

Vile 711

Chapter 711 A Royal Pays Visit

"Lady Levine, Agatha requests that you meet her."

A middle-aged-looking lady came inside Levine's dedicated potion lab and told her. Levine was busy experimenting with her concoction in the test tube. Hearing her servant's voice, she raised her eyebrows and kept the test tube on its stand before turning behind her.

"Agatha would never bother me about puny matters. Did she say what it was about?"

Levine said while walking away from her table. Her experiments would go on for hours on end. And this one wasn't any different. The B-ranker potioner needed a bath. Her private chamber was on the other side of the position lab.

"Um... she said it's about some royal matter."

Levine pondered a bit before nodding at her servant. She wondered what the royal matter was as she walked towards her bath.

"Like I told you..."

A male voice was addressing Agatha desperately.

"It was Eren who had asked me to come here. I'm sure he'd tell you I'm speaking the truth right away. Where is he? Just contact him and ask."

This young man was sitting on the other side of Agatha's table. He had dark brown hair and a dark brown beard. He had eyes of the same color as his hair.

There was nothing special about this Ace ranker. However, his surname made him royalty. He was a Renar.

Agatha had a headache handling this man. He was asking her to accommodate him into the White Raven guild on the basis that he was being asked by Eren to do so.

"Rodrick Renar, is it? I can't contact Eren because he is not available right now. Why don't you come again in a few days and meet him yourself? Leave your contact details with me. I'll inform you when he comes back."

Agatha said while massaging her forehead. The guy was insisting on being part of the White Raven guild for a while at this point. Agatha had other things to worry about. She couldn't spend all her time arguing with a scion of Renar.

Agatha didn't want to take someone like Rodrick into their fold because she feared the repercussions. There is almost no chance that a royal scion will join any guild like a normal ranker. Those who did join would only do that as a way to gain fame. And they only did that with well-established guilds.

Agatha didn't want to put the White Raven guild in the crosshairs of unknown royal forces that were infighting with each other by taking Rodrick into her guild. She also didn't know what the guy was talking about when he said he was being invited to come by Eren.

As far as Agatha knew Eren, he wouldn't ever do something like that. Not without solid benefits at least. And as of right now, Rodrick seemed to have nothing to offer them but troubles and more troubles.

Agatha had to admit Rodrick had come prepared with a shameless face. He didn't try to leave even after she had turned down his offer several times. He didn't even have a shred of royal pride in him.

"Leave, you say? Hahahaha. But I have nowhere to go. I left the capital city of Royal Renar to live here where my buddy is starting up a new city.

I left all my royal rights when I left the city. For now, I'm just a commoner. I can only count on Eren at this point."

Rodrick said while chuckling. He then looked at Agatha with a serious face before speaking up in an even more serious voice.

"Look, Agatha. I know I'm imposing on you. But I really need a place like this to survive. I wouldn't have come here otherwise."

Agatha's worries intensified when she heard Rodrick speak. She had thought that offering the royal a roof over his head would cause political trouble. But it turned out that she had underestimated the scope of trouble that could be caused by this brown beard man.

"What do you mean by "leaving royal rights?". That sounds like..."

Agatha said while narrowing her eyes on a smiling Renar. The latter coughed a bit before answering honestly.

"I mean I am not protected by any royal retainers anymore. All of my royal rights had been taken away from me now that I left the capital city for my own goals. I basically quit being part of the royal contest for the position at the royal court. By default, I am also stepping down from the contest for the royal throne.

So I hope you understand why I can't live outside this city. I don't have any allies outside this city."

Rodrick said while looking at Agatha with his pursed lips. He scratched the back of his head while doing that. Agatha grimaced as she pieced together the remaining pieces of the puzzle.

"You mean to say you'd be targeted by other royal scions who are still in the royal contest of power? And now that you don't have any royal retainers or royal rights to protect yourself..."

Rodrick nodded at Agatha before commenting.

"That's right. I'm the easiest target for all my royal cousins."

"Even more reason for me to say no to your request. We don't want any trouble with any faction of the royal house, Ace Rodrick."

Rodrick smiled bitterly when he heard Agatha's blunt reply. He had to admit Eren had put the right person on the job of managing his city and his guild. The young lady didn't mince her words after learning about his stray-royalty status.

Rodrick sighed and placed both his hands on Agatha's table before speaking up.

"Look, I have come here in secret. Nobody knows about me being here. And they'd never guess I had come here after meeting someone like Eren. So it should be safe for a while for all of us.

Plus, you are underestimating House Montmorency and House Derringer. No royal cousin of mine would try to offend these two houses. Because it would mean they would be putting such forces under someone else's banner.

I'll keep a low profile until I'm ready to come out. Till then, we'll all be safe. And that's all I need."

Rodrick said before flashing a cunning smile. He waved his right hand and took out various scrolls and books in front of Agatha on her study table. He coughed and spoke up to make his offer more tempting.

"Plus, I have various spells and techniques I can offer you that you can blatantly say came from my side. I have known about the White Raven's team members for a while now. So I only picked up ranking resources that were suitable for all of you.

Do we have a deal now?"

Chapter 712 Researching on White Raven Ale

"Do we have a deal now?"

Rodrick said while looking at Agatha eagerly. He hadn't come empty-handed. He had kept tabs on the White Raven Guild since its inception.

Rodrick explained to Agatha what he, Altashia, and Eren had discussed that day after his duel with Altashia. Agatha listened to Rodrick's side while checking up on the spells and techniques he had shown in front of her.

"You mean to say you were so moved by Eren's idea that you decided to implement it without a second thought? Did you not think for a second that he might have said all those things to get the transcendent-grade spell from you?"

A third voice suddenly resounded in Agatha's office. Both Agatha and Rodrick turned around to see a striking B-Ranker walking toward them. Levine had finally shown herself.

"Aaah! Lady Levine de Montmorency. It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

Rodrick stood up from his seat and bowed a bit. Agatha thanked Levine with her eyes before bowing as well. She then gestured her hand for Levine to take a seat beside her.

Levine nodded at both of them before sitting beside Agatha. She folded her arms over the table after taking the seat and rested her head on the cradle of hands she created for herself before looking at Rodrick curiously. The latter sat down with Agatha before replying.

