

Vile 831

[Chapter 831 Exclusive Selling Chains](#)

Levine chuckled when she heard Eren's way of looking at his business. She was aware that the guy had dipped his fingers in many pies. She was also lowkey aware of his weapon-selling business. Something he hadn't made public yet.

'I am tutoring a dangerous man. And for some reason, I am enjoying it. Something must be wrong with me too.'

Levine watched the chemistry Eren and Kirin shared in their eye contact with each other and thought to herself. She decided to pull Eren's leg a bit.

"How's Marie handling the manufacturing units, Eren?"

Eren raised his eyebrows when Levine suddenly brought up Marie's topic. He had thought that his teacher didn't like to talk much about her. But he answered her anyway.

"Oh, she's doing well. She is in charge of the guild's signature concoctions. She has done a miracle in increasing the qualities produced each day by optimizing the potioneing process."

Levine displayed an amazed expression on her face before speaking up.

"You have found quite a working bee for yourself. I wonder where she gets this much energy from.

I also heard that you changed her... let's say... orientation?"

Eren started coughing and clearing his throat for no reason. He drank some more White Raven ale from his glass because he had suddenly started feeling parched.

"Alright. Who is leaking all my secrets to you guys?"

Eren looked at his surroundings as if trying to find someone to blame. This was one too many times that his profane lifestyle was discovered by outsiders.

Levine chuckled as she watched Eren's expression. She pointed a finger at Kirin before speaking up.

"Hehe. Ladies talk, Eren. That lass you have who stays with you like your shadow isn't like you. She is honest and pure-hearted. She doesn't like to speak much. But when she does, she sometimes spills the beans about you. And that is enough for us to connect the dots."

Eren looked at Kirin and read on her face that she didn't know what she had done wrong. She looked at things from her monster culture's perspective. As with most rankers, she was simple-minded.

"Kirin darling, from now on, whenever someone asks you where I was or where I was, just say that you don't know. Whether they ask you personally or through voice communication, your answer should be "I don't know."

Especially when Agatha or Master Levine ask you."

Kirin nodded at Eren seriously. She also asked him if she had done something wrong. He scratched under his ears before shaking his head in denial. Levine kept laughing intermittently as she watched the couple's reaction.

Alto could read what was going on in people's minds. They thought White Raven ale was just another counterfeit of elven ale. So he cleared his throat before speaking up.

"Haha. I know you have doubts. I can see clearly in your faces.

My friends, we are planning to distribute a few sample bottles of the White Raven ale. Hehe. We are convinced of its flavor, quality, and ability to stimulate your elemental attainments.

You as the consumer will soon discover where my confidence comes from. I hope you can give these products a try and share your experiences regarding them with your colleagues."

Alto started distributing a few samples of White Raven ale and Pleasure Paradise to his select audience. While his staff was handling the distribution, he spoke further.

"I have one more announcement to make. In light of having been allowed to launch and sell such promising products, my shop chain has decided to enter an exclusive selling contract with the White Raven guild. It means we will only sell White Raven potions from now on."

Alto dropped another metaphorical bomb on the audience that made the audience throw a long line of questions at him. He laughed before speaking up to clear the viewers' doubts in one go.

"Haha. This is good news for you, my friends. In exchange for entering into an exclusive selling contract with the White Raven guild, shops can sell their top concoctions at a discount of up to ten percent compared to their competitors.

The guild has perfected its concoctions ever since it entered the market. Even their most basic potions are in high demand these days. And you know they have something for everybody. So you lose nothing and gain lots of discounts. I would call this a win-win situation for both our sides."

The audience was quiet for a while before bursting into collective joy. They didn't care about the White Raven guild's motive behind this move. They were just happy that they'd get to have their go-to potions at cheaper rates from select shops.

The B-Rank potioner looked at Eren with a stunned expression. Only now did Levine realize what Eren was talking about when he said that he had decided to be "exclusive" with his products.

"Eren, you understand what you are doing, right? You are influencing the shopkeepers to sell only your products using the customers' demand as your leverage. You are basically declaring war against all the famous potion manufacturing houses by this move."

Eren had his eyes on the excited crowd and Alto who was addressing the rankers. He started laughing when he heard Levine's question.

"Hehe. You and I both know that only a certain House is most likely to be the most affected by my decision. All my products can be seen as a lineup that I created that stands toe-to-toe with that house's top-selling concoctions.

Now it doesn't matter what effect my products have on other houses' equations in the market. I won't be able to do business if I keep thinking about my opponents' well-being after today."

Eren said and ran his fingers through his hair. Kirin had started catching up on what her husband was trying to do after reading about various things and Eren's descriptions. But she failed to pinpoint which House he was talking about.

"Eren, which House are you targeting?"

Eren and Levine looked at each other when they heard Kirin's question. The latter was about to speak. But turns out he didn't have to.

"House Slughorn. He is talking about my House, young one."

Eren heard an aged voice behind him.

[Chapter 832 Sebastian Slughorn](#)

"House Slughorn. He is talking about my House, young one."

An old man in his 80s could be seen walking toward Eren's table.

He had a head full of white hair and a long white beard. His back was hunched and an inwardly arched posture that made him look much shorter than he was.

This man had a wrinkled face. He also had green eyes but they were darker green than Eren's. He was wearing a long coat and a belt with a spatial bag attached to it. He had worn a cape over his long coat as if he was protecting himself from being exposed to the cold weather like a mortal.

Although this old man seemed to have cleaned up his act, there were signs of unkemptness on him that subtly made their presence known. It was apparent that the man had a lot of other priorities than his looks.

Eren looked at the old man and saw that he was in the late stages of the B-Rank. The man seemed old but his aura was anything but feeble.

Levine was a bit surprised to see the old man here. It looked like she knew him well.

"Oh! Long time no see, Myriad Potioneer. Please join us at the table."

