniest joke in a while. He turned around and disappeared from his position before reappearing near Har Jahar.

The tall Har Jahar towered over Varhan when he was so close to him. He didn't like that.

Har Jahar had thought he couldn't get any more shocked today. But he was proven wrong when Varhan's body started changing shape and started appearing as tall as him.

Varhan came within a meter's distance of Har Jahar and looked him in the eye before commenting.

"Har Jahar, is it? I'm not on the rebel's side. "Neither of us is on your side."

Har Jahar started feeling a weird sensation throughout his body as he watched Eren's eyes that he came to realize were not monster-like. He felt like his body was sending him warning signs to get away from existence like Varhan.

His survival instincts that had been put to slumber suddenly woke up and started telling him that something bad was about to happen to him despite him being the Oni king if he doesn't get away from this seemingly unimportant Orc Leader.

Eren's body had started producing tribal tattoos over his torso as the dagger was still lodged into his heart. His voice grew heavier and grimmer as he continued.

"Purging evil? My evil will not just survive. It'll thrive. In this world. And worlds that are beyond."

Eren's devil-like voice was heard by all the helpless spectators. He removed the dagger from his heart and wiped his blood on the blade with Har Jahar's face before casting his vile ability.

The sacred hall that was supposed to be blessed by the divine was where he cast his ability.

"Mark of the Seven Sins: Domain of Wrath!"

Chapter 667: Espying: A Perfect Opportunist

"Mark of the Seven Sins: Domain of Wrath!"

Eren said while flashing a smile. The tribal tattoos over his torso became more prominent as the domain of wrath expanded around him and Har Jahar.

The monsters in the audience who were locked in their place by their siphoning array felt another wave of dread washing over them when the domain of wrath expanded.

Har Jahar was the one who was most shocked by the mana included in the domain expansion. He looked at the Orc Leader with pure disbelief on his face. His voice was shaky as he commented out loud.

"This... this is the mana that belongs to "that" place. How can you access this mana?"

Har Jahar looked at Eren as if he was seeing a ghost before reiterating his question.

"HOW CAN YOU ACCESS THIS MANA? TELL ME!"

Eren smirked before responding.

"I don't even know what "that" means here, horned man. But I'll just assume it's a world different from Echidna or Anfang. Now don't make me talk too much. My Oni language is not fully developed yet. I'll say something that might creep you out too."

Eren said and raised his hands. In the next moment, the wrath mana started to invade Har Jahar's body. The Oni King felt the changes happening inside his body and used his mana points to expel the wrath mana.

Eren frowned as he understood what had happened. He realized that Har Jahar was stronger than his vague expectations for him to use his domain of wrath on him. Even if he was locked inside a siphoning array.

In the end, Har Jahar successfully resisted being turned into a creature of wrath.

As the monsters on the war drums stopped their work, there was a voiceless atmosphere in the sacred hall. Therefore, the audience could fully concentrate on what was happening in front of them.

They saw that the prime worshiper of the festival had not only rebelled but also done something unimaginable to their Oni King. The rebel faction among them was equally shocked and confused.

The rebels didn't know whether to celebrate these turns of events or condemn them. Because Varhan was potentially doing what they had prepared this plan for— taking care of Har Jahar and starting a new life on the continent of Anfang away from the shadows of Echidna.

The rebels didn't want any connection with the Echidna because it had started demanding more and more sacrifices than the last time. The monsters who were born here had started to think for themselves instead of the world they weren't part of anymore.

This was the land of th

e faithless. Where self-interests mattered more than devotion to an entity that may or may not be able to help them in their times of need. This thought became more and more prevalent as the later generation of monsters kept on being born in the Anfang and started unlocking their clarity.

Har Jahar had ruled over the monsters of subspace with an iron fist. He didn't care what the rebels thought. For him, Echidna and its customs were everything. So they had decided to take things into their own hands and sever their connection with the Echidna for all time.

Borul was one of the leaders of the rebel faction. He was a firm believer that the continent of Anfang was a better land to prosper for those who had been born here. He had started seeing this continent as his world— his home and treated Echidna as a place he didn't belong to anymore. And he was not alone in this.

However, Har Jahar would not have approved of the monsters living in the subspace dropping their faith and adopting the values of Anfang. The rebels didn't want to hurt the faction that supported Echidna's values. All they wanted was to leave on their own terms, without being cursed.