"Even if Eren had his own motives to give me that advice, his advice itself wasn't wrong. I am not stupid enough to think that he did that out of the goodwill of his heart. But he did me solid nonetheless.

I know I'm asking a lot here. I think I have also given you guys something valuable in return with the ranking resources I received. I just hope you consider this as well as the discussion I and Eren had before making a judgment."

Agatha observed that Rodrick's persistence softened by a huge margin in Levine's presence. She also breathed a sigh of relief now that the B-Ranker was involved in this decision-making process.

Levine pondered a bit after listening to the whole story. She was already keeping tabs on the two's conversation before entering the office. Even she was against the idea of keeping Rodrick who had a target on his back.

But his talk with Eren had complicated things. The guy had walked on the path Eren had shown him. He had even dared to regress in rank. He was close to achieving a ranking breakthrough when he met up with Eren. And now his mana core was in the gaseous state of the Ace rank.

Levine and Agatha both couldn't turn down Rodrick after learning about what he had done to become a summoner. The guy could quickly regain his ranking as long as he wasn't targeted. With his talent and the resources he must have accumulated, it wasn't too difficult for the scion of Renar to retrace his steps back to his previous level.

Levine talked about a few things with Agatha telepathically before speaking up.

"Alright, Rodrick. We'll keep these ranking techniques and spells you have given to the White Raven guild under your name and offer you a place to stay.

As for becoming an official guild member. It's better if we waited for Eren to come before making that decision. Is this arrangement enough for you?"

Rodrick felt really relieved after he heard Levine's words. Even if she didn't directly include him as a White Raven guild member, the fact that she had allowed him to stay on the guild lands told him that she would take responsibility for his safety.

Rodrick bowed to Levine again from his seat before responding positively.

"But of course, Master Levine. Agatha, I also thank you for listening to my selfish request. I'll try to pay back whatever you have done for me when I get my position in the royal court."

Rodrick said before getting up. Agatha ordered one of her subordinates to take Rodrick to a secure location on the guild lands, which was on the Kukenan plateau.

Agatha and Levine both knew what they were signing up for even when they had decided to keep Rodrick on their guild's estate. They could be sure that other royal scions would come looking for Rodrick once they got the wind of his whereabouts.

Levine wasn't particularly worried because she knew how royal affairs worked. Sure, the fights among loads of royal contestants in any generation would get brutal. But players playing big had to bet on one horse anyway. She was fine with it being Rodrick this time.

Agatha just wished that Eren would be here before Rodrick's whereabouts got known to his royal cousins. She thanked Levine for her assistance before discussing a few more topics with her.

Levine agreed to help Agatha set up another potion manufacturing setup when their exchange of ideas was over. The setup was for the potion called Pleasure Paradise, vials of which were getting sold in the markets like hot cross buns.

Although both ladies maintained a professional decorum about it, they couldn't help feeling a bit awkward about discussing the setup related to the potion. However, the money generated through the sales was no joke. Levine was offered a sufficient royalty cut in exchange for setting up the manufacturing hub. So there was no reason she wouldn't be on board with it.

Similarly, Levine was also experimenting with a peculiar version of Elven ale based on the ideas and data provided by Eren. The latter had told her that she only needed to give him her analysis and her opinions related to various methods he had come up with. She also needed to include a possible alternate method if there was any.

Eren had offered her recipe for monster ale, which he had received from Sharog long back. He was moving towards making his own blend of Elven ale and naming it White Raven ale. It was just that he was expediting the creation of the recipe by including Levine on the project.

Initially, Levine had no interest in ales that stimulated elemental attainment. But the data and concoction recipes provided by Eren were pretty convincing.

Thus, Levine got to work on the creation of White Raven ale right away after finishing the rest of her affairs outside. It'd be a while before she came out of her potion lab.

Chapter 713 Rey Remus

"Lass, what can you tell me about Eren Idril?"

An aged voice addressed Dianna who had been summoned to the House Remus' estate. She was seen standing in front of the old man who was sitting behind a huge desk.

This old man had a pair of green eyes that were shining with unusual luminosity. He had white hair along with his long, fuller white beard. His skin was a bit wrinkled but not to the extent that could be described as old.

The green-eyed man's stature was short. Although he was sitting at the time, it was evident. He had worn a traditional long coat. He had also worn a white shawl over it, giving him scholarly vibes.

The desk did not have anything over it except a single paper on which the old man was currently writing. He was still busy writing on it in cursive, using a simple yet elegant pen.

The old man's study room was minimal and clutter-free as well. It gave the impression that he was very methodic in each of his actions.

Dianna was still in her army outfit. She had been given a week's rest by the army. But as it turned out, the old man couldn't wait any longer and summoned her as soon as her mission was done. He had sent a flying artifact to bring her to the Remus estate as quickly as possible.

Dianna was ready for questions like these. She had already discussed the topic with Eren. So she knew what she was supposed to say.

Dianna nodded at the old man before starting to speak honestly about Eren. She told him everything that was general knowledge about Eren Idril as well as some of the additional information Eren had allowed her to tell.

Dianna was very careful with the words she was using. She had her free will intact despite being branded by Eren. And that had allowed her to navigate her dialogues in a way that wouldn't come across as biased.

Dianna described how Eren got in touch with her about the dead land House Remus owned when she was least expecting it. She also highlighted the fact that it was the old man sitting in front of her himself who had approved the deal.

When Dianna was done speaking, the old man finished writing and folded the paper before making it disappear into thin air. He then looked at Dianna and sighed before adding up.

"It was indeed a mistake on my part as well to let go of the land without doing any proper research. Maybe the signs were already there that Minerva's Utopia was going to appear on the land.

But we were too hasty in selling a barren land thinking that it was nothing more than its face value."

The old man said and stroked his beard before looking at the ceiling. There was a look of regret on his face. It took a while for him to readjust his gaze on Dianna before asking her.

"What's done is done. The question now is how can we get our land back?"

Is there any hope for us to get in touch with this crafty lad Eren?"

Dianna watched the old man look at her with keen expressions. He kept stroking his beard while he was at it as if thinking of many things at once. She smiled bitterly before asking the old man a question of her own.

"Uncle Rey, would you let go of such land after having bought it from someone else? Why would Eren sell us the land back no matter how much money we offer him in return?"

