

Vile 721

Chapter 721 Striking Deals with Monsters

"The guild might even..."

The woman ranker was about to disappear but was stopped by the armored ranker's suppressing aura once again. The Edinburgh kingdom was also keeping tabs on White Raven city and the guild itself.

The city assured the kingdom of significant revenues as soon as it opened. So it didn't care who owned the city as long as it got what it wanted from the city. However, from the looks of things, the kingdom was under the impression that Demonmir would eventually take over the management of Minerva's Utopia. It was only a matter of time.

Still, this was not something a kingdom-affiliated ranker was supposed to mention or comment on. So the swordswoman cleared her throat and dropped the subject of the White Raven guild before saying what she wanted to say in the first place.

"Anyway. My name is Meera Medinah. And this is Kev Larson, also known by his title Armored Knight. If you ever think of joining Edinburgh's special forces, give us a call.

You have already proven your worth by what we have seen you can do so far. We'd gladly accommodate a ranker of your talent."

Drin was taken aback when he heard Meera extend an invitation to him to join Edinburgh's special forces. Although the offer was tempting, Drin didn't want anything to do with the kingdom's business. As a ranker, he knew that increased authority only meant additional responsibilities, which limit a ranker's path.

Although it was not public knowledge, more and more rankers had started noticing that there was a storm brewing on the borders of Edinburgh and Layos. Both kingdoms were actively seeking to increase their military strength. It could only mean that a massive disturbance was heading for both the kingdoms and their respective populace. When the storm hit, Drin didn't want to be restricted. He'd participate in the storm on his own terms.

"I'll think about it."

Despite not wanting to join the special forces, Drin spoke calmly. He didn't want to turn the rankers' invitation down in front of someone like Bigua. So he chose to keep his answer ambiguous, which made the Armored Knight chuckle. He knew at that point that Drin wasn't planning to join their ranks.

Drin got up from his position and looked at the full-body armor man and the beautiful lady ranker who was beside him. When Bigua the tribe chieftain stood in front of them, he wanted to know why these kingdom-affiliated rankers were willing to rescind the raid mission.

From the looks of it, these two rankers' combined strength should be enough for them to take care of Bigua. Especially with their kingdom-issued artifacts.

In retrospect, Drin decided not to ask these questions of the rankers. He guessed that monsters of Bigua's level would always have contingency plans that would spell doom for both parties.

The rankers simply didn't want to burn their hands in collateral damage now that their main goal had been achieved. It didn't matter that Bigua had killed more humans and attacked the many settlements near the borders in the past- it was just that. A past.

Drin wasn't really keen on targeting the entire monster tribes. Especially now that there were no rewards to be gained from doing so. He bowed at the two rankers and also bowed at the quasi Monster Overload Bigua before taking his leave.

Meera, Kev, and Bigua waited for Drin to leave the region before resuming their talk. Bigua was the first one to speak.

"You can't fool me, you know. I know you guys don't care for adventurers that die here, no matter how many of them end up losing their lives.

You don't care about anything other than your profits. So why the pressure tactic?"

Meera smirked when she heard Bigua speak. However, she didn't speak to herself. It was Kev's place to bargain with Bigua.

Kev didn't take long to answer.

"Alright. I'll cut straight to the chase. Should the kingdom of Layos send its forces through the Badlands from your region, we would like for you to attack them with your entire tribe.

Of course, we'll provide you with the necessary intel and some artifacts as well as array imprints to cause maximum damage to our enemies. But you'd have to use your manpower in a sufficient quantity."

If Drin was here, he would have been taken aback by the special forces of Edinburgh striking a deal with a monster and his entire tribe. To ordinary rankers, dealing with monsters on a diplomatic level was unheard of.

Drin shook his head in disappointment when he heard Kev's words. He seemed to have guessed correctly.

"I just don't understand why humans can't settle their disputes as we do. Arrange mortal combat between the two sides. Whoever wins gets to decide what they want to do. Simple as that."

Bigua said and snorted. Then he caressed his chin before adding more.

"I'll need a lot more than the intel and the few artifacts. I need other resources from you. I want you guys..."

Bigua started discussing what he needed with the two rankers. Both sides talked for a while and objected to some of the proposed arguments before finally finding common ground.

Bigua was not the only monster chieftain of importance the kingdom of Edinburgh was in talks with. Similar talks were taking place throughout the Badlands.

The space-time fabric in Badlands was abnormal. Meaning it was very easy to create teleportation arrays inside the Badlands if the rankers knew where to build them. This was the reason why Eren could create a teleportation array all by himself after Alephee's guidance.

Thus, the kingdom of Layos could create multiple fronts of attacks on Edinburgh by using teleportation arrays inside the Badlands. The kingdom approached the monster tribes with this possibility in mind.

The kingdom of Layos was no different. It was doing the same thing with the monster tribes it was in talks with. Both kingdoms had put aside their differences with the monsters at this point.

Instead, they were focusing on making their side stronger by getting monsters onboard on their side. All while using guild rankers as deterring forces and bargaining chips at the same time.

Chapter 722 Muddled Memories

"Where are the rest of you guys?"

Oslo looked at the two men who came to meet him at the designated rendezvous point. His aura told the two men Oslo wasn't happy with their performance.

The two men were severely battered and in terrible shape. It was apparent that something had happened to them.

Yet, Oslo didn't care about their well-being because that was not his job. His duty was to deal a heavy blow to White Raven team members as a warning.

Oslo belonged to Demonmir's faction. He was sent here by Nico Chains, the condor-owning demon beast tamer to oversee the Escalon guild's activities. The beast tamer didn't completely trust the Escalon guild. So he had sent one of his men to handle the situation on-site.

Oslo was a man of medium height and build. His age couldn't be discerned because he was wearing an iron mask. His choice of clothes was odd— plate armor over loose-fitting clothes with tacky colors. His iron mask gave him a mysterious vibe.

"They... they all got killed. We were the only two that survived."

One of the men replied to Oslo. He looked terrified when he started remembering the hell that was unleashed on the entire Escalon guild's team by the Orcs warriors out of the blue.

The other man gritted his teeth and clenched his fists before describing the events that had taken place ever since the team's pursuit of White Raven members began. When he was done, Oslo seemed even more annoyed. He looked at them with his narrowed eyes that were visible through the metal mask and asked to confirm.