Levine managed to smile and greet the old man even though she carried a stressed expression on her face. She had come to realize that Eren had an unstated hatred for the House Slughorn. That put her in a difficult position as she tried to greet the old man normally.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

The old man started coughing when he stopped looking at Eren and glanced at Levine. It was as if turning his neck was also a bothersome task for him.

The old man smiled and nodded at Levine before taking her up on her offer. He didn't mind that Eren or Kirin didn't greet him even though his ranking status hinted at it for them. The rankers' code of conduct didn't mean anything to the man in his old age.

The old man took a deep breath and looked at Levine.

"Long time indeed, little Levine. No need to call me by my title, you know. I stopped fighting for the kingdom's sake a long time ago. It doesn't mean anything to me now."

Cough! Cough! Cough!

A bottle of potion was pulled from the old man's storage. He drank its contents quickly and channeled his mana to digest it right away.

"You didn't take my Sienna under your wing, little Levine. That's the only complaint I have with you."

Sebastian's voice sounded clearer and deeper after he drank his potion. There was no undertone of his age in that voice. Levine quickly took a glance at Eren before replying to the old gentleman.

"It's not like I didn't say no to her. To become my disciple, she could have taken my test and aced it. But she never showed up."

Sebastian sighed and nodded at Levine before responding.

"I know all that, little Levine. But you know that I'm unable to teach her anything because of my condition. You were the only one apart from me I could count on to guide her. If you could have just lowered your requirements a bit..."

Levine frowned when she listened to his words. It looked like the man wanted her to take Sienna under her care regardless of her lackluster talent in potioning. Something she had never done or would ever do. The reason she had ignored Marie was that her standards were too high to meet easily.

She cut off Sebastian's speech and spoke in a cold tone that was devoid of any respect this time.

"Please let me stop you right there, uncle Sebastian. You and I both know Sienna wasn't up for the task. She wasn't interested in potioning at all. She'd rather cheat her way through her academic year than make genuine efforts to learn the basics.

I don't know how you still expect me to make her my disciple under such circumstances. I'd rather take a talented ranker who is thoroughly invested in the field than choose someone else because of the personal connections I share with them."

Eren drank his White Ravel ale from the pitcher as he watched the banter between Levine and Sebastian. He didn't care anymore that one of the House Slughorn's acting heads had come to meet him while the presentation regarding his guild's top-tier products was taking place.

The butcher already knew that the clash with House Slughorn was inevitable because of his move to become exclusive with his products. So he had already prepared to meet someone from House Slughorn like this. He just let the two Master rankers talk while he held hands with Kirin and whispered sweet nothings in her ear.

"A talented ranker who is thoroughly invested in the field, you say. And you think this young man satisfied all your requirements? If you ask me, he looks more invested in chasing skirts than potioning."

Sebastian asked Levine while staring at the public display of affection Eren was showing toward Kirin. He looked at the couple holding hands over the table and frowned.

"Eren Idril, is it? I am not asking you to show me some respect, young man. But the least you could do is take your date somewhere else when I'm talking. That is if you can't control your hands."

Eren chuckled and finally looked Sebastian in the eyes before commenting.

"You are asking me to show respect without asking me to show respect, Master Sebastian. And please don't forget that it was you who decided to join us. I don't have to do anything that is being dictated by you."

Eren said and caressed Kirin's hand even more as he drank from his pitcher with the other. He would have spoken to the old man more leniently if he and Kirin were alone with him.

A B-Rank entity wasn't someone he wanted to easily offend. Not unless he had his own strategies to deal with him. But this time, Levine was with them. So he didn't have to worry about the old man suddenly turning hostile.

[Chapter 833 Monopoly](#)

Eren's soul sense leaked a bit when he spoke to the old man and made his stance known. The words and the tone used to speak them were enough to tell Sebastian that Eren was not afraid to make a move on House Slughorn.

Sebastian narrowed his eyes at Eren and felt something weird about him. It was as if his instincts were telling him that he was more dangerous to his House than he had come to realize just now. However, he ignored those feelings and spoke up.

"Haha. Being young always makes one naive and delusional. Lad, I have seen a dime a dozen like you that get into the spotlight fast and disappear faster. Sometimes no traces of them could be found on the face of Anfang."

Eren chuckled at the old man's comment. He finally let go of Kirin's hand and used it to adjust his hair before speaking up.

"Disappearing from the spotlight? Hehe. Master Sebastian, if you want to threaten me, do it right. Don't do it while hiding behind a euphemism.

Do you want to see how it's done?"

Eren made a naked threat to the B-Ranked Master potioner with his words. And he did it while sounding casual. As if he had all the things he needed to fight with him and his entire clan.

Levine saw that Eren wasn't backing down from a confrontation with Sebastian. She already knew that he had already messed up with House Remus with his recent actions. She didn't want him to get involved in any more conflicts. At least not on a personal level.

"Uncle Sebastian, Eren is my disciple. I hope you can forgive him for his naive comments. He is still learning, you see. The seniors have to show a bigger heart in forgiving their juniors."

Levine's voice sounded sweet and gentle, which changed the tense atmosphere around the table. Sebastian shook his head in denial before speaking up.

"I didn't come here to fight with you, little Levine. If my old age has taught me anything, it's that a needless fight is always bad for business. No matter if our opponent is an ant or an elephant. It just changes the scale of the repercussions."

Sebastian looked at Eren after saying that. And all he received in response were the latter's deadpan expressions. Sighing, the old man continued.

"I didn't come here to talk about Sienna either. It's just as you said. She was a bright child once. Someone who I could see leading the clan into even more prosperity in the future. But I have lost all hope in her now. It's like she suddenly became a different person when she entered her teen years.

She can't even handle the tasks I have given her in the city of New beginnings. And she had managed to mess up with House Carren. The same House this lad has managed to enter into partnership with."

Sebastian looked at Levine and pointed at Eren. The old man drank some more potion from his vial and cleared his throat before continuing further.