Because whatever we offer, it won't be enough. The guy has his own city which is growing at a tremendous rate. Do you think he would give it up just because we asked him nicely?"

Dianna said without any fear. She needed to make sure Rey understood the land that the House Remus had sold to Remus was not up for grabs anymore.

The old man Rey frowned after hearing her words. He blew air through his big nostrils before responding.

"Young lady, he needs to understand that not every deal is done based on profits and losses. Some deals are done for mere survival."

Rey said and smirked before getting up from his seat. His wooden staff was nearby which he was used to using when walking. He started walking towards the window while placing his weight on the wooden staff that served as his mobility aid.

He looked at the lavish Remus estate spread in front of him through the window before adding up.

"When you meet that boy, tell him that he and all his mates will be targeted by that brat Ottoman de Montmorency if he doesn't let go of something he is not capable of holding onto.

Ottoman has contacted House Remus already. We are in talks.

Our two sides will find our way into the management of White Raven city somehow. That's not a question of if but when."

Rey Remus had a rare smile on his face as he spoke further.

"Hehehe. You tell all this to that Eren lad and tell him that House Remus is willing to buy back the land at triple the price it sold it for. This will make sure he is not caught in the storm. Otherwise, we won't be held responsible for what is about to come.

Our reputation is already ruined because of some bastard attacking our customers right after they were done with our most secured auction event. As of now, we are yet to find out who has caused this and how.

So we will not let our reputation get sullied anymore. We would stop this talk for once and all of how a youngling was able to fool us into losing a golden goose."

Dianna's eyes shined when she heard Rey's words. She shook her head in denial before walking toward the exit of the study room. Just when she was about to step outside, the young lady looked back and added on.

"Uncle Rey, I see that you are counting a lot on Demonmir to fight off House Derringer and Master Levine's faction. But you are not considering Eren while making these decisions.

Trust me, messing with Eren will turn out to be the most disastrous decision House Remus could ever make. The consequences of that mistake would be scarier than fighting against the forces of House Derringer, House Montmorency, and Demonmir combined.

Of course, this is my personal opinion and I know you would ignore it anyway. But let it be known that I tried warning you."

Dianna said and stepped out of Rey's study room. The old man didn't look back. He just snorted with his nose and stared at the setting sun with a storm of thoughts running through his mind.

Chapter 714 Spirit Beast Spell

A region near the Edinburgh kingdom borders. Badlands.

Overcast skies with a chance of precipitation.

It was 3 PM and yet there was hardly any sunlight.

"What are we supposed to do here?"

A soldier asked another who was standing beside him. At the current army-controlled area of Badlands, a large number of soldiers were gathered.

These soldiers had signed up for this unique army-initiated program meant to bolster the rankers' strength. The program had been in the works for a while now. However, it had recently been expedited for some reason.

"We wait, I guess. Let's see what the officer has to say about it."

The young elf who was asked the question replied casually and flashed a subtle smile. His name was Arjun— Eren's squad member who had signed up for this project of his own violation.

He was one of the few rankers who wasn't stressed by the army's program. Not because he had the utmost trust in the army. But because he already knew what it was about.

People who had their reach and joined the army for its resources knew the inside story about the program and its reason for getting expedited. Arjun was one such individual.

There was a possibility that a war with the kingdom of Layos was going to break out. The kingdom was doing everything it could to prepare for that possibility. Of course, it wasn't made public knowledge yet to avoid panic.

This project which had remained stagnant for quite some time had suddenly gotten revived for the same reason. In a way, the war held many possibilities for rankers who were present here.

There were at least 300 soldiers present for the current program. And the program was held in multiple locations throughout the kingdom.

The Edinburgh kingdom sought first to increase the strength of its army as well as its stationed guards before making this program available to the local population. This way, it would be better prepared for the war and all the destruction-causing elements that get hyperactive during the war.

The kingdom had its own spy network to predict the flow of events happening all around it. Through this network, it was made aware that the kingdom of Layos was trying to open a joint front against Edinburgh.

Edinburgh wasn't worried about other small kingdoms teaming up with the Layos kingdom to launch a campaign against it. But it was worried about the Asikha empire's stance on the war.

Things would be disastrous if it stayed neutral in the war. And they would get more complicated if the Asikha empire joins the war covertly or overtly from the enemy's side.

The Asikha empire had many treaties with Edinburgh. Therefore, a frontal opposition to Edinburgh was virtually impossible. However, the kingdom knew how the empire's stray forces liked to play spoilers. The Edinburgh kingdom would be in a pinch if it turns out to be the case.

Things were not that serious yet. There were a few skirmishes on the border. But it wasn't anything new for either the kingdom of Layos or Edinburgh. However, the spy network had informed the higher-ups that it was only the beginning.

There was someone named commander Saisha Goren who seemed to have been given a higher rank in the army and relocated to the Layos' western borders. The borders it shared with Edinburgh.

This man named Saisha Goren was leading a specialized squad that was supposed to contain all the exceptional rankers the kingdom of Layos had in its army. The relocation of such a squad could only be considered a strategic deployment.

Edinburgh's higher-ups also knew that Saisha Goren was also well connected to Isen Osan— the betrayer baron of the kingdom. But Isen Osan had vanished into thin air somehow. Arthur's spy network, as well as the kingdom's, had not been able to track him since his sudden disappearance.

Thus, the kingdom was paying extra attention to Saisha Goren and his entire squad. It knew about Isen Osan's battle prowess as well as his scheming behavior. The authorities in Edinburgh did not want to be caught off guard.

Therefore, the kingdom launched various countermeasures. It initiated talks with the Asikha empire as well as other small kingdoms.

But the kingdom also knew that schemes and diplomacy would only get it so far. Might make right. The concept applied to the relationships between two seemingly peace-loving countries as well.

But how would Edinburgh bolster its strength and prepare its citizens for the war? This program was one of the answers it had found for itself.

"My soldiers!"

An authoritative male voice abruptly rang out in the surrounding area. The spectators looked up at the source of the voice and saw that there was someone in the air.

This C-Rank army officer was walking on air as if it were solid ground. His Way of the Wind had reached an exceptional level of attainment.

