

Vile 731

Chapter 731 Lightning Maestro

Blitz Steps

Blitz Bolt

Solid Spark

Casting these spells, Alephee vanished into thin air from her position. She cast these spells with such finesse that nobody would believe that it was her first time using them.

Lightning sparked on her body. Up to her elbows and down to her knees, the arms and legs of the homunculus were completely coated with a purple-lightning element, making them appear to have lost their forms and become shapeless lightning-mana.

Eren was not standing still either. He cast his own spells while using time-element spells to boost his reactions. In the next moment, a distinct lightning spark bloomed in the middle of the open field, indicating that a clash had just taken place there.

But the participants were nowhere to be seen by ordinary onlookers. Even Ror was surprised by the movement spells both Eren and Alephee were using at their levels.

Eren was surprised by the weapon Alephee was battling him with. It was another of his spells that he was used to casting as a long-range attack. She was wielding two Solid Sparks in both her hands and strengthening them with Blitz Bolt.

"What in the world..."

Eren was surprised by the power of the spell he had been using all this time. He could see that Alephee was more skilled at casting his spells than he was. It kind of irritated Eren that she was flexing her skills while trying to show him how much he was lacking in using his spells.

There was no verbal communication necessary. They both knew what the other person was thinking even without the mental connection they shared. Alephee smirked while Eren had a frown on his face. At least one of them was having a good time.

Blitz Storm!

Alephee cast her AoE just when they clashed for the 17th time. She let it loose in such a manner that Eren was unable to flee in time. For the first time since his life had been rebooted, Eren felt the true horrors of clashing with the lightning-element ranker.

His entire body froze and his muscles atrophied as if they hadn't been used for a long time. The blood in his system boiled and his skin started flaking. He had a killer headache and his vision started blurring. His legs were about to give up on him as well.

"Something's wrong... Blitz Storm was never this powerful."

Eren spoke before sending his mana circuits into hyperdrive. He quickly expelled the foreign mana that was trying to take over his nervous system and pulled back from the middle of the ground. He felt aggravated by the fact that he was made to retreat just a minute after the fight started.

Alephee wanted to press on with her advantage. But Eren wouldn't learn to reflect on his mistakes in real time if she kept attacking him all the time. So she retreated as well, giving him the breather he so desperately needed.

"Hehe. I'm pairing Blitz Storm with a stacked Blitz Bolt. Each strand of lightning released by the Blitz Storm is a solo variant of the Blitz Bolt. Of course, the combo is going to be more deadly than simply using the AoE like an amateur."

Eren's eyes were opened wide when he heard Alephee pairing his go-to lightning element attack spell with his AoE attack. The finesse with which she did it made Eren unable to discern that the AoE had been altered. Because visually, nothing had changed in casting the spell. However, only his body knew how destructive his AoE had become after pairing up with Blitz Bolt.

Eren looked at the smiling Alephee with a serious expression. He had to say that what was standing in front of him was a monster more monstrous than anything he had come across so far.

She had become a lightning maestro in Eren's eyes.

She made casting and pairing those combos seamless even when bound by the same restrictions as him. Was it that her way of lightning was more profound than him? Eren couldn't tell. But he guessed that the answer wasn't as simple as he was thinking it to be.

Alephee realized what Eren was thinking and clarified.

"Way of the element can give you an edge. But that is not the only way to gain an edge, Eren.

Absolute control over one's mana circuits.

Even a simple act like controlling the mana circuits most efficiently can give you the edge you need. You've seen this before.

What I'm showing you right now is only the lightning-element variant of something you witnessed firsthand in your battle against that girl not too long ago."

Alephee said and made one of the Solid Sparks disappear from her left hand. She was adopting a one-weapon style. Eren heard Alephee's words and quickly scanned through his recent memories. He quickly zeroed in on a name.

"Altashia!"

Alephee chuckled before nodding at Eren. She changed the shape of the Solid Spark and turned it into an actual-looking sword made of pure lightning element mana. She tweaked the spell so much that it started looking like a different spell altogether.

Eren had stopped getting surprised by Alephee's deeds anymore. Plus, the whole point of this spar was so that Eren could learn his flaws and improve his current battle style. And that's what was happening at this point.

He listened intently as she spoke up.

"Why do you think I gave you such a detailed explanation about Altashia's class? Remember her way of casting spells. She is way superior to you in this field.

Her control over her mana circuits is so profound that, she'd advance leaps and bounds every time she ranks up. I can bet you anything if you battle with her right now, she'd win. There's no doubt in my mind about that."

Eren furrowed his eyebrows when he heard Alephee speak. Even he knew he had brute-forced his way into victory against Altashia. And he had relied on his sudden breakthrough of elemental fusion to overcome Altashia's spells.

He knew all this retrospectively. But that didn't mean he should like it when someone reminds him of it. He pursed his lips before thinking of something. The guy knew it was about to sound like an excuse. Regardless, he spoke what was in his mind.

Chapter 732 Guts to Pay the Price for Something Worth Having

"Um... Altashia needs to have that much control over her mana circuits to make use of her warrior class. Otherwise, she'd be worse off than a mediocre ranker."

While keeping an eye on Alephee, Eren said. He was sure that she would attack him without any hesitation if he let her guard down.

Alephee looked at Eren disapprovingly before commenting.

"So? That doesn't change the fact that she had superior control over her mana circuits than you. And who said you need to belong to a warrior class to train yourself into controlling your mana circuits to perfection?"

The class system has made the mana harnessing entities of Anfang too reliant on it. Forget about what is expected or not expected of you because of your class.

Every ranker who wants to wield their powers to their fullest needs to have exceptional control over their mana circuits, no matter which class they practice. You just saw what I could do with simply having better control over my mana circuits than you.

Hehe... If you are still not satisfied, let me show you something else."

Alephee said and shaped another Solid Spark in her free hand. This Solid Spark looked more like the traditional Solid Spark Eren was used to casting except for the fact that it was thinner and more elongated.

Before Eren could ask what Alephee was planning to do with the Solid Spark, he observed something different at the upper tip of the Solid Spark. Upon realizing something, he shut his mouth. Alephee was going for another combo attack.