"I am not here to talk about the past. But the fact remains that this young man is at the helm of everything that is going wrong for me in my old age. As if he had a personal score to settle with House Slughorn.

He gets the opportunity I had wished Sienna would get and becomes your disciple. It's the separate dimension managed by his guild in which Sienna creates trouble with the House Carren."

'And here I thought I was the master of bullshittery. Not that he is wrong about me settling personal scores with his House.'

Eren had a random thought as he listened to the old man speak. But he didn't disturb or try to present a counter argument.

Sebastian was reading too much into Eren's plans to mess up with his house. He didn't know that the House Slughorn wanted Levine to take Sienna under her tutelage. It wasn't like he had given Levine's test to get her supposed position. He had become Levine's student for his own sake.

The butcher certainly hadn't set Sienna up against House Carren even though she had done it while she was technically inside the White Raven city. This was something she managed to do on her own. Eren wasn't even in his city when the incident had taken place.

Seeing Sienna's ability to attract trouble for her House like a giant mess magnet, Eren applauded in his head. He drank his ale as he listened to the old man speak.

"And lastly, the policies he has come up with in selling his potions make me wonder if he has any previous enmity with my House. Coming up with potions that purposely compete with my House's line was not enough. Now he is trying to split the market and create chaos in the entire kingdom.

Forget about my House. No other potion-manufacturing organization will support his decision. They will join hands to defeat their common enemy before competing with each other once again. Frankly, I'm surprised that House Derringer and your faction still want to associate themselves with a trouble-seeking young man like him.

I don't think that lad Demonmir has to do anything. The fellow is on a self-sabotaging mission by himself."

Levine looked at Sebastian and sighed. The old man thought that she had agreed with him. But what she said next made him change his mind.

"Things are not the way they look, uncle Sebastian. Eren only lets me know the things I'm supposed to know. So I wasn't sure what he was doing at first. But the announcement in the presentation made a few things clearer to me."

Levine then turned her gaze toward Eren before asking him.

"Eren, do you have anything to say about uncle Sebastian's grim predictions?"

Sebastian didn't understand what Levine was talking about. So he too looked at Eren with an inquisitive glance. The butcher smiled subtly before confirming Levine's doubts.

"My guild has entered into binding contracts with some potion-manufacturing organizations. The same top organizations you are banking on. They let me monopolize the market without their retaliation.

It's just as you said, Master Sebastian. I also believe that a needless fight is always bad for business. But I also fight the necessary battles with greater zeal than anyone I know."

[Chapter 834 An A-Rank's Appearance](#)

Sebastian had a grim look on his face.

He had to admit that he had underestimated Eren. He was looking at him from the same prism he was looking at his granddaughter. But turns out they were a class apart.

Levine's talk also made a few things clear for him. That Eren was no pawn. He was one of the masterminds behind the White Raven guild's success, if not the only one.

Eren watched Sebastian's facial expressions change as he spoke about how thoroughly he had planned House Slughorn's downfall. He really liked the look on the old man's face. He would have recorded it on the array disk if he had one in his storage space.

Eren finished drinking his ale and gave a small burp before continuing nonchalantly.

"Master Sebastian, these marketing campaigns are happening all over the kingdom. And some are taking place in other parts of Anfang today. My network is still in its growing phase, you see.

These programs will all run concurrently. And I can't deal with the spike in demand that will be brought by these presentations alone. What will I do when the first batch of customers start talking about my products and bring even more customers in?

Thus, I have signed a contract with some of the most recognized potion-manufacturing houses. They will only handle my regular potions so that my guild can concentrate on our signature products.

Of course, these manufacturing hubs will receive their own commissions from the profits. But I'm fine with a bit of loss in revenue to create a monopoly in the market. It also helps me save on taxes imposed by the kingdom in a legal way."

Bam!

Sebastian slammed his hand on the table and almost broke it. But he controlled his strength midway and only cracked the surface of the table a bit. It doesn't take much to say that the old potioneer was angry.

"How... how could those idiots not see the aftereffects of manufacturing your products on contracts? Have they become crazy?"

Sebastian's sage-like voice lost its calm. He sounded shocked and angry at the same time. Eren's calm smile and his serene mana signature told him that he probably wasn't lying about the developments he had made with the top manufacturing hubs.

Sebastian was still managing his house's potion production affairs. And he was sure that no offer came from the White Raven guild regarding the contract manufacture of potions.

Sebastian was made to reconfirm that this was a personal attack on House Slughorn. And nothing else. There was no ambiguity in Eren's motives regarding his clan. This guy wanted to destroy everything his House had built over generations of doing business and earning fame for itself.

Eren could clearly understand what the old man was thinking about, thanks to his soul sense. He had come to realize that the man was close to awakening his soul sense himself. As such, he couldn't intimidate him like the way he was used to when dealing with lower-ranked entities.

Nevertheless, the moves he had made over this extended period had shaken the old man to the core. The butcher chuckled before answering his questions.

"Who told you they were not aware?"

They also know what the repercussions will be for manufacturing my products. But they don't have a choice, do they? I can always abandon them and look for another hub. I can always increase my capacity in a short time by making tie-ups with loaded sponsors.

Why would they throw away a bit of profit if they are going to suffer a loss anyway? At least that's what they all thought before signing a contract with me. So they became my henchmen for me, throwing a bit of profit their way."

Levine was having a hard time trying to control Eren. She had sent him a lot of voice messages. But the guy ignored them all. She could only sigh and watch as Sebastian's face got redder and his aura became grimmer by the second.

"Bastards! What the fuck are these short-sighted hyenas doing? They slowly destroy their own businesses by doing this and end up being mere henchmen. Don't they fucking know that?"

Eren expressed a great deal of shock. It looked like he was offended in his so-called business partners' stead. The two ladies could tell he was faking it. But the butcher ignored their gazes and carried on.