"So you're telling me that your entire team was basically wiped out before you could even properly deal with the White Ravens? And this was not even your first attempt, right?"

Oslo seemed more appalled by the members' competence than he was shocked at this point. He looked at them one more time from head to toe before speaking further.

"Wow. It wasn't what I expected from the members of the guild who have the Paladin of Pain in their midst. I guess some unique rankers don't define the guild they are part of."

Oslo said in a disappointed voice. He had also assumed that the White Raven had its card in its sleeves to keep its members safe. However, since it was the third attempt by the Escalon guild, he assumed its

members would be able to overcome the obstacles. After all, no sane person or organization would make the same mistake twice.

It also meant that an attack on White Ravens was not something Demonmir's faction could launch without directly getting themselves involved in some form. Oslo frowned before asking the two rankers to hand over the array disk he had given the Escalon guild beforehand.

One of the two men had managed to secure the array disk amid the tragedy that struck them. He retrieved it from his storage before handing it over to Oslo.

This was a spying and intelligence-gathering artifact made using ether runes. It would show the current activities of the person whose aura it had received upon activation. The person needed to be in a certain range for the array disk to work.

Plus, the ether-element runes would burn themselves as the array disk is getting used. That meant there was only a limited window of time the array would be active before it gets destroyed.

However, for the time it was active, the artifact would show the real-time activities of the person whose aura had been recorded on it. The artifact was very expensive even with the limitations placed on it. So it couldn't be used casually by anyone.

Oslo placed the array disk on his right palm and activated it. In the next moment, a spectral screen was displayed over it that displayed the real-time activity of the person whose aura had been recorded into the artifact at the time of the activation.

The Escalon guild had messed up once again. It was supposed to record Drin's presence so that they could keep an eye on him. But the artifact was activated at the wrong time because the White Ravens split up during the chaos. So it ended up recording Bianka Bluedust's aura.

Oso watched as Bianka and her teammates fought the Ogres that seemed to be of a different squad than Hiram's. But the monsters belonged to Bigam's tribe nonetheless.

Bianka's spell scattered the azure dust particles around her. She was battling a bunch of Ogre Leaders with the rest of her team.

The scattered White Ravens eventually got together. Drin was the only one from the team absent from the scene. However, he managed to contact Katalina a few minutes ago. According to him, the tribe purge mission was over. They were free to continue with the rest of the challenges they had taken on simultaneously in Monster Canyon.

Binaka Bluedust, William Shanks, Kataline Reich, Lily Geist, Wayne Wilder, Ketsu Hasu, Ray Rinehart, and Silver Rehrook. The ex-Titus tournament contestants and current White Raven members were each engaged in their fights with the Ogres.

All of them wanted to go to a different place since killing Ogres of Bigua's tribe was not part of their missions anymore. The most they could do from dealing with them was sell the monsters' bodies after killing them. Which was less lucrative than taking on missions with multi-layered rewards.

However, the Ogres had their own form of communication. They had come to know that Hiram had been killed because of the humans that were currently trying to retreat from their territory. The Ogres were fighting for vengeance at this point.

The azure dust scattered by Bianka didn't look harmful at first. As she fought with her dagger, she held the lamp that she used to scatter her azure dust.

Bianka was very skilled in dagger arts as well as her movement spell. She was also a capable leader. She gave optimal directions to her team to ensure that the Ogres would be at a disadvantage fighting against them.

When sufficient time had passed, Bianka smiled and created a safe distance from her opponent. For an extended period, she kited him across the entire battlefield. Now it was time to reap the fruits of her labor.

"Muddled Memories!"

Bianka executed her next spell which was part of the combo. In the next moment, the enemies that were battling White Ravens stopped their battle with the humans and looked at the other Ogres with vicious glares.

Bianka's spell was about to start infighting among the Ogres.

Chapter 723 Creating a Homunculus P1

The barren mountaintop. Ottoman de Montmorency's place of residence.

The cloudy sky was blocking the afternoon sun. Yet, its blaze could still be felt in the air.

A giant condor-type demon beast was seen flapping its wings, stabilizing his flight a few meters above the ground. A man jumped from the beast's back and landed on the ground.

The beast screeched at its master before flying away, leaving the man on the barren mountaintop. The man walked towards a lone swordsman practicing his weapon arts all by himself.

"Lord Demonmir, I have received a message from the royal court. They are inviting you to attend the meeting. It is going to be conducted in the capital city in a few days."

Ottoman stopped his sword movements when he heard the man speak. He didn't look surprised that the summons had arrived for him.

"Haah! The war seems inevitable. That old man Isen is out for blood."

Demonmir chuckled and stored his dual axes in his storage. He already knew about the disturbance between the two kingdoms. Therefore, he was expecting this summons.

"It's a shame that I won't be able to meet my dear cousin before the meeting. I was looking forward to it."

Said Demonmir and sighed. He then started walking toward the small house to get ready for the journey to Edinburgh's capital.

However, Demonmir stopped in his tracks as he thought of something. Taking no time to turn around, he asked his subordinate who was bowing his head in his presence.

"Nico, did the Escalon guild do what we asked them to do?"

Nico pursed his lips at Ottoman's question. He cleared his throat before responding with a careful voice.

"Not really, Lord Demonmir. Oslo tells me that three of their parties had been almost wiped out trying to target the White Raven team members. It'd be a while before they began the attack for the fourth time.

Oslo is currently staying with the Escalon guild, overseeing things. He'd inform us with the latest news if and when the job gets done."

Demonmir chuckled when he heard Nico's report. He couldn't help thinking it was Levine's setup that wiped out Escalon's forces.

"Hehe. Tell Oslo to build pressure. If messing with them in Monster Canyon is not possible, tell them to cause a bit of a ruckus in the White Raven city.

I don't care if the entire Escalon guild gets eradicated while achieving what we have told them to achieve. I guess I'll run into Paladin of Pain at the meeting. I'll be sure to convey my intentions during our meeting.

Also, find that brat Eren. Hehe. He is as crafty as I was when I was his age. According to the official report, he has been dispatched on a military mission. But he is nowhere to be found on the site.

I want you to handle him personally when you find him, Nico."