Eren braced himself to flee from his current position at a moment's notice. He was sure that he would be able to cast any Solid Spark thrown his way, thanks to his time-element spells and his newfound Adept-ranked body stats.

"Hehe. You won't be able to dodge this."

Alephee said as she firmly grasped the Solid Spark. She then spun around in a quick motion before releasing the long-range attack in Eren's direction.

Swoosh. Bzzt. Boom.

Eren had started his movement spell as soon as he saw Alephee spinning. But somehow, his body was still damaged by another AoE.

Alephee had paired up the AoE with the long-range attack. She tweaked Blitz Storm and cast it at the tip of the Solid Spark. The Solid Spark served as the source of mana for the AoE.

The lightning bolt-shaped long-range attack was detonated just before it touched the empty ground Eren had left behind at his previous position. As a result, Blitz Storm was released, catching Eren in its range.

"Aaaaaargh! Fuck!"

Eren couldn't help cursing as his body was subjected to another lightning torment. He had come to realize that Alephee really wasn't being all out in her attacks. Otherwise, he would be in worse condition.

Alephee had still not approached Eren, giving him some time to think and register how she had used the spells he thought he was so familiar with. She could tell that a storm was brewing in his head.

Eren felt the same frustration he had experienced due to Ken at the start of his academic year in the past. He felt like he was an idiot for not being able to use spells like this. It was as if a stranger knew a lot about the gadget or artifact you owned and were proud of.

"Will... will I be able to do the same if I can control my mana circuits better?"

Eren gritted his teeth and expelled another batch of foreign mana from his system as he asked the question to Alephee. The latter chuckled before answering.

"Yes. But learning to control mana circuits is not easy. The rudimentary control that you have is less effective. But you need to understand that it is also safe for you to use and have. You won't ever fry your mana circuits with your own hands in your current condition.

No gall, no glory. No thorns, no throne.

You will suffer pain and suffering for a very very long time if you decide to work through the training. And the process won't be sudden. Remember what I told you about Altashia? The training is not suitable for all rankers.

What's more? I'm sorry for being honest here, Eren. But Altashia is a prodigy. And yet, she suffered so much to gain the control she has now. You are not like her. You know what that means?"

Alephee replied, looking at Eren intently. She knew her words were harsh. No matter what an ordinary challenger did to keep up, and match up, before eventually overcoming someone with inborn talent, the latter would be able to cut the difference easily as long as they put in some more effort.

This was the reason a lot of ordinary rankers stopped putting in more effort. To accept that someone with less effort gained an advantage over you was discouraging.

Life was not fair for everybody.

Eren knew what Alephee was trying to say. He looked at her with a grim expression before replying.

"I know what that means. The effort I must put in is even greater than Altashia's. I'd have to suffer far more than she did. And my suffering may last even longer than her.

This is the price I have to pay to gain absolute control over my mana circuits."

Eren received another nod from Alephee after he voiced his thoughts. Alephee knew how painful the process was going to be. But she wanted Eren to follow through with it anyway. This was for his own good.

However, she wouldn't subject him to the process if he was not willing. So she asked to confirm.

"What's your answer?"

Eren started laughing when he looked at Alephee's apprehensive expressions. As if she was going to be very disappointed if he says no.

"Haha. There are things I can get scared of. Particularly those that I am not familiar with.

But pain... I'm not scared of pain."

Eren clenched his fists before making his decision to get to know Alephee.

"I'll pay.

I'll pay the price to gain anything and everything worth having."

Chapter 733 Importance of Spell Creation

"I'll pay the price to gain anything and everything worth having."

Eren said while looking at Alephee— his eyes reflected the determination he carried in his heart. The homunculus smiled when she heard his words before nodding her head.

"That's what I wanted to hear, Eren. I'll personally start your training. But that can wait for now.

Hehe. Let me beat you some more so that your determination turns into madness."

Alephee said before casting her spells. The mana pulse she gave off was unique as well— something Eren hadn't felt before but was recognizable to some degree nonetheless.

Eren could only laugh bitterly at Alephee's stance. He prepared himself to put up the toughest fight possible.

"Use your Beast Contract spell, Eren."

Alephee said, giving Eren a heads up. At this point, the spar had become more of a show-and-tell than an actual spar. Alephee was showing how Eren's existing spells can be taken to a new level while keeping their core execution principles unharmed.

She cast a summoning spell. A summoning spell that uses red lightning. And her choice for the summoned beast was the red lightning bull. This was almost the same spell Eren was used to casting with Ertaur's soul, thanks to the beast contract spell he had acquired from one of his victims.

Eren had decided that he wouldn't get shocked by anything Alephee showed him at this point. He couldn't help doing exactly the opposite when Alephee made her summoned beast look as lively as his Ertaur at first glance. The beast used Adept-ranked mana, so it could be considered D-Rank.

"Tch. A summoning spell that was on the same level as the beast contract spell! Alephee, I don't know about you but I call this showing off."

Eren snorted when he looked at the red lightning bull. Incidentally, the beast released a gust of air from its nose as well. It mimicked his actions in response, looking at him menacingly.

"Well, the beast contract spell leaves a mark on one's mana core. Since I cloned it, this spell came easily to me. Ertaur's mark helped me use the summoning spell in this way.

You want me to show you what else you can do using your beast contract spell?"

Alephee asked but didn't wait for Eren's response. She spread her hand and seven more balls of red lightning mana appeared all around the red lightning bull. Soon, those fiery balls of mana started taking the shape of red lightning bulls.

Alephee had created a herd of red lightning bulls with her summoning spell. These red lightning bulls each showed a distinct behavior from each other. But they all had one thing in common. They were looking at Eren as if he was the target of their charge.

Alephee wasn't done with her summoning spell. She smiled at Eren before casting another spell on top of the existing one.

Eren saw with his eyes as the red lightning bulls' limbs started getting coated in purple lightning. He first thought that it was aspect fusion. But then he shook his own head in denial before looking at the limbs of the red lightning bulls carefully.

The aspect fusion was only one part of the effect Alephee had shown him. The real beauty of the added effect came from the fact that she had used another combination.

Blitz Bolt!