This man's name was Manas Reach. He was one of the military officials who were chosen to lead this region's special program by high-ranking military officials. He walked casually on air while looking down at the soldiers who had gathered up below him.

The man stopped walking and folded his hands behind his back. He stood in a standard military stance before addressing his audience.

"My soldiers, soon we might have to face some difficult challenges.

To oppose the enemy, who is glaring at us with schemes in his mind, we have to have strength.

We need strength to protect what is rightfully ours. And we need strength to deter any other force that might be eyeing us like hyenas."

Manas Reach spoke with a serious expression on his face. A smile spread across his face as he spoke his next words.

"But worry not. Edinburgh has been through many hardships like these and came out on top. We will make the enemy understand why it hadn't dared to attack us all this while."

Manas said and raised his hands. In the next moment, a giant array lit up on the ground on which the rankers were standing. Upon activation, the array made a scroll appear in front of every ranker in Manas' audience.

The soldiers took hold of the scrolls that suddenly appeared in front of them. But they didn't open it up. They looked in Manas' direction, waiting for his order.

Manas confronted all the glares directed at him with a cunning smile before speaking.

"The kingdom of Edinburgh had decided to strengthen all its forces using a very unique spell. A spell that might harm your soul if you are not prepared. A spell that can make you a lunatic if you and your soul are not strong-willed.

But if you manage to integrate it into your power, it might prove to be your trump card in battle. Because it would turn out to be almost the same as having a demon beast companion by your side.

Spirit beast spell!

Each of you can be considered one of the lucky ones to participate in this program. Those who don't want to take risks can quit right now. But quitting mid-way after the process starts won't be allowed.

The decision would affect your future for better or worse.

Now choose."

Chapter 715 New Dawn P1

Monster Canyon. A region near Baikal Pichol lake.

Evening 5 PM. The sun was beginning to set.

"Aaaargh!"

An Ogre Lord's shrill was heard in the surrounding area. He was being attacked by a black-haired man who had serious expressions on his face.

"Human... I killed fewer adventurers than Bigua. Why are you attacking me first?"

Ogre Lord Hiram kept running away from the human who was on his tail. He was trying to talk to him in an attempt to divert his attention. Alas, the black-haired man didn't listen to any of the monster's pleas. He just brandished his sword in front of him before casting his weapon spell.

Shadow Slicer!

A black-as-ink flying slash was released from his slightly curved sword. It traveled swiftly across the land and hit the back of the Ogre Lord Hiram.

"Baaaah!"

The Ogre Lord cried once again after the attack landed on him. By now, he had multiple black wounds on his body. These wounds didn't reek of blood. The skin around his wounds just turned black, as if there was no life in the tissues surrounding the wound.

The black-haired, black-eyed young man had special elemental attainment. The element of shadow. And his elemental affinity had allowed him to wield his element in such a way that it would terrify any of his opponents.

This black-haired young man was on a mission to purge some monsters in the region around Baikal Pichol Lake. A short time ago, he became a D-Rank. And yet, he was capable of dispatching someone of Hiram's level, who was an up-and-coming Ogre of his tribe, just a few steps away from challenging his chieftain for his position.

The power struggle within monsters' tribes was no joke. It would make each monster fight for their survival no matter who they were. There was only one way to achieve the position of power within all monster communities. It was through strength and strength alone.

The Ogre Lord Hiram had been a well-established member of his tribe. He had even dared to kill adventurers and loot them for resources when the chieftain of his tribe had specifically warned all his members against it.

His bold actions had granted him fame and prestige within the monster community. However, it also attracted Edinburgh's kingdom's attention. As a result, a mission was assigned and ran through multiple guilds before it ended up being taken by the black-haired man's guild.

The black-haired man saw that the Ogre Lord was surprisingly agile for someone who had been injured to this extent by him. He had to admit that monster bodies were superior in terms of almost all body stats.

The human ranker didn't show it. But he was a bit out of breath. That's because his mission had gotten a bit haywire and he had been battling for quite some time. It was only due to the miraculous ranking breakthrough that he had come this far.

His team was to attack Hiram's entire tribe with some Adept rankers dispatched by the kingdom of Edinburgh. They were supposed to meet the kingdom-affiliated rankers not too far away from the monster tribe they were supposed to target. On their way, however, they were attacked by some unknown rankers wearing masks.

As a result, their team was separated. They had to separate otherwise the enemy was keen on using an isolation array on them to make all of them stay in the same place.

The black-haired man was the de facto leader of his team. He immediately decided to split his team into multiple groups. He made sure that each of his team members had someone they could rely on.

He stayed alone. That's because he could tell that the enemy was especially focused on taking his head. He didn't want to put someone in the crosshairs because of him.

Besides, his spells worked best when he was alone.

The man had taken care of three D-Rank members who were targeting him. He didn't even bother asking them about their origins or their motives. Their guild master had already told them about these things. He had provided a few simple instructions to all of them.

"Kill without asking questions if you find yourself in trouble. The aftermath can be dealt with later on when the dust settles."

This blatant statement from the guild master prompted all members of the team to take appropriate action. The black-haired young man had become the incarnation of death and destruction thanks to it. He didn't care about clearing up the supposed misunderstanding with his enemies. He activated his strategic retreat plan as soon as things started heading south.

Having just finished killing his masked pursuers, he came across Hiram's squad, which was out hunting. Hiram was in the tribe's hunting squads, and the black-haired young man had stepped into the tribe's hunting zone unwittingly.

This was especially bizarre for the black-haired young man because he had thought that he was heading in the opposite direction from Hiram's tribe. Only now did he understand why the Monster Canyon was called the rankers' graveyard. The place itself was used to create chaos for its residents.

When he came face to face with Hiram's hunting squad, both he and the squad didn't know what to do. At first, both sides were locked in a stalemate. It was only broken by the Ogre Lord Hiram himself when he decided to launch an attack on the unknown and uninvited human.

Normally, the black-haired man would have chosen to run away from the situation because he wasn't ready to take on Hiram. But he didn't want to complicate his team's circumstances further by adding Hiram into the equation. Besides, there was no way he could outrun a Monster lord while being in the Ace rank at the time.

So he fought Hiram's team valiantly, using all his trump cards and even forbidden techniques. With them, he had managed to kill all of Hiram's subordinates who were Monster Leaders and Monster Soldiers.