Demonmir said and disappeared. Nico nodded to nobody in particular before calling out his demon beast telepathically. He needed to prepare for Demonmir's departure to Edinburgh's capital.

Oni Dungeon. Sacred Pyramid.

Two giant doors were parted as a green-eyed, black-haired man stepped out of a lavish room. This man looked fresh and full of vigor. It was as if he had a peaceful sleep last night. There was a subtle smile on his face.

"My king, the preparations are complete."

Ror addressed Eren as soon as he stepped out of his kingly room. It previously belonged to Har Jahar. Eren had occupied the room after renovating it a bit.

"You work really fast, Ror. Did you ask the emissaries from outside to help you as well?"

Eren asked while stretching his arms wide. It's been three months since he entered the Oni dungeon for the second time. This subspace was where he was preparing something. It had all the resources he needed. Plus, it offered a secure environment for him to conduct the procedure. And that's why he stayed.

Eren was using the subspace's resources to help him complete one of his tasks. And so far, things were on the right track.

When he first found out about the procedure, he was doubtful if he could get all the ingredients anytime soon. Thus, he asked Ror for his assistance. The Ogre Overlord simply put all his subordinates to work to expedite Eren's task.

It took three months. But Eren was glad it was finally over. After all, he had first thought that it would take him years to complete the task on his own.

"Yes, my king. They don't know that Har Jahar is no more and you have taken over his place. Thus, they all think the resources they are offering to us are part of the process for the next Oni festival. They assumed on their own that the orders were from Har Jahar.

I didn't think you'd want me to clear their doubts or let them know that you have been made in charge of this space. So I let them think like that.

We also made use of rare ingredients we found here to complete the procedure from our end. It only needs a final step from your end to conclude it for good."

He said this while bowing to Eren. Since he knew that his son Kaalmaahen was going outside with Eren, he was especially careful in handling things for him.

Eren looked impressed when he realized how perceptive Ror was. He clapped his hands in appreciation before speaking up.

"That was a wise call. You can simply say that you have usurped Har Jahar using various means if that is enough to shut their mouths for the time being."

Eren knew that the emissaries still active outside would find that something was off about the Oni dungeon one day. That's why he had brought forth Ror as the monsters' leader so it would be easy for them to accept him.

Eren had made sure that everybody living in the subspace was loyal to him. Thus, the rest of the monsters were on board with any of the actions Eren asked them to take.

Eren was about to ask Ror some more questions. But he suddenly felt a known presence near him.

"Lord Husband, will we finally go outside?"

Kirin appeared right beside Eren when he got out of his room. She had a starry look in her eyes as she asked Eren the question. The butcher laughed and crossed his arms before responding.

"Don't worry, Kirin. We will go outside together. I'll show you a broader world that is not this subspace. Hehe. I'm sure you'd like it.

But first, let me create a homunculus."

Chapter 724 Creating a Homunculus P2

Kirin had never left the Oni dungeon ever since she was born inside it.

As such, she was very excited to see the outside world. Eren needed to complete creating the body of the homunculus for him to take Kirin outside.

Kirin wanted to know everything about humans. She had seen them as sacrifices in the Oni dungeon. Now she wanted to interact with them on a personal level. She had also been learning Edinburgh's official language from Eren for the same reason.

Kirin wanted Eren to consummate their marriage when they left the Oni dungeon. She didn't want to start a new chapter in her life while staying in the same place.

Eren accepted her wish right away. Sharog, Lasha, and Luna kept him busy nonetheless. He also didn't forget to practice his ranking technique.

Layla had shared the Adept ranked Rootless ranking technique with Eren before he entered the Oni dungeon. She knew he would try to break into the next rank in the subspace. Thus, she gave him the half-blood ranking technique of her own initiative.

Layla knew that a stronger Eren was in the best interest of her master Eliza. So the butcher was spared from finding an alternate option for his ranking technique.

Layla was the one who explained to Eren the procedure to create a homunculus. She had already admitted to him that she was indeed a homunculus when Eren asked her about it after learning it from Alephee.

Layla also wanted to know why he was so keen on the procedure. However, the butcher just told her that he wanted to experiment.

Eren also needed to digest all the experiences he had gained in the separate dimension as well as stabilize his ranking status. He used these three months to do all that, solidifying his foundation once more.

Eren kept on talking with Kirin while quickly glancing at his current stats.

Name- Eren Elijah Idril (Verified)

Organizations- Edinburgh Army (Nightshade duchy) Lionhearts Adventurers' Academy

Academic Status- Class 2/C

Ranked Status: Not applicable due to on-field assignment

Base Stats:

HP- 15.2 / 15.2

MP- 13.3 / 13.3

STR- 13.5

AGI- 15.2

INT- 14.2

BTP~ 71

BTP Visibility- Private

Ranking Status: D-Rank (Vapor Core State)

Ranking Technique- Rootless (Custom Name)

Eren observed that his body stat values were approaching the same level as each other. As a result, his INT stat had received the biggest boost. He wasn't sure if that was a positive thing for a close combat expert like him.

Nevertheless, he realized that his life was evolving into something more than just a close combat expert. So these stats were the inevitable outcome.

Eren was just a step away from making his mana core enter the liquid core state of the Adept rank. His bottleneck of the Ace rank and his unique way of advancing his ranking status had allowed him to skip the initial hurdles faced by normal Adept rankers.

Eren was happy with his progress. And his happiness could be seen through his behavior.

Eren wasn't aware that there was a war brewing between the kingdom of Edinburgh and the kingdom of Layos. Additionally, he was unaware that his enemies and his allies were slowly congregating in the same place that was his newfound city.

However, the butcher could always sense trouble coming from miles away ever since he was given a new lease on life. He didn't take things for granted or leave them to chance this time.

Eren had already secured his team members' survival in Monster Canyon by shifting Baran's entire tribe. He had also told Agatha to only accept missions related to specific regions inside the Monster Canyon. This was so that Baran would be easily able to tackle the problems heading his team's way while remaining in the shadows.

As for the threats coming at him from Demonmir and the likes, he couldn't do anything about them for the time being. He could only rely on Levine and House Derringer for that. And so far, they hadn't disappointed him.

Eren led Kirin to the sacred hall and Ror followed him. He talked with Kirin while he was walking, telling her about stuff that she would find outside.