Alephee had granted her summoned bulls the power of Blitz Bolt. Red Bull Rush in conjunction with Blitz Steps would be a very effective weapon for the bulls to use during their charge attacks.

"Unbelievable!"

Eren couldn't even comprehend the complexities that would arise if he decided to do the same. He would need to modify the manifestation of the beast contract spell and change its execution while including the mnemonics of Blitz Bolt. This wasn't something Eren could do with his current expertise.

Eren also appreciated the fact that Alephee had started showing him these things when he broke into the Adept rank. It was neither too soon nor too late. Just the right time for him to start thinking about these things.

Alephee had decided to give Eren one more shock. She cast another summoning spell. A blue and a red ball of mana were manifested in the air before changing forms.

"Kiyeeee!"

Two distinct eagle cries were heard as the red and blue lightning balls assumed the forms of two flying griffins. They looked eerily similar to Argo's hybrid form.

Eren was quickly reminded of how Altashia was able to use summoning spells and conjure two crow-type demon beasts. She was a demon beast tamer of Roo Roo— a crow-type demon beast.

He had wondered how Altashia was able to cast the summoning spell so easily despite being a warrior class. He got his answer at this point.

It didn't take Eren long to figure out that the beasts and the beast souls he was in connection with could be used in summoning spells. Alephee was showing him that he could make use of his connections with Ertaur and Argo to make his summoning spells more potent. And with his class change into a summoner, the spell's potency would be shot to another level.

Alephee chuckled a bit before adding up.

"The demon beast you bonded with and the beast contract spell. Both make you able to access the consciousness of real beasts. That's because their souls are real.

You would be able to cast summoning spells more easily by using the connections you share with your beasts as a medium.

You have a summoning class. But since you don't have many summoning-type spells, you decided not to use it for the time being. But it's time for you to start investing your efforts in this direction as well.

As you can see, you don't really need the summoning spells of other beasts. You already have what you need to make full use of your other class. That is if you know how to make use of your connections with the beasts while using the summoning spells.

Ertaur, Argo, and your preferred summoning spell Fire Snake give you all that you need to be a successful summoner. Your current Adept rank is perfect for you to start putting your efforts into these endeavors.

I hope you don't waste time chasing after spells that are not meant for you anymore. And start perfecting the spells you already have.

Or start creating the spells that are apt for you by yourself."

Chapter 734 Quality Over Quantity

"Start creating the spells that are apt for you by yourself."

Alephee said before taking a long breath. These were the things that she always wanted to say to Eren. Nevertheless, she recognized that telling these things to Eren, a headstrong individual on his rudimentary path, and showing him what she wanted from him were two different things.

That was not to say Alephee was not pleased with Eren's progress so far. She had seen the guy put in more effort than any other ranker of his generation.

However, more effort doesn't necessarily mean more success. To produce stellar results, the efforts needed to be directed in the right direction.

One had to say the timing at which Alephee had decided to show these things to Eren couldn't have been perfect. That's because Eren had already seen the effects of the spell he created for himself.

The Wind-Fire Shards were more potent as a result of the elemental fusion they were built upon. They produce the most devastating effects while consuming minimal mana. They were also easier to cast for Eren.

The spell Eren had created all by himself was a suitable match for him for his current rank. Since it was created by him, he knew all the ins and outs of the spell. He could tweak it to suit his needs and situation at the time.

The most beneficial thing about the self-created spell was the fact that Eren didn't need to start looking for the spell's higher-ranked variant every time he ranked up. The spell would eventually rank up with him.

Since Eren had come to know and understand the benefits of having a self-created spell, he was able to grasp the importance of having self-created spells. Or to be precise, the spells that he was completely familiar with and knew the ins and outs of.

Alephee maintained her summoning spells and leashed her summoned beast to stay put while speaking up.

"Quality over quantity.

Eren, I need you to stop using your spells conventionally. These are just a few examples. You might be able to improve what I'm showing you right now. You might come up with something entirely different. The possibilities are truly limitless.

The most critical thing right now is for you to know that the true potential of your spells is only limited by your imagination and capabilities. Unfortunately for you, this too requires fine control over one's mana circuits to pull it off perfectly."

Alephee said and took a pause. She could see there was some kind of fire burning in Eren's eyes. He was really mesmerized by the possibilities Alephee had shown him. She felt satisfied that her talk had put him in the right state of mind.

Alephee didn't just want to critique Eren's ranking journey. She also wanted to highlight his achievements.

"You have managed to create your own spell. You have achieved the fusion of elements and aspects. You have the right components in your arsenal. Thus, only you are the right person to tread on a path that is completely yours.

Now it's time to put what you've learned so far into action.

Spell scrolls and spell books were only the borrowed tools that got you this far. They need to be left behind sooner rather than later. For you to walk firmly on your path, you need the tools you created yourself.

A path with no worthy hurdles will not have a worthy destination at its end."

Alephee dispersed all her summoned creatures except a red lightning bull with the inactive Blitz Bolt spell cast on its limbs. She then looked at Ertaur who was standing beside Eren before commenting.

"My summoned beast or your Ertaur? Eren, who do you think will win in a frontal clash?"

Alephee said while patting her summoned beast's head with her right hand. When she stroked his head, the beast acted all friendly and tamed. She then looked provocatively at Eren, wanting him to send his beast to do his bidding.

Eren looked at Ertaur and pondered a bit. It wasn't like he hadn't tried strengthening Ertaur with his own spells. He had cast his defensive spell Blitz Shield on Ertaur while fighting with Altashia. Thanks to that, his beast had managed to tackle two of her summoned beasts.

However, Eren knew that what he had cast in the past could only be called cosmetic changes in comparison to the level of expertise Alephee had shown. He had just made his contract beast wear the Blitz Shield without integrating it into his mana body. As a result, Ertaur's defense increased but not to the level the Blitz Shield was capable of.

'How much of a difference are we talking about though?'

Eren asked himself this question as he zeroed in on Alephee's summoned beast. He wanted to know the true extent of integrating spells and comparing their effects with something he had come up with on a superficial level.

"Bud, it's going to hurt. Brace yourself and give your best shot."