Har Jahar needed to be dealt with for good for this to happen. And that was what the rebels were working on all this time.

Eren had observed that Borul's tribe had an advanced array of knowledge when he had first entered the tribe. He had seen Ulag preserve his meat inside a spatial array that had almost stagnant time. He had seen Sharog's assistants heal the tribe warriors using the healing array. There were various other instances in the tribe where the runic arrays that originated from Echidna had been employed creatively.

Eren soon realized that Borul was the reason behind his tribe's extensive array of usage. E had awoken very detailed memories of arrays and runes when he had received his clarity. And he had decided to use this knowledge to hatch this plan.

Borul was the assumed identity of the tribe's real leader Durbag. He was supposed to be injured at the previous Oni festival when the sacrifice required was not as demanding. His tribe had reported that Durbag had isolated himself to recover from his injuries and advance in his evolutionary stage.

Durbag then regressed and locked his evolution using the array imprint etched on his back. Only Sharog and a few other elders of the tribe knew about this.

Har Jahar knew about Durbag's array-related memories. Monsters of Durbag's original caliber were required to inform their king of the clarity they had received. So the Oni King was vigilant when it came to Durbag. However, Borul's identity as an average orc warrior was not worthy of attention from the Oni King. &nb

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Durbag AKA Borul used festival preparations as a way to plant this array over the array setups that were overtly visible. He received help from his other rebel members for doing so.

The rebel faction of the monsters in Oni Dungeon's subspace was more ready than ever to get rid of their cruel leader Har Jahar once and for all. This was after the festival was over. Because that's when he should have been most vulnerable.

But they could not imagine that the fruits of their labor were being consumed by someone like Varhan. The latter had struck at just the right time to catch both Har Jahar's side and the rebel side off guard.

A perfect opportunist.

Chapter 668: Espying: Defying Authority

In the end, Har Jahar successfully resisted being turned into a creature of wrath.

"Hahahahaha. Orc lad, do you even know what you are playing with? I don't know how you got access to this power but let me tell you something.

This power is not meant to be used by the children of Echidna. If they continue to do that, they will become corrupted until they have lost all clarity.

Also, you should have taken care of Echidna's Authority from me before getting on with your plans. I still have what it takes to use it on someone like you who is standing this close to me."

Echidna's Authority.

Har Jahar was still wearing the artifact on his head when Eren had made Sharog activate the array. The Oni King used every ounce of strength he could muster while being confined into the siphoning array to take care of a pest in his eyes.

Ohm!

Varhan's expressions changed as he felt like he was pulled into a different place that has many times more gravitational force than normal. Har Jahar saw the changes happening to the Orc Leader's face and started laughing maniacally.

"Hahahaha! Fools. You all are fools. A mere orc ant that thinks he can get rid of me just because I'm trapped inside an array.

You'd kill me? Me? Hahaha. This was the biggest joke I've heard in a while.

You rebels have trapped me successfully, I'll give you that. But none of you are qualified enough to kill me."

He then looked at Ror knowingly and chuckled before adding up.

"And you have trapped the ones who are qualified to kill me inside the same array. Hahaha. What a pinch you rebels have found yourselves in. What a comedy of errors!

Soon. The siphoning array also has its limits. I'll be out of the array's effect in no time and..."

Har Jahar was about to diss Eren and other rebels some more. The latter had given up on making the Oni King understand that he was not part of the rebel faction.

Eren just chuckled and shook his shoulders. Sharog and the twin Orcinas were then instructed to do something for him.

"My dear ladies, increase the array's effect on this buffoon."

Eren said as he fixed his eyes on Har Jahar.

"Yes, my Lord."

Three Orcinas responded to Eren's commands at the same time. They had assumed the role of the array controllers in the setup. The role was only given to Sharog by Borul at first. However, for better control, Sharog created two more channels and made the twin Orcinas in charge of them.

The array controllers weren't required to be of a particular evolutionary stage. They would serve their purpose just fine as long as they had mana sense to guide the controlling runes.

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p>In the next moment, Har Jahar felt like his body had lost all its energy to stand up. The array's restrictions suddenly became more intense, which brought the Monster King to his knees. The runes that were only on the floor around him had now climbed on his body and spread over different parts of his skin. They started looking more and more like chains than runes at this point.

The siphoning array started drawing more powers and life essence from the rest of the monsters as a result. At this rate, the siphoning array was going to break sooner than expected.