"You know Kirin, there are lots of beautiful places to see outside the Oni dungeon. From picturesque mountain views to bustling cities, there's so much you haven't seen.

The variety of food outside is nothing to be scoffed at either. The mortal food is also something you'd need to try. And then the wines. My darling, the monster ales are terrific. But they are all the same. You won't find..."

Eren kept talking with Kirin and teased her every once in a while. He would play with her big and sparkling earrings while he did that. Every time he explained something, he would switch to something entirely different, keeping Kirin eager to listen to his discussions.

Eren also found it relieving that he had Kirin to try his flirting skills on. The butcher felt like he was out of the game lately. Sharog and others would find even his mundane talks amusing and something to listen to with utmost care.

However, Kirin was like a blank canvas that could be dyed with a range of colors. Eren could try all his puns and one-liners on her and she would find them hilarious and intriguing.

Ror was impressed that his king had this characteristic in himself as well. He couldn't have imagined Har Jahar talking about something like this. And this was despite the fact that Eren was crueler and meaner than the Oni King. It was like Ror was looking at a completely different person.

It's been a while since they reached the sacred hall. But the Ogre Overlord didn't dare to disturb Eren when he was having some conversation with Kirin.

Kirin was mesmerized by the novelty of the outside world Eren had told her about. She couldn't wait to get outside the confined place and see the world outside with her own eyes.

Eren was more than just the husband for Kirin. He was also her guide in the outside world as she envisioned the world through his perspective. The butcher had managed to secure a firm place in her heart and mind with all his actions so far. During these three months, he talked to her every day, strengthening that relationship.

"Alright, time to focus on the task at hand."

Eren finally stopped talking with Kirin and decided to finish the procedure. He looked at the giant array that was laid in front of him and the people around it keenly before asking a question to someone in his mind.

'Aleph, are you ready to receive a body?'

Chapter 725 Putting a Face to the Voice P1

A beautiful girl was seen lying naked inside an extremely complicated runic array.

The array eye was like a small pond that contained a mysterious red liquid of unknown origin. The girl's body was also half submerged in the liquid while lying on her back.

She had her eyes closed the whole time the process was taking place. The runic inscriptions that were part of the array were getting illuminated and faded at a certain rate. As if the entire array was breathing.

It was clear that the process was still incomplete.

"Damn! Even more?"

Eren couldn't help being amazed by the blood the array was demanding from him. In the next moment, he retracted his mana defense layer willingly and cut his wrist using his Labrys.

Eren's blood started dripping inside the segment of the giant array. He was standing inside one such segment while Ror and Durbag were acting as the regulators of the array inside their own segments.

These segments were connected to the circular array using the runic chains that would glow with bright golden red colors whenever the segments were made active.

As soon as Eren's blood dropped inside the segment, it evaporated before turning into formless red energy. It would then get absorbed by the runic chains before ultimately getting absorbed by the body of the beautiful girl lying inside the array with her eyes closed.

This girl had black hair and supple skin. There was a faint sheen over her skin. Plus, she had a cute nose and even cuter lips. All these details came together to make her pretty.

The girl's jet-black, waist-length hair had a distinct luster. It cascaded her pretty face perfectly, adding even more charm to her looks.

This adorable girl looked to be in her late teen years. She had adequate feminine proportions.

Eren kept on bleeding through his wrist as he watched the process. His body was Adept ranked. It could handle blood loss for hours on end under a controlled environment just fine.

His Adept ranked body was generating his blood over time, replenishing it in a matter of minutes, using his own mana as fuel. Hence, Eren didn't need to worry about blood loss.

However, he was tired after he kept the array working for two days straight while bleeding a huge amount of blood every day. This was when Eren had a monster like Ror to control and maintain the array to lessen the burden on him. And he was also being guided and aided by Durbag who was an expert in arrays.

Durbag was fascinated by the array as soon as Eren had presented it to him and asked him to make it. After a lot of failed attempts, he had managed to cast a working array. The array's complexities could be understood when even Durbag who had trapped Har Jahar in his array found it difficult to cast it.

A huge amount of resources were spent in making this array. Other monsters were standing nearby as well, who were tasked by Durbag to fix any anomaly in the array that would pop up from time to time.

Kirin wasn't given any task because she didn't understand anything about arrays. Nor did she have the resources to control one's own mana while being part of the array's mechanism.

Kirin worried about her husband all the same. Against Durbag's polite warnings, she could approach Eren every so often and ask him about his well-being. She would also ask him if he needed anything to eat or drink.

The butcher didn't have to do much since Ror and others were here. He had basically relegated all the tasks related to the functioning of the array to his subordinates. And they were working like clockwork.

Eren would therefore drink the monster ale fetched by Kirin. He would rarely smoke while talking with Kirin. She would be surprised by even the most mundane things that existed outside the Oni dungeon. The butcher found it entertaining so he kept on adding more information to her database.

Eren would often talk with Kirin using the human tongue to give her practice speaking and understanding Edinburgh's official language. He was reminded of Reen more than once when she made mistakes.

It could be said that Eren was always very patient with his students. Or at least a few of them. He would correct Kirin using the right words and forms, making her understand her mistakes and allowing her to rectify them in real time.

Therefore, the two days spent inside the array segment weren't boring to him. It allowed him to connect with kirin and other monsters who were in the vicinity even more.

However, Eren's patience started wearing thin after another seven or so hours. That's because the young girl was not showing any signs of awakening even after he had done everything right.

By Layla's calculations, the young girl should have woken up at this point. Of course, Alephee suggested a few changes in the array diagram that Eren had implemented. Eren could only conclude that the delay was due to the changes made by Alephee.

Just when Eren thought that something had gone wrong during the creation of the array, he felt an earthquake-like tremor slowly spreading all across the sacred hall. This was the same sacred hall in which Har Jahar had been killed.

The sacred hall's runic enhancements had made Eren believe that the sacred hall was as stable as the entire subspace. But the tremors had clearly proved him wrong.

Oooooommmmm!

A formless sound that could only belong to the void spread across the surroundings as a distinct mana pulse was released from the center of the array. The runes inside the arrays glowed brighter than ever before dimming for good. The limestone on which the array was cast started cracking under some tremendous pressure of unknown origin.