Ertaur was told by Eren to prepare for a clash. The bull snorted its nose at Eren's comment. He wasn't too happy whenever Eren decided to make him come out. That's because he would get to hear the same comments whenever he did show up.

It was as if Eren would only summon him when he wanted to torture him by pitting him against a stronger opponent. For once, the bull just wanted to let loose on less powerful opponents than him. He had decided that if and when he is given easy prey to fight with, he would cherish that moment to his fullest.

Eren had made Ertaur come out as soon as Alephee had suggested him. As a result, he had seen what Alephee could do. The beast was smart even though he couldn't talk yet. He immediately figured out that Alephee was a better summoner than his master.

Ertaur could also discern to some extent that Alephee was trying to teach his master. He wondered if he would get to lead the herd of red lightning bulls and completely destroy everything in their path. The need to cause carnage and mayhem was one of the natural instincts of the bulls after all.

Clearly, Ertaur was more profound than his master in using the summoning spell for pure destruction. Ertaur would communicate his thoughts to Eren eventually if and when the latter becomes capable of casting the summoning spells on the same level as Alephee.

But for now, Ertaur stepped ahead. Beastly instincts suddenly possessed Ertaur as he turned toward his opponent, which was also the red lightning bull. This could be considered Ertaur's forte— fighting with other bulls.

Chapter 735 True prowess of summoning spell P1

Ertaur bellowed in pain as his head was pierced straight through by Alephee's summoned beast. In the next moment, his mana body was dispersed.

Ertaur was forced to quit by Alephee's summoned beast using only one move. The Red Bull Rush combined with Blitz Steps was deadlier than Eren had thought. It completely outclassed Ertaur's own variant of the inherent spell.

Neither Ertaur nor his master could see Alephee's summoned beast coming. The beast had gotten so fast that for a moment that Eren's mana sense stopped tracking him. It couldn't keep up with the beast's speed for the time being.

However, Eren also noticed that the summoned red lightning bull had become unstable after using the BLitz Steps and Red Bull Rush together. His body was starting to fade.

Eren raised his eyebrows as he watched the supposed instability. Alephee's explanation came right after.

"This is not unusual. Since Blitz Steps was a part of the summoning spell, it was bound to have a limited casting time when the movement spell was activated. The Adept rank mana is still not sufficient in quality to sustain the integrated spell for much longer after all."

Eren nodded in understanding after realizing that the limitations came from the grade of mana and not the integrated spell itself. Just from the knowledge, he could deduce that the integrated spells were not meant to be used by lower-ranked entities. Alephee was making him engage in something that was beyond his rank.

Ertaur's soul was called back inside Eren's mana core. He wanted to get back out there to fight with the summoned bull some more. But Eren told him he did not have to since the summoned bull had disappeared.

There was no point in testing the effects of integrated spells anymore. He realized that integrated spells were the next step in the evolution of spell combos. In addition, integrated spells had far superior effects to spell combos.

The integrated spells were so potent that they could not be sustained with Adept-level mana. But using these spells would give Adept rankers a distinct advantage over the others despite their limited time.

Eren could also decipher that the time limit can be extended if the integration of spells is seamless. It meant that he needed the right set of spells, and sufficient elemental attainments in their respective elements to stand a chance to cast integrated spells. Then he needed to use the right blend of elemental and aspect fusions to make his integrated spells more powerful.

The butcher was sure that with the right combination of all these things, the time limit would practically cease to exist for him. But there was another problem with using these spells.

"Alephee, what about the mana consumption using these spells? You are relying on your abundant mana reserves as a Homunculus to stack these spells. I'll be running on fumes soon after I cast spells like you."

Alephee nodded her head in understanding after hearing Eren's words. She paused a bit to collect her thoughts before replying.

"You are right, Eren. It can be a bit taxing to use the integrated spells. But it is still better than casting two or more spells together. The trade-off is worth it.

Plus, the summoning spells using the connection with the beasts allow you to use the mana in the surroundings to cast their mana bodies. Thus, these spells are easy on your mana reserves.

This is another benefit of casting the summoning spells this way. Remember how Rodrick fought against Altashia.

That guy had the wyvern-type demon beast. So he used his connection with Aqua to cast a variant of the summoning spell, allowing him to summon her consciousness into the summoned mana body. Do you remember what he did to cast her mana body?"

Alephee asked Eren with a smile on her face. The latter took some time to remember his battle with Rodrick Renar. He quickly understood what Alephee was trying to imply.

"So choosing the right environment to cast the right summoning spell is critical. Rodrick had used the water surrounding the battle ring to cast Aqua's wyvern body. It still took some toll on him. But at that time, the royal scion of House Renar was in the Ace rank.

So the fact that he could use the summoning spell that way is still impressive. He could really become a skilled summoner with his talent."

As the Alephee kept reminding him about Eren's previous fights, he realized that people with connections were already in the know regarding these things. Altashia and Rodrick were already guided in the right direction by their respective families.

He was an Adept ranker in his previous timeline as well. But he never knew about these things in such depth. Then again, he was in the right position or with the right connections to know these things. It was only because he had raised himself to his current level in this timeline that had allowed him to see the demo of what Alephee was talking about.

Eren's fights with Altashia and Rodrick had suddenly turned into a valuable experience for him in retrospect. Additionally, he realized that having connections contributed to a great start, more so than he had initially thought of.

Eren would have kept walking on a rudimentary path if it wasn't for Alephee. He would be better than his previous self even in that situation. But he would never amount to something even greater.

The distance would have been made evident if he became a high-ranked entity and compared himself with other exceptional rankers with prominent connections. He smiled bitterly when the realization dawned on him.

The kingdom of Edinburgh was slowly becoming a small pond for the ever-growing Eren to live in. Minerva's Utopia was going to be a stable source of income for him for the time being. But he needed to invest in something beyond Edinburgh's borders to increase profits.

One of the biggest reasons Eren had stayed in Edinburgh all this time despite the risk of being caught as Osan Woods Butcher was because of Minerva's Utopia. The other reason was the fact that he knew what he needed to do to reach the Adept rank.

But at this point, he needed to think about the future. A future that was less familiar to him. Something he could not prepare for preemptively anymore.

Chapter 736 True Prowess Of Summoning Spells P2

Inside the Oni dungeon. An isolated battlefield inside the sacred pyramid.