"Master Sebastian, a man of your caliber shouldn't throw insults so casually. Why do you blame my friends? Just because they would rather stay in profit than open a giant front against me?"

They chose money over dignity and pride. Money is power, comfort, and freedom. It corrupts and purifies, depending upon how you use it. It is both the source of all evil and the blessing from above.

They did what was most beneficial for them. You can't blame anyone for trying to survive in this cruel world we all live in."

Sebastian's B-Rank aura leaked out as his anger reached through the roof. It spread through the surroundings and created a suffocating atmosphere. The crowd below the restaurant stopped speaking and looked in Eren's direction as some of them started feeling weak on their knees.

"Old fart, Sebastian! This is the city of New Beginnings in case you forgot. I'll beat your wrinkly ass before parceling it to your estate in a nicely packaged gift box if you throw your tantrums here one more time. Hmph!"

Turns out Levine didn't have to keep the old man in check. One of the city protectors spoke in a slightly angry tone. The voice seemed to have no origin. As if the city itself had been personified and spoke for itself.

The voice seems to have belonged to a young woman. But something told Eren that the youthfulness in the voice was just a charade. The lady ranker belonged to the same generation as the old man.

Eren could see that Sebastian's expression suddenly turned even sourer. He paid heed to the warning given to him by the voice right away and contracted his aura. It was clear that the old man and even Levine knew who the voice belonged to.

An A-Ranked entity.

[Chapter 835 Birmond Remus](#)

"You know what, teacher Levine? I have suddenly developed an urge to give madam city protector a token of my appreciation. After all, she deserves recognition for her exemplary work.

Please see to it that we send an appropriate gift her way."

Eren bowed to Levine and spoke humbly. It was as if the venom he was spewing with his words was a completely different Eren altogether. Levine was speechless for a while before nodding at him. She also felt impressed by her student's diplomatic quotient.

Sebastian clenched his fist and bit his lips while looking at Eren hatefully. However, he couldn't do anything more than that. As the anger building inside him was unable to be vented, he began coughing hysterically.

Sebastian was angry at Eren and angrier at the source of that voice. Not because he was reprimanded. But because he was reprimanded out in the open.

Sebastian wasn't worried about the crowd gathered in the market. But there were a lot of prominent rankers in the city. Those who knew his name and had met him personally were among them.

As such, Sebastian's hate for Eren grew even more than it already was. However, the butcher wasn't worried about what the old man could do anymore. He had come to realize that the old man was a lion without his teeth and claws.

Alto was instructed by Eren to carry on with his tasks by voice communication. The merchant breathed a sigh of relief before telling everyone that there was nothing to worry about. The crowd started talking normally after that. It was apparent that instances like these were not totally out of the norm in the city of New Beginnings.

Eren became fearless when he inadvertently got the backing of an A-Rank lady in suppressing the old man. He looked at Sebastian with a bright smile before concluding his business with him.

"Master Sebastian, the opposition you are banking on is not as strong as you think it is. It has already been divided. You can say that the market has already been monopolized by me.

Trust me. I wouldn't have come out in the open if I didn't have these things working for me in the background. Flaunting my achievements out in the open is not my style. We do what we have to do, however. The business will not prosper by itself, right?

The marketing campaigns are just a way to make things official at this point. This is not an overnight success. This is something I invested a lot of time and effort into.

You were not wrong about me being a skirt-chaser. But that's not the only thing I do."

Eren said calmly, without sounding arrogant. Sebastian also took a long breath and rebooted his thoughts with it. He looked at Eren intently before asking him a question.

"I only want to ask you one last thing. What did my House ever do to you?"

Eren tapped his fingers over the table when he heard the question. He reclined in his chair and shrugged his shoulders before answering vaguely.

"Ask this question to your beloved Sienna. Maybe she can answer that for you."

Sebastian wanted to ask Eren what he meant by that. But he dropped the idea all of a sudden. His dissatisfaction with Sienna turned into hatred, and he began to blame her for everything.

Sebastian got up from his seat and looked at Levine and Eren for one last time before disappearing into thin air. Only then did Levine breathe a sigh of relief.

"You... Why are you so set on destroying House Slughorn? And don't give me that bullshit about Sienna being the reason behind all this. You hardly interacted with the girl when you were in LA."

Eren started laughing when he saw Levine looking at him with irritation written on her face. He resorted to doing what he was most effective at—speaking bullshittery wrapped in euphemisms.

Levine, Kirin, and Eren soon started talking normally—occasionally laughing. Alto continued talking about White Raven Guild's products, and the crowd below them grew even wider.

Remus Estate.

A well-lit grand hall. Three rune-strengthened walls. And the fourth wall was replaced by an open balcony that became the source of light inside the hall. From the looks of things, this grand hall was way above the clouds. This was a flying artifact that was levitating over a mountain's peak.

There was no door to access the grand hall. A small teleportation array had been placed at one corner of the grand hall.

An array made of blood-red ink was inscribed over the ground. This was the blood of the ice wyvern that had been used to construct the array.

There was a handsome man in his late 30s sitting inside an array. He was in a meditative state while practicing his summoner-specific ranking technique.

This man had dark brown hair and a square-shaped face. He had a full beard that was neatly trimmed. His black eyes were closed and moving inside the eyelids. As if he was seeing things with his closed eyes.

The man wore expensive clothes. There was a medallion serving as his pendant. He had his sword and staff beside him. They were getting imbued with his mana at the same time as he was practicing his ranking technique.

"Hush!"

The man took a long breath after finishing his practice. The breath he released created a chilled atmosphere around him all of a sudden. The ice layers started forming over the ground near him and the moisture in the wind started to condense as well.

"You can come in now."

The man said to one of his subordinates. The teleportation array lit up and a man in his 20s came forward. He bowed to the bearded man before producing an array disk in his hand.