Eren wasn't sure if the array had worked or not because of the destruction it had caused. But he soon got his answer when he focused his gaze on the face of the beautiful girl lying inside the array-eye.

A pair of ruby red eyes were opened for the first time. Or to be precise, these ruby red eyes were opened for the first time in a long long time.

Chapter 726 Putting a Face to the Voice P2

"Eren!"

Alephee called out as she got up from her lying position. Eren smirked when the latter kept on looking intently at him with a smile on her face.

Alephee stood up and stretched her arms. Her posture was about 5.10 feet. Her attractive figure was a sight for sore eyes. Despite this, the monsters refrained from looking at her for fear of making their king angry.

Alephee didn't mind her newfound body being seen in its most natural form by any of her spectators. But she didn't want to make things awkward for them either. She just swayed her arms and in the next moment, she was seen wearing a sophisticated dress.

She had created the most exquisite fabric from nothing using the soul spell.

Alephee was seen wearing a black dress. It had a bodice-like pattern for her torso, highlighting her bust in just the right way. The dress exposed her delicate shoulders.

The black dress had flounces sewn over it below the waist with layered petticoats, giving the wearer an elegant touch.

Alephee also wore a butterfly-like pattern around her neck. Her hands were tucked inside gloves that reached to her elbows. Her voluminous black hair grew a little more and spread behind the dress like a waterfall, accentuating her gothic black looks.

This was Alephee. The only person who knew Eren for the majority of his life. As such, the butcher was glad that she had appeared to him in whatever form she was in.

Eren wouldn't have admitted to Alephee but he was still doubting her existence in his head. Was it a real existence or was it some residual consciousness mixed with his own feelings and memories to create a cocktail known as Alephee?

Eren knew Alephee had proven so many times that she was as real as the second chance of life he had gotten for himself. Still, since he couldn't put a face to her voice, there was always this doubt he had in his mind that he couldn't get rid of.

However, all his doubts were put to rest when he saw Alephee standing in front of him in an elegant-looking black dress. She was looking at him as well. It seemed both of them had too many thoughts swirling inside their minds as neither of them talked for a bit.

Alephee was the first to break the ice.

"How do I look?"

Alephee sounded more human and a bit different to Eren than when she was talking to him in his mind. It was as if a large part of her consciousness and personality were slumbering when she was only able to talk to him in his head.

"Just as charming as I had thought."

Eren said and smiled before adding, "maybe more."

Alephee didn't have to breathe because of her current homunculus body. But at this point, she felt like taking a deep breath. She then surveyed her surroundings and observed everything that was there to observe.

Alephee then looked at her hands and stretched her palms. She then turned them into fists before stretching her palms once again. She then felt the skin of her face using both of her hands and felt her current countenance with her hands.

"Don't worry. The array worked perfectly. You are not ugly."

Eren walked toward Alephee and said. The latter chuckled before walking toward him as well. Soon they were standing only a foot away from each other.

Alephee spread her arms wide and hugged Eren and he hugged back. He patted her back before separating from her.

"Hehe. It's good to see you in person, Alephee."

Alephee nodded at Eren before responding to Eren.

"Heh! Right back at you. I didn't think this day would come this soon. Forgive me for underestimating your capabilities."

Alephee said and smiled. The butcher chuckled before shrugging his shoulders and responding.

"Hehe. no hard feelings. I wasn't sure things would fall into the right places for me."

Alephee chuckled and was about to say something more. However, Kirin suddenly appeared beside Eren like a ghost before asking him.

"Lord Husband, who is this girl? Or what is she?"

Kirin was just curious because she hadn't seen a homunculus before. As a result, she did not feel like any of the creatures she had encountered.

Alephee didn't have heartbeats. She didn't need to breathe. She also did not have any ranking status. Kirin's monster senses, however, told her she was not a simple being at all.

She just wanted to keep Eren safe. Thus, the butcher smiled and was about to introduce Layla to Alephee. But turns out, he didn't have to.

"I know all about you. Nice to meet you."

Alephee said to Kirin before looking at Eren once again.

"Let's find a more apt place for ourselves."

Eren liked Alephee's decision. So he called out his demon beast. Argo came flying from some unknown direction soon after. He had residual blood on his eagle beak, which spoke volumes about his activities inside the subspace.

Eren disbanded all the monsters inside the sacred hall, enabling them to get back to their usual routine. He then jumped on his demon beast's back before gesturing to both the ladies to do the same.

Kirin could walk on the clouds she made for herself. So, she didn't need a flying demon beast to achieve the same results as a flight. However, she didn't say no to Eren and hopped right on. Alephee had already climbed over Argo's back.

The trio flew in a distant direction from the sacred pyramid. Ror looked at Argo and the three blurred figures on his back with keen interest. He had so many questions in his mind.

It was not like Ror did not know about the procedure to create a homunculus. He was from Echidna previously. He had seen many bizarre events.

But there was one thing that bugged him ever since Alephee had opened her eyes.

'Why didn't Anfang's Will create a disturbance?'

Chapter 727 An Artificial Artwork P1

Inside the Oni Dungeon. Lake Hatu.

This lake inside the Oni dungeon's subspace had sparkling green water. The morning rays had penetrated deep into the depths of the lake and came out with glitter.

The lake had dense vegetation all around it. There were various flower buds still in their budding phase. The fully bloomed red flowers had golden pollen and golden stems. The flowers and the stems all around them had lights of their own while synthesizing the sunlight. It was the indication that the flowers themselves were harnessers of mana and hence had magical properties.

Lake Hatu had many different types of rare raw ingredients growing all around it. Yet, compared to the other regions of the subspace, the region around Lake Hatu was nothing special. As such, the lake would rarely see visitors.

However, lake Hatu was currently being visited by three people who had come here riding a demon beast.

"How do you feel?"

Eren asked while looking at Alephee. The latter was busy admiring her reflection in the lake water. Eren and Kirin were standing a few meters away from her near the lake's shore.

"Hm. Nostalgic, happy, upset, and all kinds of emotions I haven't processed yet. But it's fine. I'm fine, even though my mind is in disarray.

I feel that I'm content with the chaos that's currently happening in my head. Because I know that I'll manage things somehow. Because I understand the importance of time.