15 days have passed since Eren and Alephee first faced off.

A few monsters remained on standby to serve their king, also serving as spectators. They watched as their king fought with the Homunculus once again.

He had been sparring with her every chance he got in these 15 days with only a few short breaks. His Adept rank body had allowed him to skip sleep for days on end while allowing him to maintain his form.

Alephee had never seen Eren this focused before. She had also been training him to take control of his mana circuits during the nights. He would suffer unimaginable amounts of pain while practicing his ranking technique. That period of suffering also served as his rest.

He would then get up and start challenging Alephee with newfound vigor. He had never truly slept in these 15 days, pushing himself further than even his own imagination. It was as if he had stepped into Adept rank just to become more brutal on himself than before.

And yet, his diligent work failed to produce any semblance of the results he wanted to have. His efforts got him from nowhere to nowhere.

It was much easier to stay motivated when there was a reward in sight. But how could a person keep on putting in more effort when there was no gain to be seen?

The answer to the question came easily for Eren. He had seen the most terrible version of himself. He was running away from that image he had in his mind about himself. And in doing so, he would receive all the motivation in the world.

People fighting addiction in all seriousness would be scared to get anywhere near the source of their addiction. They couldn't trust themselves anywhere near it. Eren was in a similar situation.

Alephée was sure that she wouldn't have been able to keep up with Eren if she didn't have a Homunculus vessel. Eren's schedule forced her to burn away mana stones in abundance.

Today was no different.

Clang!

Alephée was using Solid Spark as a weapon to clash against Eren's weapon attacks. She was also using her summoned beasts to put more pressure on him and his summoned beasts.

Alephée's summoned griffin was battling against Eren's bunch of fire snakes. These boa snakes were much higher than before. Their raised heads allowed them to look eye to eye with the griffin.

Alephée was gradually increasing the difficulty of the battles against Eren. Every time she saw him getting comfortable at the current level, she would raise the difficulty by a notch. Eren had to be on his toes at all times due to the progressive overload.

Alephée had already shown him that the summoned beast's elemental affinity could be made compatible with him. However, he needed to have complete control over his mana circuits before making changes like these on the fly. Once that feat has been achieved, the summoned beasts would have unusual battle styles not previously associated with their species.

Eren had maintained Blitz Shield on his boa fire snakes. They were not completely compatible with each other. But Eren wanted to gain experience in using different spells in conjunction with each other. So he tested various combinations he hadn't thought of before.

"Haaah!"

Eren released another series of Invi Blaze and Purple Reaver flying slashes toward the approaching Alephée while activating his time-element spells.

Sedated Perception

Stunning Speed

He then used Total Control to amplify the effects of his movement spell before disappearing from his position. Despite his best efforts to control such a novel spell combo, he couldn't completely control his body.

As a result, the ground beneath his feet cracked and split in the same direction as he had gone off. Alephée could only chuckle when she saw him using time-element spells against her just to increase his speed and response time.

She liked that Eren had paired up Total Control with his movement spell. The two spells complemented each other. And the spell combo produced favorable results.

But Eren was still far away from integrating the spells. Plus, Eren was unable to control the recoil of using the spell combo at this point. Instead of approaching him normally, she decided to show him something interesting once again.

She first used wind-element mana to summon an eagle. She then activated the three time-element spells that had been integrated with its casting.

Sedated Perception

Stunning Speed

Wind Blade Tornado

Eren was wondering why Alephee wasn't approaching him from behind while he was in this stagnant world. Just then, he felt a strong mana pulse and looked behind him. He saw Alephee smiling at him with her usual carefree expressions.

Eren's near-stagnant world didn't affect Alephee or her movements. However, her powers were related to time itself. So Eren wasn't surprised by that fact.

What surprised him came afterward. The summoned eagle, which was as large as Argo was when he shapeshifted into his eagle form, was also able to move in the near-stagnant world. He quickly approached Eren with his exceptional flight speed before releasing the spell.

Eren saw a bunch of wind-blade tornadoes coming at him from various angles and multiple directions. Since he was already using his time element spells as well as his movement spell, he couldn't outmaneuver them.

Plus, the wind blades had formed quickly despite the stagnant world, indicating that Alephee had allowed the summoned beast to use Total Control on them. Eren could only smile bitterly when he saw what Alephee could do.

Like in his case, Alephee's time-element spells went undetected when they were cast. Eren could tell only because he had personally experienced and used the spell's effects.

Wind Blade Tornado

Purple Reaver

Invi Blaze

Eren first cast his own stacked Wind Blade Tornado all around him. His weapons then began sending slashes in the air, meant to destroy all the blades coming at him.

Eren continued casting his weapons spells in conjunction with the Wind Blades. However, suddenly one of his weapons started creaking. Purple Reaver had developed cracks over its blade.

'Fuck. Not again.'

Chapter 737 Plans To Manufacture Artifacts Enmasse

The spar stopped just when things were about to get heated. Alephee took Eren's about-to-be-broken blade in one hand while with the other she flipped the pages of her grimoire.

She closed her eyes before casting her time-element spell.

Age Reverse!

Eren had only used this spell for processing raw ingredients for brewing potions. The spell didn't work well with inorganic objects when he was employing it. But Alephee had managed to do just that by using it on one of Eren's Rigor Mortis Shamshirs.

The cracks on Eren's blade began to heal as the time-element spell activated. It wasn't long before the runes on the blade were repaired as well.

"Here. As good as new."

Alephee smiled, satisfied as she observed the spell's effects on the blade. Eren took the blade from her with a frown on his face.

"Why do these blades keep on breaking?"

Eren asked while looking at Shamshir displeasingly. He didn't like the feeling that his weapons might break mid-fight. It was okay because it was a spar. But what would have happened if he was in mortal combat with somebody?

This was not the first time Eren's artifacts had developed signs of wear. Almost all of them that had been upgraded to Adept rank were riddled with the same problem. They would be in a perilous state if and when Eren started being serious with them.

He would prefer getting new artifacts one at a time if the problem persists. Alephee shrugged off her shoulders before commenting.