Eren would be dead if the array broke and the Oni King sets him free before he kills him. And yet, the butcher didn't let his urgency rush him into making mistakes.

He stored his space element dagger in his storage and took out his two swords— his Rigor Mortis set. He swung them around a bit to get a better feel for them.

Eren was still under the effects of Echidna's Authority while he did that. Or he was supposed to be.

Har Jahar stopped getting surprised at this point and started thinking rationally. Why wasn't the monster-controlling artifact working on him? Has the artifact been tampered with?

Har Jahar concentrated and decided to make a Gnoll Lord who was on his knees not too far away from the target of the artifact's effect. In the next second, that Gnoll Lord started wailing and howling before clutching his heart and head, attesting to the Oni King that the artifact was working fine.

"You... Why isn't Echidna's Authority working on you? What... what the fuck are you."

The Oni royalty started looking at Eren who was in his Orc form in a different light when he realized that the latter could defy the artifact's effects. It was clear that he was different from the other children of Echidna. He just wasn't sure by how much.

The Orc leader shrugged his shoulders and smiled lightly before answering in a plain voice.

"Hm. The artifact isn't working because I'm not one of you. Simple as that. As for what I am?

I am what I need to be."

Eren said and started transforming once again. His body reduced in size and started changing into his white-haired human form. Har Jahar and the monsters were left aghast by how much shock their prime worshiper was giving them in a span of such a short time.

"You... are you human? No... this can't be. A creature that can use THAT mana without getting corrupted by it. A creature that can shapeshift into an Orc in front of me without getting noticed.

A creature that can hide so deep just to strike at the right time. You... how did the land of the faithless give birth to someone like you?"

Eren had closed in on Har Jahar while the latter analyzed him. He shook his head to let his shoulder-length hair get away from his eyes and responded. &n

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"Hm? Let me see.

A few cups of abandonment issues and a pint of false charges-- all topped with lots of humiliations. Stir the mix up well before garnishing it with a handful of regrets. That's how I was made.

A damn swell cocktail, am I not?

You had told me to end the charade, Har Jahar. Guess I'll do just that. Got places to be, you see."

Eren said and raised his hands. He coated his weapons in his lightning mana and crossed his arms like two blades of scissors before swinging them in the opposite direction. Har Jahar's head was right in the middle of their path.

Swoosh. Bzzt. Cut.

Chapter 669: Espying: Breakthrough Into Adept Rank P1

Swoosh. Bzzt. Cut.

The red and purple lightning crackled as Eren swung his weapons in the opposite direction from each other. His blades touched Oni King's skin and managed to breach his natural defense layer.

Two distinct cuts were formed on either side of Har Jahar's neck. The blades cut his flesh and penetrated halfway into it from either side.

And yet, Eren couldn't chop off the Monster King's neck. His mana didn't even pose a threat to the monster who was only a step away from becoming a Monster Emperor.

Eren had to struggle to get his weapons out of their stuck places. This whole time, the audience was flabbergasted by what they were seeing and the Oni King maintained a stoic expression on his face.

The wounds on his neck started healing immediately after the weapons were pulled out because of the monster's passive regeneration kicking in. His evolutionary status as an Oni King was so strong that even the body's accelerated regenerative properties started looking like a healing spell.

Oni King only groaned a bit when he felt his neck getting injured by Eren's attack. Frankly, for the first time after so many years, the monster felt fear.

The Monster King had managed to keep his dignity intact as an Oni king by acting tough and silent. However, only he knew how his balls almost ended up crawling back into his sack never to come out for a second time when Eren had launched his attack.

"Hahahahaha! Ant. You worthless fucking ant."

Har Jahar found the strength in him to mock Eren for his failure. A tinge of desperation could be heard in his voice. Despite his words, he was starting to treat Eren as a real threat. He just wanted to make him mentally unstable with his words, a job which he was failing miserably at.

Alas, Eren had seen Eliza.

Slap!

Eren slapped the Oni King's face with the back of his right hand. He then pressed his index finger of the same hand against his lips in a gesture to make someone observe silence before speaking up.

"Quiet. I can feel how shit-scared you were. No need to act tough in front of me, should I say father-in-law?"

Eren laughed and glanced at Kirin, who was entrapped within the siphoning array in her place. The latter also wore a blank face and had no discernable thoughts he could sense with his soul sense. Eren smirked at the Oni King's daughter. Then he looked away from Kirin and focused his eyes on Har Jahar again before commenting.