Does that make sense?"

Eren smiled when he saw Alephee replying to him without looking back. He nodded at her before adding up.

"It DOES make sense," Eren said and paused before asking his next question. "So what are your plans?"

It looked like Alephee didn't hear Eren's question as she was still a bit too occupied with observing what she looked like. Eren chuckled and couldn't help but think Alephee was a bit narcissistic.

However, Alephee turned back in the next moment and answered Eren's question with a smirk on her face.

"To train you of course. We can't let you slack off anymore. Hehe."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Alephee's response. He narrowed his eyes at the Homunculus that was walking toward him before asking her another question.

"Was this your plan all along when you told me about this plan?"

Alephee nodded immediately, confirming his doubts.

"That's right. That's one of the reasons. We will make sure that your progress will be streamlined from today onwards.

My other reason for having a Homunculus body is that I can't always cast soul spells using my soul space. My soul is still recovering and I need to be mindful about using them."

Alephee said and turned her gaze toward Kirin. She looked like she wanted to ask Alephee some questions but was waiting for the right time. Alephee smiled at Kirin before speaking up.

"What is it, Kirin? Do you want to ask me something?"

Kirin looked at Alephee curiously before voicing her query.

"Alephee, why don't you have any heartbeat? You don't feel like a normal human even though you look like one. What are you?"

Alephee smiled when she saw the curiosity Kirin had towards her. She, Kirin, and Eren started taking a stroll on the lakeshore. Alephee replied after a bit.

"The artificial humanoids are known as Homunculus. They are made with alchemy, which is a combination of potioning and arrays. Since my body is artificially made, you can easily discern my presence as something out of the ordinary."

Alephee replied to Kirin with a patient voice. Eren had also come to know a bit about homunculus after Alephee and Layla told him things. However, he was still a novice in such a mystic field. Thus, he also listened attentively to Alephee's words.

"Homunculi don't have heartbeats because they don't have a regular heart. The blood and mana in our bodies are regulated by an array of mechanisms. The array is located at the heart. So even if it doesn't beat, that array mechanism can still be called the heart for all the homunculi."

Kirin nodded her head in understanding. Eren remembered that Layla could replicate the functions of a functional heartbeat with her array mechanism. When asked, she told him that she liked to think of herself as alive. The sound and feel of her own beating heart gave her that feeling.

Kirin was having different thoughts than Eren. She asked Alephee another question.

"You mean to say that you don't have mana circuits? How would you cast magic then?"

Alephee didn't take long to answer.

"Homunculi can have mana circuits. But like their bodies, the mana circuits are also artificial and hence less complicated. The artificial mana circuits are also regulated by an array mechanism."

Kirin was beginning to understand how Alephee's body worked. She asked another question without any inhibition. Alephee looked at Kirin before adding further.

"Homunculi don't age. They don't have to sleep or eat like regular people either. They can technically live for eternity. This is the reason Sages create homunculi and make them caretakers of their subspaces or their legacy works."

Alephee looked at Eren while saying the last part of her sentence. She was letting Eren know why he found Layla in charge of the Purgatory for the first time. This is the reason why homunculi were almost always the caretakers of Utopias and Purgatories created by the Sages of the past.

A homunculus was a faithful subordinate. They would never betray their masters. They were not greedy for Extols in a way other humans were. They only looked at it as a food source for the most part.

They practically lived forever. A homunculus would even outlive its creator and still be bound by the same rules and regulations. They would keep on working non-stop without any need to eat or sleep, making them a suitable workforce for Sages.

Kirin was amazed by hearing all this. But then another question popped into her mind.

"Then how do homunculi sustain themselves?"

"Homunculi need Extols or other forms of condensed mana stones to function. Or the alchemist who created them could make them use a different form of energy.

They then use the mana that is stored inside the energy source and circulate it throughout their bodies using the heart array inside them. This would enable them to cast spells more traditionally."

Chapter 728 An Artificial Artwork P2

Eren observed that Layla was describing things about Homunculi to Kirin patiently. But she never called herself a homunculus.

Alephee was still connected to Eren's mind. As such, she could sense what he was thinking. She looked at him and smiled before speaking up.

"You are right, Eren. I don't see myself as a homunculus because this is just a temporary vessel for me. I would find myself a real vessel when the time comes. With your help, it is completely possible."

Alephee said, making Eren remember why Eliza had zeroed in on him in the first place. His constitution as a slime half-blood and his connection with Reen. They were the right raw ingredients for creating a real vessel for oneself, which was seen as even more of a taboo than creating homunculi.

Alephee knew what Eren was thinking so she clarified it in a serious tone.

"Don't worry. What Eliza is doing is not the only way to create a flawless vessel. And something like that won't be enough for me anyway."

Alephee chuckled a bit before continuing.

"I guess all homunculi have an identity disorder. Being immortal, they want to belong to the world of the living.

They do not want to accept the differences in existence they have with humans. Hence, they create a personality for themselves and stick with it."

Kirin and Eren didn't disturb Alephee. They just let her continue speaking as they continued walking along the lakeside.

"I'm different from other homunculi because my consciousness is not derived from the soul splitting or copying of memories. My thoughts and personality are not a construct based on some alchemist's origins or experiences.

This body has Eren's origin blood. But my thoughts are not influenced by it."

Alephee looked at Eren and formed a smile. She knew Eren had wondered if she was real or not in the past. Before speaking up, she cleared the air for good.

"Eren, you need to know this. Layla is not a normal homunculus either. Her consciousness is real. You know what that means?"

Eren narrowed his eyes when Alephee made another revelation about Alephee. He listened to all that Alephee had said so far before concluding.

"Do you mean to say Layla once existed for real?"

Alephee nodded at Eren's question right away before adding further.

"That's right. Someone took her real soul and made a homunculus body for her afterward.

Binding a soul to a homunculus body is not an easy fit. The creator must know what they are doing. Otherwise, both the soul and the process of creating a homunculus body would be compromised.

In my case, I did all the heavy lifting. The modifications in the process that were suggested by me were for this reason. Otherwise, you would have failed the process many times."

Alephee said and thought about Layla. She was very impressed when she first sensed Layla. She was practically indistinguishable from human beings. It didn't take long for Alephee to understand that Layla was special.