"I upgraded the runes on the artifacts and made them so that they would work well with the current vessel they had been carved on. But I couldn't change the metal that acted as the conduit itself.

We need better metals serving as replacements for the existing ones. Just get me a better chunk of metal suitable for your current rank and I'd fix your artifacts for good. Till then, we can count on my spells."

Alephee said it was no big deal. Eren frowned some more before starting to ponder. He could always get chunks of premium-grade Andrium suitable for his rank from Minerva's Utopia.

Eren had first thought that Alephee's spells were exclusive to his weapons. Then when the weapons started showing signs of wear, he realized that the spells were not as reliable as he had thought them to be.

However, realizing how Alephee's spells worked gave Eren another idea: he could make use of this ability of hers to make crazy profits. He already had a constant supply of raw ingredients, thanks to Minerva's Utopia. Plus, he was planning to get his hands on the Soul Seed Insertion array from House Lancelot.

What if he uses Alephee as an artisan for producing high-grade weapons? He could then give those weapons to his subordinates and team members. He could also sell them inside his city at a lucrative price, earning hefty profits.

Alephee knew what he was thinking. She liked Eren's line of thinking but she needed to make her stance clear.

"Eren, I don't mind making a few artifacts. But I don't want to spend most of my time crafting weapons. I accepted this vessel so that I could train you better first and foremost. Everything else is secondary."

Eren was busy thinking of a lot of things when he heard Alephee's words. He chuckled when he understood what she was trying to say and then assured her with his words.

"Don't worry, Alephee. We'll come up with an arrangement. I'm just glad you can do this."

Eren said before swinging his weapon. He then imbued it with his mana and spun around before releasing a flying slash. Upon confirming that the weapon was ready to use, he smirked before adding up.

"Alright. Let's continue with our battle."

Alephee smiled mildly before agreeing to his decision. Money was an indispensable resource for rankers. She could understand his drive to earn more of it so that it wouldn't ever become a bottleneck.

Eren and Alephee continued sparring after that. The sessions continued for a few more days. Alephee showed Eren what kind of integrated spells he could try. She also guided him in the right direction regarding this topic, making him try various things at once.

Eren wasn't a quick learner at first. But thanks to his diligence, he slowly got the hang of it. His training to take control of his mana circuits was also paying off. He could cast spells more easily while reducing their casting time. He also stabilized all his gains during this time.

Three days before they left the Oni dungeon.

A time just before dawn.

Eren was being trained by Alephee in the king's chamber. He had been practicing his ranking technique throughout the night. He would then practice the same in conjunction with his new form of training arranged by Alephee.

This was Eren's routine after Alephee possessed her homunculus vessel. He had stopped his nightly activities with the Orcinas these days so he could concentrate on the task at hand.

Eren was sleeping with almost no clothes on him, on a bunch of pointy metal shards that served as his bed. He was forced to retract his mana defense layer, making his skin come in direct contact with the sharp points of the shards.

The bed of metal shards was placed inside an array that was exuding a faint white light. The runes inscribed in the array were made to react with the mana-conducting shards.

These pointy metal shards were still unable to injure Eren's bare skin. But that was about to change.

"Are you ready?"

Alephee asked Eren while standing outside the array's core. She was the one handling the array. She had decided to train Eren in this way instead of the usual practice. By doing so, she had increased the difficulty of the training. But it would also deliver superior results to traditional methods.

"Yes!"

Eren said and gritted his teeth. He then started executing his ranking technique with his eyes closed. The tiny metal shards glowed in a distinct yellow light as Eren activated his technique. In the next moment, they started moving as per the flow of the mana inside the mana pathways.

"Stop!"

Chapter 738 The Process Of Achieving

"Stop!"

Alephee commanded and the metal shards turned red. Eren stopped channeling the technique as soon as he heard the voice.

Yet, the flow of the mana couldn't be stopped immediately. So it kept moving for a bit. And this was the reason behind Eren's incoming suffering.

The metal shards were still reacting to the flow of mana inside the mana pathways. They tore his skin and lodged themselves inside it before moving with the flow, making him bleed all over. In a few seconds, Eren's Adept-ranked body was severely injured.

Eren was about to yell in pain. But tonight he held on. There was some part of his mind that was not processing the pain he felt. That part made him proud of himself for not crying. It indicated that he was getting used to the pain.

The metal shards did not only tear Eren's skin. They also injected unfiltered mana into Eren's system, making his body treat it as a foreign mana invasion. The array took that a step further and made the unfiltered mana enter Eren's mana circuits.

Eren's mana pathways and the mana points were injured as a result of this brutal process. This was due to Eren's inability to control the flow of mana effectively. The more he lacked, the more severely he would be injured.

Eren's blood started dripping on the ground by running along the length of metal shards which were about 10 inches long. Some of the blood drops landed on the ground, painting the limestone surface red.

Alephee looked at Eren's condition and sighed. She didn't seem surprised. This was an expected outcome for her.

"Your control hasn't improved a bit, Eren. Take some rest and recover. Then we can..."

Alephee was about to take Eren off of his bed of suffering when the latter shook his head in denial. His eyes were a bit moist because of the pain he was feeling. But they also glistened with the determination he had in his heart.

"No... we... we will continue. Do it one more time."

Eren said and closed his eyes. His watery eyes produced tears when the eyelids were shut suddenly. The tears ran down close to his ears before falling on the ground, mixing with the small puddle of blood created by his injuries.

Eren didn't care about his appearance. He just remained stressed and prevented himself from getting up on his own.

There was a part of him that was missing the feeling of sleeping on a plush bed. There was a part of him that was telling him maybe he shouldn't have to go through this today.

There was always tomorrow. A tomorrow in which he would be able to adhere to the schedule just fine. If he could just take a break today, everything would be fine.

However, Eren didn't let these voices win over him. He ignored them all and held on. Now he wanted to kill these voices by subjecting himself to even more pain. That pain will soon act as a suppressant to all his thoughts of quitting.

Alephee regretted showing Eren what he could have done with better control over his mana circuits at this point. Maybe she should have shown less or downplayed the effects. Because Eren was moving way beyond the course she had set for him.

"Eren, I believe I've said this to you before. More arduous work doesn't necessarily translate into better results. Your body should be allowed to heal before continuing the training regimen.