Hiram watched all his subordinates get killed by this exceptional human ranker and decided to kill the black-haired man slowly and painfully. He torched him and played with him and made him experience a hell of a pain in a short time.

Hiram also insulted the black-haired man in various ways while he was close to death. All of the pain and insults he endured along with his life-threatening situation allowed him to tap into his dormant potential.

The shadow-element ranker stepped into D-Rank just when he was close to death. The state of Epiphany he was in allowed him to upgrade all his spells, making them compatible with his D-Rank.

Chapter 716 New Dawn P2

The breakthrough of the shadow element ranker was also noteworthy. It had created a black swamp around him for 100 meters, destroying everything it touched and came in contact with.

The shadow element would just take the life out of every living thing, making it deader than the dead. It would also negatively affect the inorganic matter, making it appear aged or corroded.

Special circumstances allowed the young human ranker to complete his rank breakthrough and state of epiphany peacefully. It enabled him to digest all his gains without having to worry about someone like Hiram attacking him.

The Ogre Lord also couldn't approach the human ranker nor could he run away from his current position. A black swamp surrounded him in all directions, blocking all his exits.

The Ogre Lord could feel that his body would just stop functioning after he was bombarded with such a potent shadow-element mana. The black swamp that was festering with malignant bubbles every now and then was nothing but the manifestation of the shadow element.

Hiram could only watch in lowkey fear as the young human ranker passed through his breakthrough. He regretted initiating an attack on this crazy ranker. And he regretted playing with him. He should have killed him when he had the chance.

After the young human completed his breakthrough, he was in the gaseous state of the D-Rank. He also found out that he had so many ideas in his head about his path and his elemental attainment. Ideas that could one day enable him to gain his signature abilities.

When the young man's breakthrough was complete, the black swamp vanished from existence. As if the place that usually cursed rankers would also bless them if they could pass the test it had put them into.

It was for this reason that so many rankers stuck in their rankings dared to enter Monster Canyon despite its dangers. The place was used to create miracles for a select few rankers. And every ranker who had lost hope wanted themselves to be one of the chosen ones.

This time, the Monster Canyon had offered this young man a taste of the miracle. It had pulled him away from the brink of death and enabled him to fight with his enemy.

The young man wouldn't let go of Hiram now that he was completely recovered from all his injuries and fatigue. His rank had been elevated, his spells had been upgraded, and his elemental attainment had achieved new heights. There was no reason for him to not take care of the Monster Lord who was in front of him.

Another round of battle ensued. This time, Hiram was on the losing side. Only now did he understand how terrifying the human ranker's shadow element was. The element and his upgraded spells had allowed him to dominate the Ogre Lord by himself.

So the Ogre Lord finally decided to make a run toward his tribe. He knew he was about to be bombarded with the human ranker's spells from behind him. But he gritted his teeth and kept on running.

This situation had led both the human ranker and the Ogre Lord to their current predicament. The black-haired young man wanted to kill the Ogre Lord for his peace of mind. Hiram on the other hand wanted nothing to do with this human ranker anymore.

The shadow-element ranker was Drin Dawn. It was the White Raven guild that had been given the mission to purge Hiram's tribe. They had taken many missions related to Monster Canyon by this point. This was the first time they had run into the problem.

The masked rankers who had targeted them were from the Escalon guild. However, this wasn't their first time going after the White Ravens. They had already tried attacking the team twice already. It was only when they attacked the team a third time that they managed to succeed in their endeavors.

The Escalon guild was almost fed up with attacking the White Raven team members. That's because they would be attacked by a bunch of Orc Hunter squads every time they zeroed in on these people. It is as if the monsters were aiding the White Raven team members. Which was something incomprehensible and unthinkable.

With its third attempt, the Escalon guild opened multiple fronts to attack the White Raven team members at the same time and finally managed to intercept them. But as a result, since their numbers were divided, they weren't able to overwhelm their targets, allowing them to break free from them.

The Orc Hunter squads were indeed ordered to keep the White Raven team members safe by their guild master. The order was issued to the commander of a big orc tribe named Baran who had managed the task given to him with flying colors.

Baran slaughtered the Escalon guild's team members as soon as he identified them to be targeting the White Raven members. He had the means to keep track of what was happening inside the Monster Canyon. Suffice it to say, the relocation of his huge tribe had been accomplished for him without any problems.

Eren had already shared his team's information with Baran before parting with him. He had anticipated that attacks would be launched against his team in the Monster Canyon by other forces.

He always knew owning his current guild land was a blessing as well as a curse. A curse only if he didn't figure out how to tackle the problems heading his way.

He knew he could count on Levine's factions as well as House Deringer to act as a deterrent. But he couldn't count on them in regions like Monster Canyon where every mishap could be explained and reasoned with.

Eren had begun his plans to acquire Echidna's Authority as soon as he had claimed his guild land. The fruits of his labor were now being tested by his team members without their knowledge.

Drin had also found it strange that there were no more masked pursuers following him while he was battling with the ogre Lord. But he didn't pay much attention to it because he had his hands full with his opponent.

Drin was tired because he was not used to his elevated rank and his spells. As a result, he ended up taxing his body and expanding his mana reserves more than he should have.

But for some reason, despite being out of breath, Drin was excited. He had miraculously risen to the D-Rank. After he became an Adept, it was as if new dawn had broken for him.

Chapter 717 Shadow Spell Combo

Shadow Flames!

Drin was finally able to cast his spell and created a circle of flames to stop Hiram from escaping any further. Since he was not used to his upgraded spell, it took him some time to cast it.

Hiram stopped moving any further when he saw that Drin's shadow element had acquired the properties of flame. The shadow element was derived from the great elements.

The ether would be combined with all the other great elements in differing quantities, enabling the user of the shadow element to acquire the properties of other elements while using the shadow-element mana. Because of his elemental malleability, he was able to take full advantage of his rare element.

Drin also found it difficult to advance into rank because of his element and inherent nature. Due to the uniqueness of elements, he would experience intermittent bottlenecks. There were not many resources available for him to make use of. There were hardly any "shortcuts" available for him to choose from in the form of runic stele or other such things.