She looked at the lake water that still glittered with a golden hue as she said it. Her talk with Eren was making him understand what or who he was dealing with even though Layla looked to be a child trapped in a teen's body.

"A very capable alchemist has created the artificial bodies for the real twins Layla and Leela in the form of homunculi. And I can tell you that it was not Eliza."

Eren looked at Alephee when she spoke her last words. Kirin wasn't aware of what or who the duo was talking about. Alephee answered all her questions because she knew those were the same questions Eren had in mind.

Alephee told the duo that a homunculus would heal from any injury quickly after extending their mana reserves. They could even survive after their heads get chopped off and would only show signs of weakness when it comes to their heart array.

These artificial humanoids cannot be poisoned. Plus, they would have no restrictions or compatibility issues placed on them when it comes to using any elemental spells. In any case, the restrictions wouldn't be as severe as for ordinary living beings.

Since homunculi didn't have traditional mana circuits, there was no class for them either. They would need a medium to cast their spells with and would only use their artificial mana circuits to tweak the spells' effects.

Still, since it was not cast by a living thing, the spell executed by homunculi had a deviant mana signature. Even a non-sensory class ranker would discern that the spell was not cast by a normal human if they ever saw a homunculus executing their spells.

Alephee explained to Kirin and Eren that a homunculus would not have a ranking status in a traditional sense either. They didn't have mana cores in them after all.

A homunculus' entire body acted as their mana reserves. The type of mana they use depends upon the heart array. An Adept-ranked heart array would allow the homunculus to use Adept-ranked mana and Adept-ranked spells.

A homunculus would not be able to cast spells after they depleted their mana reserves completely. They were also incapable of using the mana in the surrounding environment to replenish themselves.

As such, the artificial humanoids depended heavily on Extols and such to replenish themselves. The effect of every spell they would cast could be quantified in terms of Extols. As such, most homunculi were walking money-burning machines.

Homunculi were also incapable of giving birth to children.

The kingdom of Edinburgh and other forces around it considered homunculi as menaces that needed to be taken care of. When a mad Sage released a batch of homunculi in the past, it made things difficult for these forces.

Since they were difficult to kill, a huge force needed to be dispatched before such destructive homunculi were taken care of. As such, every stray homunculus would be tracked and hunted by these forces.

Layla knew about these things from Arthur's descriptions of the current rules and regulations set by the Anfang alliance. Thus, she had refrained from using any spells directly for the most part whenever she showed herself.

Chapter 729 Perfect Paradox

"So..."

Eren tried to sum things up.

"You are now nearly immortal. You don't have to eat or sleep. And in exchange, you won't get to have kids or cast spells normally. Sounds like a good deal to me."

Eren said and smirked at Alephee. Alephee had a smile of her own before replying.

"I was immortal before I occupied this Homunculus body, Eren. This is actually a downgrade for me. To be honest, being turned into a homunculus was not something I wanted. This is only a necessity so that I can guide you better.

After all, my existence is tied to you. And I'd have to prepare you if I ever want to get back to the place I belong."

Alephee's voice was serious and sounded more like resolve. She stopped walking and turned toward Eren. Then she began levitating about five meters in the air from the ground.

Alephee flew over the surface of the lake while maintaining eye contact with Eren. She stopped advancing after creating some distance between herself and the duo.

'As for the restrictions placed on the homunculi, some of them don't apply to me. Let me show you something special."

Alephee raised her arms in response. She moved her fingers as if playing zither on the formless cords stretched in front of her.

"Perfect Paradox!"

Alephee cast the soul spell. She wanted to refrain from using soul spells. But this was something she had to do.

At that moment, Eren felt that something was wrong with his mana core. He felt like something was trying to pull him out of his body. As if his mana core was also trying to metamorphose into something else.

To Eren's surprise and horror, Eren saw his ethereal mana core getting pulled out of his body. He looked at Alephee with his horrified expression only to receive her next words in response.

"Hehe. It's not what you think, Eren. Try to access your own mana core."

Alephee said while beckoning the new mana core to fly towards her with her raised hand. Meanwhile, Eren found relief in knowing that his mana core was perfectly safe inside him.

Alephee guided the newly created mana core toward her. When it reached halfway, Alephee stopped moving it before spreading both her arms wide open.

As a result, the ethereal mana core that seemed to have been based on Eren's expanded dramatically. The mana core now had a diameter of about 50 meters, without casting any form of shadow on the sparkling lake water.

While spinning around to itself, the mana core drank massive amounts of mana from its surroundings. The surface of the mana core started illuminating, revealing the existence of various runes placed on it.

Alephee waved her hands and some more runes were being added to the surface of the mana core. She seemed extremely concentrated on her current task. With her powers, she had created a cube-shaped energy barrier that isolated her and the mana core from the rest of her surroundings.

Soon, the mana core started shrinking as it took more mana from the surroundings. Alephee waved her hands from time to time, causing the runes on the mana core to light up.

When the mana core had a diameter of about 10 meters, Alephee took a long breath. After biting her index finger, she snapped her fingers together. A few drops of her blood landed on the mana core. And as a result, it started shrinking rapidly.

Soon the mana core reduced its dimensions by a lot, turning into a sphere that was about an inch in diameter. Alephee gestured with her hands and the mana core disappeared into her body.

Alephee didn't just stop here. She cast her spells again. The nodes and artificial pathways for mana that had been created in her body lit up so brightly they could be seen through her skin in broad daylight.

Alephee gritted her teeth before using some unknown means to re-forged her artificial mana circuits. Her body turned ethereal until only her mana circuits and her mana core was visible.

The artificial mana circuits started getting complicated while the mana core started spinning around itself. Soon, it resembled the mana circuits of an Adept-ranked entity. Yet, there were some distinct differences.

Only when she was done did Alephee's body become visible. She started panting heavily after she was done with the process. It seemed like she was having a hard time breathing. As if she had forgotten the feelings of exhaustion and fatigue.

Eren hadn't felt any mana pulse all this while. But he kept looking at Alephee keenly. He knew that he was witnessing a portion of Alephee's true powers.

His soul sense was telling him that something massive and unnatural was happening at this time. Alephee was trying to overcome one of the restrictions placed on her homunculus body with her powers.