"Lord Birmond, these are the details we received regarding the disappearance of Adept Rey and Expert Janos."

The man sent the array disk Birmond's way using his wind-element spell. He then bowed once more at Birmond before making his exit.

"Hmm. This brat is afraid of what's inside the disk. Or he is afraid of my reaction to what's inside the disk. I wonder what happened to those two."

Birmond mumbled to himself as he watched his subordinate disappear. He then imbued his mana and started accessing the data that had been stored inside.

[Chapter 836 Naya](#)

A mana storm erupted.

This froze the moisture in the wind and affected the spatial fabric.

A wave of frost washed over the mountain's peak, where Birmond's flying artifact was hovering. It created ice and snow out of thin air and covered the peak with it.

The layer of ice and snow started spreading downwards. It traveled for a mile in an instant, freezing everything in its wake. When the ice element wreaked havoc on the surroundings, the land became a realm of ice.

The birds cried, and the lower-ranked mana beasts located nearby were scared. They were scared by the sudden changes in their surroundings. Something that might claim their life.

A black panther appeared at the peak all of a sudden to salvage the situation. This beast stood about 7 feet tall and was about 10 feet long. She had black fur that shined with a peculiar blue texture. She had green eyes and vertical pupils.

The tail of the beast was long and agile like a snake. She looked at the surroundings and knew he needed to do something fast, lest the House Remus' facilities on the mountain get destroyed by Birmond's elemental manifestation.

The black panther started shapeshifting. In the next moment, a gorgeous young girl in her early 20s was standing at the same peak as the black panther. She possessed the same green eyes as the panther. She had shoulder-length dark hair that had a slight blue texture.

This girl's skin was as soft and supple as snow. Her pink lips and her cute nose added extra charm to her overall cute facial features.

She had a slim body and apt curves. She stood about 5.10 ft tall and was wearing a long black dress.

The girl raised her hands and narrowed her eyes. She had a compatible mana signature with Birmond, allowing her to interfere in the manifestation of the ice elemental attainment the B-Rank ranker was inadvertently displaying.

The wave of snow and ice stopped after the girl intervened using her powers. Most of the ice and snow that had formed over the mountain's peak vanished into thin air. The remaining layer of snow was not severe enough to pose a threat to the surrounding area.

This young girl looked around and nodded to herself. She looked over her head and saw a small island levitating over the mountain's peak from a height of about 50 meters.

This small island was the land of snow. It had a huge ice palace in the middle and that was the only distinguishing feature it had. It looked like the levitating island had been created for Birmond in case his elemental manifestation wreaks havoc on the ground.

The girl was glad that House Remus took this precaution and shifted Birmond's residence permanently here. Otherwise, a lot of lower-ranked clan members and other rankers would have died in this outburst of ice calamity.

Birmond had colluded his path by taking shortcuts mentioned in the cultist ways. Something that couldn't be undone anymore.

The ancient ranking technique helped him make significant progress in his ranking journey, achieving significant gains. However, one of the downsides of that incredible achievement was that his elemental manifestation was more difficult to control for him than entities of his status.

The girl took a long breath before disappearing from her position. She appeared right beside her master before speaking to him.

"Control your anger, master. You are also hurting yourself."

The young girl said with a worried look on her face as she looked at Birmond with concern in her eyes. The latter had his fists clenched and his stature erect. There was a levitating array disk in front of him that was projecting something that could only be called hideous.

Birmond and the young girl were looking at Eren's masterpiece. The Grim Pillar he had erected displayed the head and other body parts of Janos. Birmond was used to seeing death and destruction. He was no stranger to the sight of blood and gore. He had caused mass genocides himself for various purposes.

However, for the first time in his life, Birmond thought that he was a greenhorn when it came to unleashing violence. A greenhorn compared to the person who built this pillar.

"Naya, are you seeing this?"

Birmond asked grimly. There was a hint of doubt in his voice. The demon girl looked at the pillar attentively before speaking up.

"Somebody killed Janos and possibly Rey in a most brutal way. And they have erected the pillar as an open challenge to us."

Birmond wiped the blood that was trying to spill from the corner of his mouth and gulped something down. He took a long breath and touched his medallion to calm himself down. His rapidly racing heartbeats and his agitated mana circuits slowly started to calm down.

"I had told Rey to not think too much about White Raven city. A missed opportunity will only hurt us more if we keep on thinking about it. I told him not to pursue the matter anymore.

I fucking told him to stay put... and now this."

Birmond said to himself as he read the rest of the details attached to the report. He then snapped his fingers and froze the array disk. The artifact was first encapsulated in a block of ice before dispersing into thin air.

Naya raised her eyebrows as she was made aware of the details of Janos and Rey's dual kill. She and her master shared a mental connection after all.

"There was a summoner involved? Has this newly formed guild hired a summoner in its midst that we are not aware of?"

Naya asked nobody in particular. She then walked toward a particular corner in the hall. She activated a small array and made a small tea table appear.

She poured a special medicine for Birmond from a stone kettle into a runic stone glass. An ice spike extending from her index finger was used to stir the light blue liquid.

"Drink this," Naya said before handing over the glass to her master. The latter gulped the contents down before crushing the utensil in his grip.

Birmond didn't express his rage through his facial expressions. But his eyes were spewing venom at someone responsible for the creation of the Grim Pillar.

[Chapter 837 Necromancer Goro](#)

Birmond felt the effects of the solution kick in.

He immediately started feeling the calmness he was seeking at the moment. He licked his lips before speaking up.

"Another summoner to rub it in our faces? Bastards!

I fucking don't care who they have hired. I had told Rey not to approach that smokescreen guild. He didn't listen and was killed for it. Fine. That's something I can understand.

But they didn't have to ruin my House's reputation like this for killing Rey, did they? Janos was just following orders. He didn't need to be killed either. It seems more like a personal vendetta.

I'll fucking kill this sick bastard who did this. No matter who backs him up."