I appreciate that you are taking this training seriously. I really do. But I'll appreciate it even more if you don't overdo it."

Eren was in no mood to talk. But Alephee wasn't activating the array. Then he opened his eyes and looked at her before speaking.

"I... I know what I'm doing. I'll relax when I hit my limit. But this... this ain't it. Not yet."

Eren replied and looked at Alephee with unwavering determination. The latter could only sigh before nodding in agreement.

Eren's bed of suffering was activated once again, forcing him to muster every ounce in his body not to yell in pain. His watery eyes turned red. The uninjured side of his body turned red and started sweating heavily.

Alephee looked at Eren's condition with a grim expression. But she didn't stop the array.

"Speed up!"

Alephee began operating on the array with different instructions. In the next moment, Eren sped up the channeling of his mana flow. Despite his efforts, he was unable to match the speed at which the metal shards were moving. They had already pierced and carved the skin, to begin with. Thus, his injuries only worsened.

"Hhhmmh!"

Eren puffed up his cheeks and was about to cry out in pain. But he refused to part his lips, suffocating the yell that was about to escape his mouth. As a result, a muffled groan was heard from him.

Alephee kept on operating the array until Eren was somehow able to match the mana flow with the tiny metal shards. She then switched her instructions, making Eren suffer through additional rounds of pain.

Morning after.

The butcher had gotten up from his bed of suffering. He was about to get freshened up before meeting up with Ror. He was leaving the Oni dungeon. So he had to make a few preparations.

All of Eren's wounds had healed. But his expressions were haggard. He wished that the psychological wounds he felt could also be healed as quickly as his physical injuries. But not everything in life can be as picturesque as one would wish.

Alephee was sitting on Eren's bed in a meditative state with her eyes closed. She opened her eyes when Eren was ready to move on with his next set of assignments of the day.

Despite his haggard expressions, the homunculus could still see a subtle smile on Eren's face. Despite knowing him for so long, she was surprised.

"You haven't achieved anything yet, Eren. Why are you smiling?"

Eren was walking towards the bath chamber where Orcinas were waiting for him. He had changed the schedule of his nightly activities and made them part of his routine to save time.

The butcher stopped in his tracks when he heard Alephee's question. He didn't look back and resumed his stride before replying.

"Haha.

This happiness comes not from having achieved but from the knowledge that I'm pushing myself to new heights. I now know that as long as I keep on pushing myself and don't give in to my inner sloth, the results will come.

I might not be the most talented and I might not get the best results for the efforts I put in, But I take pride that nobody I know pushes themselves as hard as me."

Chapter 739 Sedating Gaze

The day before Eren left the Oni dungeon. Evening 6 PM.

The sun was preparing to set on the horizon. The gray clouds were trying to mask an all-orange sky. But in doing so, they were just distancing themselves from each other, running thin.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Eren and Alephee were about to wrap up their spar. But for some reason, Eren pressed on. It was as if he was sensing a breakthrough into something.

Eren had been having these feelings for the last couple of days. But what he was feeling at this point was more intense than before.

Alephee could sense what was happening inside Eren's mind. So she didn't try to disturb him from his current mindset and aided it by sparring with him well beyond their agreed-upon time limit.

Eren and Alephee both were using the lightning and fire element spells they had access to. This was the first time Eren felt like he was battling a much superior version of himself.

Alephee was fighting with Eren while being mindful of her attacks. She didn't want to overwhelm Eren with her attacks because it felt like he was fighting with her subconsciously. He was letting his instincts take over him.

For the first time in a long while, Eren felt like his perception was lacking. He felt like he was a bit slow to process things even under the effects of his time-element spells.

He could only hear his heartbeats in his peculiar state. The clashes of weapons had become inaudible to him. At first, he thought that he must be feeling like this because he was battling against Alephee who knew time-element spells better than anybody.

But he soon came to realize that that was not it. This was his subconscious mind trying to level the spell up because it felt like it was under constant duress these days.

The time-element spell Sedated Perception wasn't enough for Eren anymore. He needed something more. Or he needed to slow down his opponent who was keeping up with him no matter how hard he tried to outmaneuver.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Both Eren and Alephee exchanged various moves in close combat. The former was sparring with Alephee but his attention seems to have been divided by something else.

State of epiphany!

Eren finally entered the illusive state while he continued sparring with Alephee. Active participation in the battle was a prerequisite for such a peculiar state. So she kept the pressure on him with her attacks.

Alephee was keeping up with Eren by using Sedated Perception as well. But suddenly, she found that the vessel she was using as a medium to cast the spells felt like it had been submerged underwater.

Alephee's movements became relatively slow. She felt like an external interference was keeping her vessel from moving the way she wanted to. This was even though she was a time-element spell user herself.

Alephee created a distance from Eren using Blitz Steps and looked at Eren's face instead of his attacks. The guy still seemed like he had been hypnotized to fight with her. But there was something different about his eyes.

Eren's eyes had suddenly become pure white. There was no iris left in both his eyes anymore. The white viscera had occupied the entire canvas of both eyes.

"This..."

Alephee narrowed her eyes and used her soul sense to know what was happening to Eren. She had first thought that the breakthrough was related to his mana circuits. But it seemed that his training and constant adversity had produced some unexpected results.

Alephee was about to move when Eren narrowed his ghostly eyes on her. In the next moment, the feeling that her body was submerged in the water intensified. As a result, her movements got so slow that she stopped moving.

Eren's movements remained unaffected by this phenomenon, indicating that only Alephee's body had gotten slower. He approached her without any fear at this point. His sword gets charged with his lightning-element mana.

Alephee understood what was happening to Eren as she saw him approach her while in a state of epiphany. She could only smile before dispelling the effects of the time-element spells her body was being subjected to.

Eren had fused his two time-element spells into one to acquire a unique ability. He did not need to cast Sedated Perception and Stunning Speed separately anymore. Activating this ability would grant him the effects of both the spells.

And this ability could be activated with his eyes. But that was not the whole story.

The time-element spells had also evolved after being transformed into abilities. The ability could now force Eren's opponents to process time differently, subjecting their bodies to a different passage of time.