"Har Jahar, when I say you will die today, you will die today. If not swiftly, then painfully. Just wait your turn."

Eren told Har Jahar in his Life Drain form with his red eyes, supposedly staring into his soul fearlessly.

Eren wanted to kill Har Jahar using his Wrath ability and process his gains. But that seemed impossible because the monster was able to resist the wrath mana. Eren was just too weak to make his wrath mana potent enough to work on Har Jahar.

Then he had thought of using his Life Drain ability on him after killing him. That way he would be able to get maximum benefits out of the monster's death and improve his ranking status further post his death.

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Eren was sure he wouldn't be able to use the Life Drain on Har Jahar while he was alive. He didn't have the power to wrest the life essence away from his living body.

That left him with only one option.

Eren summoned a sizable wrath flame that had been sealed by Alephee's soul spell all this time. He held it in his hands as if it was a flame-shaped sculpture of ice that had been frozen in time, which it was.

Eren pondered for a while before asking his Orcina slaves.

"Sharog, how long can the siphoning array hold?"

Sharog had beads of sweat on her forehead as she guided the channels that regulated the siphoning array. Upon hearing Eren's question, she checked up on her condition as well as the twin assistants' before answering.

"My lord, another 15 minutes."

Eren nodded to her statement before asking another woman who was his partner in all this.

'Alephee, how much time do you think it would take for me to digest this flame from Kilaaba?'

Alephee didn't take long to reply.

'Don't worry. I'll help you digest your gains. I'll also wake you up at the right time if you experience a breakthrough-induced epiphany. Your gains would be a bit lower because of that, but I don't think you would complain about the kind of situation you have found yourself in.'

Eren smiled mirthlessly at Alephee's statements and agreed. To reap maximum benefits, he wanted to combine Kilaaba's and Oni King's wrath flames into one.

Eren had planned to kill Har Jahar this way from the moment he learned about his existence from Sharog. That's why he waited all this time to digest the wrath flame left behind by Kilaba. However, he now understood that the plan was impossible to execute.

Eren looked at Har Jahar and flashed a cunning grin before saying out loud.

"It'll be over soon."

To unseal the flame, Eren immersed his mana in it. The sealing spell dispersed and the wrath flame returned to life. Eren closed his eyes and let the flame disappear into his body through his palm.

Eren felt the implosion of his mana core as soon as he felt the wrath flames being absorbed by his body. His body started oozing out impurities from his skin all over as he went through his rank upgrade.

Breaking into F-Rank granted one the ability to wield their elements. In breaking into E-Rank, they were able to stabilize their elements to provide a secure path for their ranking journeys.

Breaking into Adept rank was considered one of the deciding factors of a ranker's life because it dealt with Elemental condensation. In this breakthrough, the mana core will be etched with the mystic elemental runes of their respective elements, condensing them into the core. This enabled the rankers to wield their elements with greater speed, power, and efficiency than ever before. The potency of their average Adept ranked spells is also enhanced by several degrees, thanks to Elemental condensation.

Rankers often experienced a huge bottleneck in their Adept rank because of the Adept breakthrough's peculiarity. For prodigies like Altashia and a pseudo

prodigy like Eren, the case was even more severe.

In Eren's previous timeline, Eren had been stuck in the Ace Rank for decades before achieving a potion-induced breakthrough. That too after spending all his savings on the potion.

As a result of the unnatural breakthrough, his elemental runes gained through Elemental Condensation were less effective in his past. It had bankrupted his potential for another rank breakthrough. Hence, he never reached C-Rank in his past timeline.

However, this time it was the polar opposite situation. The Elemental Condensation Eren had achieved with his breakthrough was unique and one-of-a-kind even by half-bloods' standards.

Chapter 670: Espying: Breakthrough Into Adept Rank P2

Normally Eren would have had more difficulties achieving Adept rank because of his special existence. However, Kilaba was a monster who had progressed enough in his evolutionary path to allow Eren to overcome his ranking bottleneck without a hitch.

Eren's Elemental Condensation was different from any other ranker though. His mana core began incorporating world law runes of all the grand elements rather than just the ones he was used to.

Eren gritted his teeth and felt every muscle in his body rupture and rebuild. Every cell in his body was now incorporating more of the world's mana into it. His flesh and bones were getting strengthened by mana as if they were artifacts in their own right.