Naya placed her hand on Birmond's chest and tried to calm him down using her icy touch. The latter felt a familiar chill and continued.

"I don't care about that wretched city, Naya. We are not getting it back from the likes of Levine and House Derringer. I already knew that.

But that pawn needs to be disposed of. He has overplayed his importance in this equation."

Birmond sounded calm and collected even though the words he spoke were anything but. Naya agreed with him too. This was the first time she had seen this facet of human nature through the Grim Pillar.

Birmond was about to summon his subordinate once again to make a few preparations when he felt something in his storage. He retrieved another array that was used for long-distance communication.

Birmond imbued the array disk with his mana and let it project the scenes from the other side of the communication line.

"Am I catching you at a bad time, lad?"

Birmond heard Sebastian Slughorn's aged voice. He was in his private space in the city of New Beginnings.

"You can say that, uncle Sebastian. But it's fine."

Birmond caressed his beard with his hand and scratched it a bit before speaking up in a serene tone.

"On second thought, I shouldn't have gotten so riled up over a death or two. Especially over a cockroach that has recently learned to fly."

Sebastian flashed a smile when he understood what must have happened.

"So you learned about the incident. Currently, only a few people are aware of it. But soon it will be known throughout Edinburgh.

There are already a lot of people visiting the scene and treating it as a sightseeing activity on their way to the city of White Raven. I mean no offense but that pillar is a tight slap to you and your entire clan, lad."

In his mind, Sebastian thanked the stars for catching Birmond just in time.

"Did the White Raven guild do something to you too, uncle Sebastian?"

Birmond wasn't stupid. He immediately figured out that the old man was trying to gaslight him. But that was fine as well. Because he had already been gaslighted by the butcher himself with the display of the Grim Pillar.

Sebastian laughed and coughed at the same time. He readjusted himself and cleared his throat before speaking up.

"Haha. Lad, you're as sharp as I was in my youth. It's too bad you had to practice that problematic technique."

Sebastian shook his head and took a dramatic pause before verbally marching forward.

"Anyway, you are right about your guess. Birmond, we had a common enemy. And I'm sure you'd agree that he needs to be squashed as soon as we can."

The old man Sebastian then proceeded to tell Birmond about his interaction with Eren. He didn't hide anything from the man because most of the details were going to be common knowledge for House Remus anyway.

"So this is the story from my end. I also recently learned that the fiend has created trouble for you guys as well. So I thought I should give you a call.

I started digging more about the guild and Eren and found out that we are not the only enemies they have. The Escalon guild, Nico Chains from Demonmir's faction, and Rehaal Renar are also interested in my plan to kill Eren.

If your House decided to get in..."

"Yes. We are in."

Sebastian didn't have to say much. Birmond was ready to join hands with anyone and everyone in their common goal of killing Eren.

Through Sebastian, Birmond found out that Eren was still in the city of New Beginnings. Of course, they all knew that creating a mess in the city was out of the question.

Regardless, Sebastian's united front planned to strike the butcher after he left the city. The city's protectors won't interfere in matters that are outside the city.

Sebastian's plan was simple. Use the resources each of them possesses to strike Eren. Birmond was supposed to send a few people that would meet up with the people being sent from all the factions. They would create a giant ambush outside the city and wait for their prey to fall into their widely cast trap.

Sebastian had tried contacting one of the top manufacturing hubs within the kingdom and found out that what Eren had told him was true. Therefore, he had given up on retaliating against Eren by using the potion markets as a platform. He knew he couldn't win even if his House was stronger than the current White Raven guild.

Thus, Sebastian started to hatch the plan to erase the root of all the problems from existence. He knew that the kingdom was also going to benefit from Eren's massive trade.

Plus, Eren had the backing of two huge forces. So Sebastian decided to involve other forces in his plan. That way, they would all get shared responsibility. After all, just like the Grim Pillar, Eren's potential killing was also going to be an open secret. He didn't want House Slughorn to take all the credit for such a scandalous killing.

Birmond also understood why Sebastian wanted his House involved as well. But he didn't mind. He was all for shared responsibility as well. They both talked for a bit before finalizing a plan.

Birmond cut off the spectral screen call with Sebastian and summoned his subordinate. The same one who had submitted the array disk containing Grim Pillar's information.

"Hehe. Goro, you did a good job assessing the situation and staying away from me. I would have killed you accidentally otherwise."

Birmond chuckled when he saw his subordinate and disciple. His face suddenly turned grimmer and his voice serious as he addressed Goro.

"It's time you ventured out after staying cooped up here, Goro. Show me how far you have progressed in your path as a necromancer."

Teleport to New Beginnings using the teleportation arrays. If you are lucky, you'd also fight a summoner.

However, make sure you get rid of the nuisance before doing anything else."

[Chapter 838 A Couple's Retreat](#)

A natural alliance of enemies.

Escalon guild, Rehaal Renar, Demonmir's faction, House Slughorn, and House Remus had teamed up to get rid of Eren. The group had congregated for the common cause of removing him from White Raven's equation for their own reasons.

These forces sent their skilled rankers to the city of New Beginnings. The city of White Raven was Eren's stronghold. So disposing of the man here was their ideal choice.

Unaware of this recently formed alliance, Eren was having fun with Kirin. He had bid adieu to Levine a few hours ago. The potioner left the couple to their devices. She proceeded to sort her own affairs related to the joint venture between her faction and the White Raven guild.

Eren took Kirin on a sightseeing tour of the city. A couple's retreat.

The city of New Beginnings was a gigantic place to explore. So much so that it would take weeks for the couple to truly say that they have seen the city and all that it has to offer.

Eren and Kirin suppressed their ranking statuses and chose to act like mortals to avoid too much attention. Of course, they were sensed by high-ranking entities in the city all the same. Most of them, however, also wanted to keep a low profile as a couple. So there was a silent agreement between these rankers to let others be.