This was why Drin was very surprised when he achieved his breakthrough while advancing so far into his elemental attainment. It was as if his legs had been replaced with wheels that just allowed him to run past all his obstacles at breakneck speeds.

Hiram had grim expressions on his face as he turned back. He wanted to lead Drin to his tribe. But it seemed like the human ranker was already aware of his plan. He had stopped him from running at the cost of spending a large amount of mana.

Drin coated his sword in black flames that affected the fabric of space and took a long breath. He looked at his target before speaking up.

"You said Bigua killed more adventurers than you, right? Want to tell me more about him so that we can take care of him after we're done with you?"

Bigua was the Ogre Lord of Hiram's tribe. He had attacked various human settlements when he was just an Ogre Leader, causing the rankers to chase after him. After many close calls and fought battles, Bigua had come to realize that battling with adventurers who could plan things and cooperate in teams was not a wise choice.

Hence, Bigua changed his approach when he was an Ogre Lord. He focused on gaining personal strength by becoming a strong fighter in the Badlands. After becoming the chieftain of his tribe, he suggested to his tribe members that they should avoid causing trouble with adventurers.

Hiram knew about Bigua's trouble-causing past because he was made aware of these things by anybody who compared him with the chieftain from the past. They told Hiram how he was the Bigua Lite even with all his achievements, which pissed Hiram off.

Bigua became difficult to track for adventurers and the kingdom after his reform. But Hiram's activities had put Bigua back on their radar. Thus, Bigua had a much higher price on his head than the amount awarded by the mission itself.

Drin was eager to collect information about such a monster because his team would have to fight Bigua's entire team eventually. Of course, Bigua would be handled by kingdom-affiliated rankers who

had been specially dispatched to take care of him. However, Drin didn't want to get caught off guard anymore. He didn't want to put his team's safety at risk regardless of their intentions.

"You want to know about Bigua because you think I was planning to challenge him for the position of chieftain. And now that I'm going to die, do you think I'd be happy to sign the death sentence for my current chieftain as well?"

Hahaha."

Hiram channeled his earth element mana throughout his body as he laughed. His limbs were coated in earth-element mana. Stone and mud armor soon covered him.

Hiram had discarded wearing the armor earlier because he didn't want to be restricted in his movements. At this point, he decided not to continue running.

Hiram looked at the earth-element ranker with narrowed eyes before speaking up.

"You would never understand our customs. Yes, I want to challenge Bigua and get rid of him. But that is not to say I would be happy if someone else did it for me.

I would have challenged Bigua in the future. But that doesn't mean I'm ready to betray him now that my life is on the line. He is still my chieftain. And as long as he is my chieftain or anyone from my tribe, I'd not betray him."

Hiram said and struck both of his earth-element-armor-coated fists against each other. He then charged at Drin intending to carry out a kamikaze attack.

Drin, like every other ranker, wasn't aware of the rules and customs the children of Echidna followed after gaining their clarity. Almost every ranker had thought that the monsters were shrewd and selfish enough to act against each other. But all their actions were based on a culture that had its own rules.

Drin saw that Hiram was approaching him at high speed. He was creating a lot of noise and mana disturbance. The heavy armor was a function of his inherent nature of absolute defense and dominance. As such, it couldn't tap into the anti-gravitational aspect of the earth-element that could have offered him enhanced mobility despite his heavy armor.

But in turn, his defense was a notch above other monsters of his level. Drin had only managed to hurt him because of his unique element. Any other ranker in his position would have had a much more difficult time achieving half the feats against Hiram as he did.

Drin couldn't help but feel his swordplay wouldn't help him much against Hiram now that he was all covered in armor made of earth elements. So he retracted his weapon and coated all his limbs with shadow element mana before casting his spells.

Shadow Steps.

Shadow Flames.

Shadow Chains.

The Adept ranker had cast multiple spells at once, turning them into a spell combo.

Chapter 718 Shadow Switch

Drin cast his spell combo and disappeared from his position. In the next moment, Hiram felt a distinct mana signature surrounding him.

Loads of black shadow-element chains sprouted Hiram's shadow and climbed on his legs. They first bound his legs and stopped him in his tracks. Then they climbed on his body and bound him to a still position.

The contact the chains made with Hiram's armor started showing cracks. The armor developed mud-crack-like scales on its surface as if the entire moisture had been sucked dry because of coming in contact with the shadow element.

"Aaaaargh! Release me if you dare, human!"

Hiram yelled while getting angry. He had broken these shadow element chains easily when Drin was in the Ace rank without having to cast the armor spell on himself. But after the human ranker's rank upgrade, the Ogre Lord had come to realize that Drin had gotten way stronger than he had anticipated.

Approach. Grab. Punch.

Drin appeared out of nowhere in front of the Ogre Lord and grabbed his chained arm. He then pulled the monster toward him before jumping over his head. While coming down on him, Drin punched the monster's back with his hands coated in black shadow flames.

Drin did all this in one swift motion, linking all his moves seamlessly. As a result, Hiram was on the ground before he could understand what had happened to him. The shadow chains that had bound him tightened around his body some more. And more shadow chains sprouted from the ground, securing the Ogre Lord in his current position.

Drin knew that Hiram was suffering less damage than what he was inflicting on him because of the monster's armor. So he decided to increase his damage output by delivering multiple attacks at once.

Shadow Flames!

Drin lit the ground beneath Hiram with his shadow flames. He then coated his hands with even more shadow element mana and strengthened the flames. As a result, the flames reduced in size and got darker than usual.

Drin sat on Hiram's back and started punching the back of Hiram's head and neck. The monster was still down and unable to get up. With each of his punches, the Ogre Lord's earth-element armor was chipping away bit by bit. Although Hiram was recovering it using his earth element mana, his recovery rate was slower than the amount of damage Drin was inflicting on him.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Drin's punches were heavy and cracked the ground beneath Hiram's face. His armor developed even more cracks on its surface, indicating that he was unable to keep up with Drin.

The human ranker was tired himself. He had beads of sweat on his forehead. This would be the first Ogre Lord he would finally be able to kill.

Drin was reminded of the field boss of the Titus tournament that was also an Ogre Lord. He had steered away from the monster at the time. And now he was preparing to finish off a monster of the same level. He was quite happy with his progress.