An Adept-ranked mana cloud was soon summoned all around him. His mana core spun with even heightened efficiency than before and drained the mana cloud surrounding him.

After another couple of minutes, Eren's breakthrough into the gaseous state of the Adept rank was stabilized.

Eren had broken into Adept rank once again in this timeline.

However, this did not mean that the process was over.

Way of the water!

Kilaba had an affinity with the element of water. Plus, his elemental attainment as a monster in his 3rd stage of evolution was also substantial. As a result, Eren's water element attainment started increasing at a rapid rate while he digested Kilaba's understanding of the element. Eren entered into a state of epiphany at that moment, and his mana core started spinning again.

This time, it summoned an even denser form of an Adept ranked mana cloud than before. The Elemental Condensation runes related to water etched on Eren's mana core started getting more complex as the core spun around itself while absorbing more Adept rank mana.

Har Jahar started getting more worried about his well-being as he saw Eren's breakthrough with his own eyes. He knew that the breakthrough of the abomination that was in front of him was anything but normal.

He wanted to scream and distract Eren from gaining any more attainment while under the effects of the State of Epiphany. Meanwhile, Sharog focused on her former king some more and attached more runes to his body, shackling every muscle.

Har Jahar and the rest of the audience watched as Eren digested all the gains he was due from Kilaba's kill. Eren could have indulged in his epiphany for longer. But Alephee reminded him that he had more important things to attend to.

Eren opened his eyes with a smile on his face. He was happy. And nostalgic as well.

Nostalgic because it had taken him so long to break into D-Rank in his previous timeline. He knew that those experiences had also helped him get to his Adept ranker faster. His ranking journey was virtually free of bottlenecks compared to his last life. &nb

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However, the struggle he had had to face in his past was exceptionally difficult for him. He did not truly enjoy his breakthrough into D-Rank because of that.

"The place is different. My circumstances are unusual. The time is different. Yet. It's still me. It's all me."

Eren mumbled to himself as he looked at his hands and his open palms. They were brimming with youthfulness and energy, unlike the last time. His potential was still in its budding phase, he could feel it.

Eren turned around and saw the same scene he had seen before his breakthrough. He ignored the gazes that were fixated on him and started walking towards Har Jahar once again.

"Har Jahar, oh Har Jahar. Have you experienced something like this? If I kill you now, will you get to see anything I just did? Tell me. Do you want to find out what life is made of after experiencing death?"

Eren said, his voice still deep, that was the sign of his wrath mana even though he didn't have wrath domain anymore. Despite only having a few minutes to spare, Eren had managed to surpass even the wrath flames' standards of water element attainment gains.

Eren had previously digested the water attainment from Langdon when he was still in the Titus tournament. Then he killed off a rebel Orchina from his tribe, which had water element affinity as well as weapon arts related to hammer.

In this time's state of epiphany, Eren had managed to make all his elemental attainments come together, using Kilaba's water attainment as the foundation. He had fused them and created something that was completely his.

Har Jahar watched as Eren came close to him once again. He was now an Adept. The Oni King was not ashamed to show the frustration on his face anymore.

This was no human, beast, half-blood, or monster. This was an abomination that would take on any form when it felt like it. There's nothing wrong with being fearful of abominations.

Looking at his struggles to say something, Eren gestured to Shargo that he was okay now and she could allow him to speak. The latter nodded and decreased the runic restrictions placed on the Oni King. The Oni King took a long breath before asking Eren in a grim voice.

"You... What is your name? What is your real name? Tell me."

Har Jahar asked while looking at the azure flame that was still burning in the distance. A final gamble. He was hoping the god's remnant shadow was paying attention and would help him somehow. Because he had started to realize that Eren had come prepared to kill him no matter the circumstances.

'Don't tell him. This Oni is pretty crafty. He wants you to get cursed.'

Alephee spoke in Eren's mind and the latter looked at Har Jahar with an appreciative nod.

"Good. You are looking for ways to fuck with me even in yo

ur dying moments. This is what the land of the faithless is all about. The struggle for survival. Guess you did learn a few things from here."

Eren stopped smiling when he said that. He activated his wrath ability in his usual way once again and injected the wrath mana into his own body, making it gain even more muscular definitions. This also helped him increase his stature a bit. His red eyes started sparking with red radiance as he spoke to the Oni King with an even more monstrous voice than him.

"Fortunately or unfortunately, your struggle ends here."