Kirin got to see some more of the way the outside world in Anfang behaved and did things. She would always draw comparisons between what she used in the Oni dungeon and her memories related to the continent of Echidna.

The half-elf had tried and tasted many cuisines during the exploration. She tasted many brews and shopped for a bunch of items and accessories.

Kirin explored a theme park with her husband that was run with the help of many arrays and array disks working in tandem. She embarked on a scary-themed boat ride for couples and pretended to get shocked by the spectral ghosts.

But her acting sucked and everybody could tell that she was not scared at all. The elf enjoyed the ride with Eren nonetheless.

The city's nightlife was equally active and exciting. Unlike the city of White Raven, almost all the shops and various establishments ran day and night in the city of New Beginnings. As such, the couple didn't need to stop their exploration.

The night passed in a blink of an eye, and the couple left one part of the city to enter another. This was a region filled with a myriad of clothing stores.

It was one of the most crowded areas of the city. It would be mostly populated by the mortal population of the city. But rarely would there be Novice and Ace-ranked adventurers and city guards coming here.

To change their outfits, the couple entered a clothing shop for mortals. Eren was now wearing an oversized white tunic to give him a relaxed look. It had green-colored palm tree prints that boded well with the pendant he was wearing.

Kirin was wearing a stylish dress in a shade of pink. It had a plunging neckline with a floral printed tiered skirt. The cuffed balloon sleeves added to the dress's elegance.

The half-monster girl had let her hair down for the first time in a long while. It had grown in waist length. The golden locks and her green earrings created a nice visual symphony with her pink dress.

Kirin had matched the light pink dress with strappy white heels and golden bracelets in both her hands. She really liked the ever-changing styles of mortals that kept practicality aside and just experimented with what looked nice.

Kirin stood out from the crowd more than anyone because of her already cute appearance. Her stylish outfit, however, allowed her presence to be magnified even more.

"How do I look?"

Kirin asked her husband casually— a light smile on her face. She really enjoyed the last few hours of city exploration with Eren.

The butcher smiled in reply. He held her arms in his and proceeded to walk out of the shop before replying to her in a playful tone.

"Hmm. It's no use."

Eren took a dramatic sigh and shook his head in disappointment. Kirin started to recognize Eren's mischievous behaviors by now. She decided to play along.

"What do you mean? Don't I look pretty?"

Eren looked at her from head to toe and shook his head once again. He looked at the sky before saying his words like he was talking to someone up there.

"Pretty is not the word I'd use, Kirin darling. It doesn't quite express your beauty. But no matter what I say, it wouldn't do justice to describing your charms anyway."

Kirin chuckled heartily when she heard Eren's words. Her cute laughter garnered her some more attention as the couple walked through the city's bustling crowd.

"That won't do. Please give your best shot, Lord Husband."

,m Kirin said, clinging tightly to Eren as they walked. The latter was being eyed by a lot of men after seeing such stunning beauty together with a seemingly ordinary man. But they never tried to look him in the eye for some reason.

It was as if they had subconsciously understood that dealing with the guy in any way was a terrible idea. Unknown to him, Eren's soul sense would also influence people around him. Particularly mortals who were extremely vulnerable to it.

Eren scratched below his ears and pursed his lips before replying in a disappointing tone.

"It's regrettable that I never took the effort to enhance my vocabulary when I was young. My linguistic skills are mediocre at best.

One can't blame me though. I had different priorities back then. I was trying to get into aunt Nina's pan... cough... cough... I mean I was trying to get into aunt Nina's head and learn the art of potioning from her.

That project took all the time I had, never allowing me time to focus on anything else. So bear in mind that my praise can be lacking. But as you said, I can always try."

Eren said and looked ahead. His destination was in his eyesight. A quaint restaurant in the district that was popular among mortals and rankers alike. The venue was supposed to have a pleasant ambiance with separate areas for the couples.

Eren cleared his throat and shook his head before coming up with a few lines for Kirin.

[Chapter 839 Sea Shanties](#)

Eren cleared his throat and shook his head before coming up with a few lines for Kirin.

"You are a white lily, my love
In the sea of hellfire— dreadful
You are a faint glow— amber
Of the evening sky— red
You are a sunken pearl— jade
In murky waters— gray
You are an old coin— silver
Among the dirt coppers— umber
You are a lost dream— found
A garnet wine— vintage
You are the only voice— sane
Among the endless screams— savage
You are a beacon of light— bright
In a stormy sea— wild
You are a heartbeat— kind
In my evil heart— vile
You are a needed respite— pleasant
In my lonely life— upsetting
You are a gentle smile— content
Among endless earnings— yellings
You are a light quill— flimsy
Over a brown parchment— old
You are dipped in ink— blue
Writing sea shanties— untold."

The butcher said and sighed. It looked like he was still unable to capture the charms Kirin was exuding in his words. He acted like an utter failure— with his downhearted voice and his sunken gaze.

It took a while for Kirin to process what Eren had said. She understood his words well. However, she processed the meanings behind his words slowly— enjoying the process in her head.

Eren had basically told Kirin that he saw her as a sought-after respite and safe zone in any unwanted situation. Since she had become his shadow, he felt safer and always surrounded by feelings of affection. The piece he created for her was just a token of appreciation he had come up with.

Eren told Kirin that he was unable to come up with better words to praise Kirin. Then he went ahead and whipped up the most artistic lines he could think of. It was safe to say that the girl was impressed beyond measure.

Kirin tightened her grip around Eren's arms and planted a peck on his cheek as they were walking. The butcher smiled when he received confirmation that Kirin really liked his piece.

"That was a beautiful piece, Lord Husband. I couldn't have asked for anything better. If there are better words, I don't want to hear them after listening to what you came up with."

Kirin spoke in a gentle voice full of affection. Eren had to say that this was the most expressive Kirin had shown since they met up. She was opening up to him at least.