It meant that Eren could buff himself while debuffing his enemies if and when he wanted to. This would allow him to gain an overwhelming advantage over his opponents even if the debuff lasts for a short period.

This was a truly terrifying ability. When activated at the right time, it had the potential to create loads of flaws in Eren's opponent's defense. He would be able to land a critical blow on them if the timing of the ability's activation is done right.

Eren had pleasantly surprised Alephee by acquiring this ability. Usually, only innate or inherent spells have a higher chance of turning into an ability. In the end, even a prodigy Adept ranker was not usually qualified to transform one of his spells into abilities, no matter how familiar they were with casting spells.

It was true that Alephee's existence had allowed Eren to acquire the ability faster. However, that did not negate the efforts he had put in.

This was his first Ability he had gained by putting in the efforts. Not something that was bestowed by some otherworldly statue or bloodline. As such, it spoke volumes about how hard he had struggled to achieve something like this.

This was no luck. Eren had been making conscious efforts to get his time-element spells to turn into an ability for him. He had invested quite a lot of time and energy to synthesize the ability for himself. This was the culmination of all his strategic planning and diligence.

Alephee had to admit that Eren was talented in his own right. It was just that his talent lay in putting in more grueling work than the rest and planning things.

[Chapter 740 Groundbreaking Bloodline Powers](#)

Eren's mana reserves were dwindling while he was under the effects of the state of epiphany.

He had no real control over using his ability. It was his subconscious mind that was using it whenever it felt like it. It would expend a huge amount of mana when casting the debuff on Alephee, who would be able to get rid of it through her own means.

Alephee was happy for Eren while he was in that state. She didn't disturb him even after he kept on attacking her subconsciously while using the full potential of his ability to cast a debuff on her. She was sure that if it was any other Adept ranker in her shoes, he had been butchered by Eren's current state.

Alephee had decided to let Eren snap out of his state himself. And she was doing everything she could to maintain just the right amount of pressure on him by casting her attack spells.

Fire Snake!

Alephee attacked Eren by conjuring two three-meter boa snakes. They opened their mouths and cast the spells they had been integrated with. One of the snakes chose to cast a Fireball while the other was planning to use Fire Breath on Eren.

Meanwhile, Alephee retreated by summoning a third beast: the giant eagle. She had quickly climbed on the eagle's back.

Alephee was now flying over the battle ring. She directed the boa snakes to attack Eren strategically. As such, the boa snakes kept on moving at crazy speed before finally deciding to release the spells they had been holding all at once.

A series of fireballs came from Eren's 5 O'clock direction while an intense fire breath attack approached him from his 10 O'clock direction. On second thought, Alephee also cast a domain ability using her grimoire and prevented Eren from using his time-element ability.

Eren sensed the two attacks approaching at breakneck speed. He also subconsciously realized that he couldn't use his time-element powers anymore.

Alephee thought that this would be enough to snap Eren back to reality. As a result, she was expecting his logical mind to take over since the problem she put him in could not be solved by instinct alone.

But Eren's state of epiphany was more pronounced than Alephee had thought. It was as if he was encashing all the cheques he had earned through his arduous work.

Eren stopped moving or using his spells altogether. He closed his eyes and let the two attacks approach him.

Boom!

Eren's body was completely consumed by both attacks, which exploded right in the middle of their paths. Alephee frowned when she watched the events unfold from the back of her summoned eagle.

Alephee could still tell that things weren't as they seemed. She would know if Eren had suffered. But it felt like Eren was not being affected by anything even while standing inside a cloud of flames.

It was as if Eren had become completely immune to the spell's effects.

He didn't just start being immune to the spells' effects. It seemed like he was also controlling the flames in some way.

Eren had managed to take control of Alephee's spells as if they were cast by him. And the control has been taken away from Alephee so easily that she didn't even notice it at first.

Alephee didn't understand what was happening inside the cloud of flames even when she had locked her soul sense on Eren. But then she paid attention to the feedback she was getting from her senses and opened her eyes wide in pleasant surprise.

'This... this is one of Elder Ichor's powers. These are "his" edicts.'

Alephee couldn't help but feel visibly elated when she realized what was going on. Eren, in the moment of crisis, had managed to copy her mana signature entirely without any semblance of flaws. As a result, the spells that were cast by her failed to damage him.

In all his previous instances, Eren had failed to copy the mana signatures of the rankers he was shapeshifting into completely. There was always a difference, no matter how close it was to perfection.

But this was the first time he had managed to copy Alephee's mana signatures completely, robbing the powers from her spells to affect him. Additionally, it allowed him to control her spells.

The butcher raised his hands and dispersed the cloud of flames that was surrounding him. He was seen coming out unscathed from Alephee's attacks. He also dispersed the boa snakes that had tried to maintain a safe distance from him, looking at him with confused eyes.

Eren snapped out of his trance when he saw Alephee jumping down from her summoned beast right in front of him. The summoned eagle dispersed right after.

There was confusion written all over Eren's face as he looked all around him.

"My time-element spells... they have been turned into an ability."

Eren's blurred memories were gradually cleared as he became aware of what had just happened. He closed his eyes before opening them again, making the white sclera occupy the canvas of his eyes once again.

"Sedating Gaze!"

Eren cast the debuff of his ability onto Alephee once again to test its effects. The latter seemed annoyed before making hand gestures as if she was swatting a fly.

"Hmph! These effects won't work on me."

Alephee said before looking at Eren approvingly.

"Nevertheless, congratulations on gaining a new ability."

That's enough for today. Let's prepare to leave. We have to check up on Kaalmaahen and Kirin. It's been days since they have been locked inside their separate arrays.

We have to make sure the array works properly if we want to bring them outside without causing a ruckus."

Eren nodded and followed Alephee. A doubtful tone in his voice, however, implied that he was still confused about something.

"I'm sure they'll be fine, Alephee. But what had happened in the end? Why could I not get injured by your attacks?"

Alephee chuckled before answering.

"You copied my mana signature down to a T, which allowed you to take control of my spells after getting immune to them. Your half-blood abilities are more profound than you think, Eren.

I'm looking forward to the day when you can fully utilize your bloodline powers."