Kirin seemed fascinated by everything that was happening in front of her. She didn't have her soul sense like Eren. So she felt absolutely nothing.

However, her monster instincts were telling her that this was not the norm. This was not something a typical homunculus could do even with their seemingly limitless years of experience.

Alephee snapped her fingers once again and the cube-shaped energy barrier in front of her vanished. She flew back to the lakeshore when she was done.

A small earthquake was felt when she touched the ground, creating waves and ripples on the lake's water. The ripples seemed to originate from her feet, which were a bit submerged in the water.

Eren felt an overwhelming presence wash over him when Alephee took her next step. In the next moment, however, everything returned to normal.

"You... you have turned yourself into an Adept ranker. Same as me!"

Eren couldn't help exclaiming after seeing the changes that had happened to Alephee. She didn't feel any different from any typical ranker at all.

What's more? Eren felt like Alephee had copied his ranking status entirely without belonging to the same close combat expert class.

Alephee smiled in response before speaking up.

"Hehe. Told you not to compare me with your typical Sage's typical minions."

Chapter 730 Grimoire Magic

"Hehe. Told you not to compare me with your typical Sage's typical minions.

Even the Sages themselves are nothing more than a speck of dust in the grand scheme of things."

Alephee said as she combed her voluminous black hair by running her finger through it. She had a normal mana signature at this point, which was almost similar to Eren's. Since the transformation was internal, her appearance hasn't changed.

Alephee didn't sound arrogant even when her statement sounded that way. This was something she knew to be true.

Eren had already come to realize that Sages were not prominent figures in Alephee's eyes. Her statements just now only highlighted what he already knew.

"What did you do?"

Eren asked while raising his eyebrows. For some reason, he could feel resonance with Alephee's mana core. As if he could use her mana core and she could use his even though they were two distinct entities.

Alephee chuckled in response before answering.

"Something you wouldn't understand even if I told you. What you need to know is that I can cast the same spells as you from now on. And then some more after using a medium."

Alephee said paused. She thought of something and her eyes lit up.

"What do you say, Eren? Want to spar with me?"

Alephee looked at Eren with a subtle smile, knowing full well what his response was going to be. Eren could only smile back in response before taking out his weapons.

Eren was wielding Rigor Mortis Shamshir in his right hand and Andruril in his left hand. He regretted the fact that since he had been promoted to Adept rank, all his Ace rank weapons were not that useful to him anymore.

Eren had the transcendent-grade Labrys. But he needed sufficient weapon comprehension and mastery in the weapon arts related to the weapon to use it in a spar against someone like Alephee.

Eren could tell looking in Alephee's eyes that she meant business when she said that she wanted to guide him. As such, she would not be easy on him. Not that he wanted her to do so anyway.

Alephee knew what Eren was thinking after he drew his weapons. She raised her right hand and closed her eyes. A pitch-black book was conjured in front of her that seemed to have unknown origins as it gave off a unique aura.

This black book had black pages and they didn't seem to have anything written on them. Yet, Eren could see that Alephee was focused on the book with her ruby-red eyes.

Alephee let the book levitate motionlessly in front of her while addressing Eren.

"Take out all of your weapons. I'll cheer you up right away."

Eren looked at Alephee suspiciously when she asked him to take out all his weapons. He wasn't sure what she was planning to do with them. But he did what was asked of him.

What he saw next blew his mind.

An open field near Lake Hatu.

Two Adept-ranked entities were seen standing face to face, about 30 meters apart from each other. Some monsters had come to see the fight after Kirin informed the higher-ups about it.

"Isn't this the homunculus the Lord created earlier? She seems a bit different than the last time we saw her."

Sharog commented after observing Alephee. She also sensed that Alephee didn't come across as a Homunculus anymore.

Sharog had checked up on Eren from time to time during the three days, ensuring his well-being isn't harmed during the process. She also felt a bit jealous that Alephee was currently hogging all the attention Eren could spare to give to any of them.

Lasha and Luna were with Sharog, standing behind her. The trio started talking about Eren and Alephee while fixing their gazes on them.

Kirin was nowhere to be seen. But one could always guess that she was hiding in plain sight. She wouldn't miss the fight between her husband and this mysterious entity known as Alephee.

There were other monsters like Ror, Kaal, and Durbag standing all around the open field, looking at the duo keenly. To be honest, the monsters wanted to see how their king would fight without holding anything back.

The duels Eren had fought using his Varhan identity placed certain restrictions on him, making him unable to bring out his true strength. But he would need to go all out during his spar with Alephee.

Sharog, Luna, and Lasha had also sparred with Eren in the past. So they knew how exceptional of a close combat expert Eren was. So they were keen on knowing what the homunculus was up to.

Eren was holding the same set of weapons in his hands. But there was something different about them.

All of his go-to weapons and gears had been upgraded to Adept rank, making them suitable for his current rank. He didn't have to buy or hunt for brand-new weapons anymore. It was unclear how many lives Alephee had saved by upgrading his gears to Adept rank.

This time, Alephee didn't cast the soul spell. She used grimoire magic, which was a known school of spells on Anfang. It was just that the way Alephee used the spells related to grimoire magic made them look like they were on a completely different level.

Even among the homunculi, Alephee had become a unique being. That's because she had the mana core. However, her mana core only allowed her to cast Eren's spells. For other spells, she needed a medium to cast the spells with. Alephee had chosen grimoire magic for this reason.

"This... this is unbelievable. I thought the runes leave a permanent mark on the mana-harnessing metals. As such, it is not easy to upgrade the weapons' ranks after they have been set.

And upgrading their ranks without any smithy in sight? Suffice to say, I'm as surprised as I'm thankful, Alephee."

Eren gripped his two swords and spoke. He thanked Alephee briefly before preparing himself to fight with the existence he had only received help from at this point.

Eren was eager to try his new weapons out. He wanted to learn what she had to teach him. Most of all, he wanted to see how wide the ridge was between him and her.

Alephee could only have access to Adept-ranked mana and thus could only use Adept-ranked spells. But that didn't mean Eren would have an easy time battling with someone who didn't even treat Sages with much regard in her eyes.

"Hehe. Ready when you are, Eren."

Alephee replied casually to Eren's remark. It seemed that she was also intrigued by the prospect of sparring with the butcher.