He was also reminded of the winner of the Titus tournament as he kept on punching Hiram. For some reason, the guy was absent from all the missions the White Raven guild had conducted in Monster Canyon so far. He was assigned to different tasks by Agatha that weren't related to normal missions.

Drin thought that it was such a pity he wouldn't be able to fight off Tuan fairly now that he was in the Adept rank. He also wondered if the guy could keep up with him.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Drin's sweat ran down his cheeks and dripped on Hiram's back as kept on chipping away at the monster's armor with his punches. He finally was able to see the back of his head that was not protected by the armor after throwing countless punches.

"You could have told me about Bigua and I would have made things easier for you, you know."

Drin said while raising his shadow-element fist over his head one more time. This was the finishing blow he was going to inflict on his opponent. Hiram laughed even harder in his battered state before managing to utter what he wanted to say.

"Haha. it is already too late for you. Let's die together!"

Drin narrowed his eyes when he heard that. In the next moment, he felt a dangerous sensation encompassing him. Someone else had suddenly interrupted his duel with Hiram.

A shadow was cast over Drin and Hiram both as something approached them from above the sky. Drin looked above him and saw a huge mass of purple water shaped into a fist approach him at breakneck speed.

This was a spell cast by someone very proficient in the water element. Plus, he was way stronger than Hiram, possibly someone who was a quasi-Monster Overlord.

Drin could not run away from this massive fist made of a huge mass of water, which was going to engulf the nearby area. And the mana density of the giant fist was strong enough to depress the entire region about three feet into the ground.

Drin looked at Hiram and understood what he was saying. In the end, his escape plan resulted in something he had always hoped to achieve. Summoning someone else from his tribe to help in the rescue.

Bigua had shown himself after sensing the signs of battle near his tribe's region.

Unlike Hiram had previously thought, Bigua had not come here to save him from the human ranker. Hiram was planning to try overthrowing Bigua's rule when he was strong enough to do so. So Bigua had no sympathy for the guy. But his loyalty to Bigua had compelled him to act.

Bigua was a crafty monster, to begin with. He chose to kill Drin in such a way that his future troubles would also be silenced. This was killing two birds with one mighty purple fist.

Drin smiled when he understood the inner politics of the monster tribe to some extent. He was still on top of Hiram's back, who was delighted that he would be able to die alongside his opponent.

Drin brought his face closer to the Monster's Lord's face and whispered his words into his ears.

"I am afraid you will have to embark on your final journey without me, Hiram.

Bye and well fought."

Saying that Drin activated a rare long-range spell that had also been upgraded with his rank up.

Shadow Switch.

In the next moment, an Ogre Lord's body was crushed under the huge mass of purple fists.

Chapter 719 Bigua

Boom!

The ground near the place where the punch had been landed quaked and created a suppressed sound. The suppressed sound traveled with the quake and spread in every direction.

The tremor became more violent and intense. It took a while for the place to return to its peaceful state.

At a distance, a tree's shadow that had been cast on the ground got stretched and a person popped out of it coated in shadow-element mana from head to toe. This person immediately dispelled the black-as-ink mana over his body and crashed to the ground because his legs suddenly turned limp.

Drin Dawn was out of breath. He had used his spell Shadow Switch to escape from his near-death situation. And that had landed him at a distance from where he was just a few moments ago.

Drin wiped the sweat off his forehead with the back of his right hand and looked in the direction of the impact. He had information on Bigua that was provided with the mission. He knew that the monster was the one who used such attacks.

"Damn. I would have died if I had stayed there any longer."

Drin mumbled to himself while looking exhausted. In the next moment, however, he regretted speaking so soon. Because the monster he had run away from caught up with him just as quickly.

The monster had maintained a safe distance from Drin for some reason when he showed up. This quasi-Monster Overlord had an intimidating physique.

He was 14 feet tall, which made him taller than Hiram. Every muscle in his body had been chiseled to perfection. His bronze-colored skin had a peculiar luster to it that bounced the evening rays off of him.

This luster had come from the monster's exceptional mastery of the water element. It was as if the fundamentals of the water element had been integrated into his existence.

Drin had thought that his Shadow Switch spell had improved beyond his imagination because of the distance it allowed him to travel in one shadow jump. He was at a sufficient distance from his previous position.

Plus, Drin's shadow element made him difficult to track. He was counting on these two aspects when he ran away from the monster. But turns out he was naive in thinking he could get away from such an existence after he had attempted to kill him once and failed.

Still, Drin didn't want to give up just yet. He knew he couldn't fight the monster head-on. His only chance to live lay in his ability to use Shadow Switch to his maximum potential.

Drin sent his mana circuits into overdrive. He was thinking about using the forbidden technique to enhance the effects of the spell at the cost of facing negative consequences. He could deal with them later on. He just needed to get away from the place first.

But Drin heard Bigua speak when he was about to use the technique.

"Boy... stop. I am not trying to kill you. At least not anymore."

Bigua said in human tongue and looked at Drin intently. This was the first time the monster was seeing someone with the shadow element.

At his level, Bigua wanted to learn more about a variety of elements to enhance his elemental understanding of water. And he was especially interested in the shadow element since it could mimic various elements.

It could be said that the shadow element didn't exist on its own. It always needed something to base its characteristics on. Just like a shadow's existence was dependent on the light as well as the object it belonged to, the shadow element needed the characteristics of another element to manifest.

Bigua had been watching Drin and Hiram fight for quite some time. He also came to realize that if the shadow element could mimic the characteristics of other elements, the process could be reversed. He could use the shadow element as a medium to gain the elemental effects of other elements while still using his water element mana and water elemental attainment.

After all, Bigua's clarity had allowed him to accomplish something special in his tribe. It was based on water's nature. To be precise, a water surface's nature reflects when it is calm and collected.

Bigua could use someone like Drin to carry out a few experiments for himself. This could allow him to progress to his next evolution and become a real Ogre Overlord. But alas, the monster knew taking Drin into his custody was out of the question.

They had arrived.

Drin stopped casting the forbidden technique when he heard Bigua speak. Simply because he had no reason to lie. He was already aware that Bigua wouldn't have shown himself openly if he wanted to kill him in the first place.

Bigua stared at Drin for a moment before asking him his next question.

"Why did you attack Hiram?"

Drin heard Bigua's question and frowned. He didn't want to offend the monster of his level but he also didn't want to admit that whatever he had done was a mistake. Therefore, he cleared his mind before speaking in a cold tone.

"That man attacked me first. Besides, we had a mission to kill him anyway."

Drin said, looking at Bigua before narrating the events that had taken place ever since his separation from his team. When he was finished, Bigua asked him the next question.

"Hiram is dead. I killed him and you confirmed it. What business do you have with my tribe now?"

Drin felt weird that a quasi-Monster Overlord was chatting with him so casually. He also didn't understand what he was trying to say. So he asked to confirm.

"I am sorry. But I don't understand what you are trying..."

Drin was about to complete his words when Bigua made a face of displeasure before interrupting him.

"Tch! I am not asking you, boy. Keep quiet now. The spectators of this entire show haven't yet shown up. They know that I'm asking them.

Are you too afraid to show your ugly old faces? Answer me!"

Chapter 720 Meera Medinah and Kev Larson

"Are you too afraid to show your ugly old faces? Answer me!"

Bigua said in an angry tone. The monster's strong aura instantly overwhelmed Drin. Thankfully, he was already sitting on the ground.

"Since when did mere Ogre men start getting cocky about their looks? They are nothing but inflated meat blocks that walk around just because they have legs. Hehe."

A sweet voice suddenly sounded in the distance. The tone of her voice was casual and welcoming, but her words were anything but.

In the next moment, two shadows appeared over the branch of the tree Drin was sitting below. These two shadows were the reason Bigua hadn't approached Drin carelessly.

Drin looked up and observed the two rankers who had suddenly appeared. One of them was a woman in her early 30s. She had shoulder-length dark burgundy hair that was tucked neatly behind her ears.

The woman wore a bodice-like half-crop. The purple top paired with purple cargo pants complimented her looks. She had also worn a pair of arm guards and shoulder guards, giving her a hardcore veteran vibe.

This woman had beautiful facial features. She had light wheatish skin and brown hazel eyes. She had a slim waist and ample feminine proportions. But not too much that they'd get in the way of her agile movements. She had a sword sheathed on her back, ready to be drawn.

Drin could immediately tell that this woman was loaded. The gear she had worn along with the sword on her back had distinct mana pulses. These mana pulses were intimidating even when they were not in use.

The person beside the woman was wearing golden body armor. Everything from the guy's head to toe was covered in armor. He was about 8 feet tall and the wielder of a broadsword.

This man also had a red cape attached to his armor. His face was completely covered by the helmet he was wearing, which only had a slit for his eyes.

Both of these rankers were C-rankers. It seemed that the lady had only recently managed to get into the Expert rank. Whereas, the man with the full body armor was close to breaking into the B-Rank. Their mana signatures attested to their strength. Bigua immediately canceled the pressure Drin felt when the two spread their auras.

Drin watched as the lady looked at him and smiled before addressing Bigua once again.

"Anyway. We are here now, Bigua. What are you planning to do about it?"

The lady said while smirking at the Monster Lord. However, she pursed her lips and dropped her head when her companion released his aura to suppress her. His meaning was clear— she should stop provoking Bigua unnecessarily.

The armored ranker turned his head toward Bigua before speaking up in a deep voice.

"What were you trying to prove by killing an Ogre Lord from your own tribe right in front of us?"

Drin narrowed his eyes while looking down when he heard the armored ranker speak. He had figured out the identities of the two rankers at this point. They were the same kingdom-affiliated rankers his team was supposed to meet and collaborate with.

These rankers who were directly under Edinburgh's payroll were supposed to be allies. At least in this mission. And yet, they only served as spectators for his battle against Hiram. He wondered how long they had been observing him without doing anything to salvage the situation.

The armored ranker turned his head down to look at Drin who was below him and shook his head in denial. It was as if he realized what Drin was thinking about.

Bigua snorted his nose before responding to the armored ranker's question.

"You came here to kill Hiram, right? He has been dealt with. I don't think my tribe poses any serious threat to your activities in this place anymore. It is a place you call "Bad"lands, but visit it as if it were your most sacred space.

Talk about hypocrisy."

Drin couldn't believe that a monster was offering a ceasefire by killing a member of his own tribe. It seemed like he had another reason to kill the troublesome Hiram that he hadn't grasped before. He wanted to ward off rankers from attacking his tribe by taking care of the Ogre Lord with his own hands.

The full-body armor ranker pondered a bit before nodding his head at Bigua. He spoke out and made his stance clear.

"That's right. Since Hiram is taken care of, we would no longer pursue the mission to attack the entire tribe."

He then looked down in Drin's direction and said.

"Drin, you can tell your team members you meet them. Tell them that the raid has been called off. The White Raven guild will receive half the reward anyway as compensation for their troubles."

The armored ranker took a pause and allowed Drin to process the news before adding further.

"Let's say that the fabric of space and time is not stable in Monster Canyon because of the way these monsters appear in Anfang, Drin. It's not just our perception that gets skewed. Sometimes the reality itself gets twisted in Monster Canyon because of the imbalance in the space-time fabric.

It's thought that's why miracles occur in Monster Canyon. The will of Anfang can't act normally in the place, allowing countless tragedies and a handful of blessings to slip from its hands."

The armored ranker wanted to tell Drin that not much time had passed since they started observing Drin. They too wanted to get to the meeting place. But ended up witnessing a fight with one of the rankers they were supposed to meet at the rendezvous point. Drin's perception of time was skewed as well, making him process time differently than them.

He also provided Drin with a reason for his sudden breakthrough. The lady ranker who was beside the armored ranker looked at Drin and smiled before adding further.

"Congratulations on your breakthrough, Drin. Your element is special. It would be difficult for you to progress further the higher you climb the ranking ladder. The resources for a ranker like you are just that rare."

The swordswoman narrowed her eyes on Drin and smirked. She folded her hands under her breasts and spoke in an inviting tone.

"Why don't you consider joining Edinburgh's force? We have all the resources you need to help you progress faster in your ranking journey. Plus, you'd gain some authority while you are inside the Edinburgh kingdom.

Your talent is wasted in a low-level guild like White Raven. It has nothing to offer to a ranker like you. Hehe.

The guild might even..."