It seemed that Kirin was not done with her replies. She paused to come up with something similar to Eren's piece. But in the end, she couldn't do it. She tucked her hair behind her ears before speaking honestly.

"Eren, I am not as verbal as you. I lack the talent of a poet. And it has nothing to do with the fact that I learned the language just recently.

But I'll say this. Your strength lies in your determination. Your character shines brightest in the diligent work you do every day. And your sky-high goals inspire not only you but those around you as well, including me."

Eren was surprised that he was receiving counter-praise in return. This was the first time in a long while that someone had said positive things about him. As such the experience was almost foreign to him.

As much as he wanted to say he didn't need to be hailed for something he did purely for his reasons, he didn't dislike praises when they came from Kirin. This was akin to a land that had learned to survive without the rains suddenly getting doused in a downpour.

Kirin liked that Eren's smile had changed shades because of her words. She looked at him intently before speaking further.

"Agatha often fears that your deeds will be portrayed as evil should they come to light. And maybe they are, because of the rankers' society we are currently living in. But she doesn't know the broader truth of the world.

She doesn't know what it takes to conquer an entire army of monsters. She doesn't know what it means to be supported by Anfang's world will in a way.

It would be impossible even for the most powerful child of Echidna in the Oni dungeon to stand against my father the way you did and hope to survive the ordeal.

But the unimaginable happened and I was freed from that prison. Only after getting out of that space did I realize how suffocating it was. Only after coming with you did I realize what I was missing in life."

Eren smiled when he heard Kirin's take on the past. It looked like she really saw a savior in him. Sometimes tyranny didn't have to be physical or verbal. It is also possible for silence and non-interaction to come off as tyrannical. And in Kirin's eyes, her father was just that.

Eren led her inside the restaurant for couples and booked a cozy table for them upstairs. He ordered a bunch of dishes for both of them and waited for the appetizers. While waiting, he decided to dig deep into Kirin's psyche.

"Kirin darling, you say that you are living a better life with me than you were inside the Oni dungeon. But you are forgetting the fact that it is also very dangerous being with me.

I take precautions. I plan. And I keep tabs on my enemies. But I have come to understand that when shit wants to hit the fan, it will. And nobody would be able to stop it.

After all, those who are trying to rise and take flight are bound to get pulled down by gravity harder.

Wouldn't it have been better for you if you were to separate from me and concentrate on your evolution now that you are free to do whatever you want? I would not mind if you stayed in White Raven city or Badlands to work on yourself rather than always being with me.

As terrible as your father was, he didn't stop you from working on yourself. You had safety and steady progress in the Oni dungeon. Not something I can provide to you in this volatile situation.

After all, I can't provide you with something I don't possess myself."

[Chapter 840 Carving Out A Piece Of Freedom](#)

"After all, I can't provide you with something I don't possess myself."

Eren welcomed the appetizers to his table as he talked with Kirin. Crostini, deviled eggs, ham and cheese rolls, bacon-wrapped jalapeno peppers, beetroot and cheese salad, and lastly, a spinach dip with bread.

The restaurant staff had come to realize that Eren and Kirin were ranked entities just by the quantity of the appetizers they had ordered. This was not their first time seeing something like this. A lot of rankers liked to mingle with mortals this way. So they didn't say anything and served the couple well.

Kirin chuckled when she saw the amount of food Eren had got for himself. She only took a small portion of the appetizers for herself and took the first bite of her Crostini before replying to Eren's question.

"Safety? Was I really safe there? You wouldn't have been able to penetrate the Oni dungeon if there was such a thing as absolute safety."

Eren smirked when Kirin put her point of view forward. What she was saying was his ideology as well. It was just that he had come to adopt it after living a life of misery and hell.

Kirin on the other hand lived a relatively better life. At least he liked to think that she did. And still, she came to the same conclusion. Eren could only conclude some intersection truths would be obvious to people leading different lives.

Kirin took a few more bites before continuing.

"The idea of absolute safety is just a figment of imagination people willingly create for themselves. So that they can stop themselves from pursuing what they truly want. Because that pursuit will require them to give it all they have. That pursuit will require sacrifices. Something they are not willing to do.

What if it breaks them? What if it cripples their future? People are often stuck in various what-ifs of their lives.

An ever-fleeting sense of safety in exchange for suffocating restrictions and unquestionable obedience is not worth it. I have seen that most rankers make these choices because they have the option to choose. They take their freedom of choice for granted. They take their freedom for granted.

They happily sign contracts with various establishments and get bound by the rules set forth by them. As if their freedom meant nothing to them. As if it was just another commodity they had in abundance.

Most of them don't even try to break the bindings they have. They get comfortable in their cages. Their shackles become the life-saving rope they can hang onto to keep them from falling into the pit of uncertainty."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Kirin's words. He was surprised by how much their thinking matched each other. It was as if he was listening to himself. But there were a few points he didn't agree on.

"Not understanding the true value of freedom, huh? If you ask me, Kirin, it's not the rankers' fault that they are raised this way. They are the product of a society that is governed by its rules.

Restricting individual freedom is minimizing overall chaos. Which establishment would want to invite anarchy in its wake? So it's not their fault either.

Almost every ranker, whether they join any organization, choose to stay mercenary, or become a cultist to experience a greater illusion of freedom, is subjected to shackles of their own making.

Even if they are given choices, they don't really mean anything. Because they would be bound by a set of rules designed for that particular group. Regardless of what they choose, the imposition of rules cannot be skipped.

By the time they are aware of this truth, they are already chest-deep in the quagmire. The freedom of choice is just an illusion, Kirin.

You have keen eyes. I'll give you that. But you can't judge the rankers based on what you see on the surface."

Eren said as he drank the refreshment he had been served. He wanted Kirin to understand that things weren't as black and white when it came to rankers' society as she was making them out to be. Even with her keen perception, she was bound to remain oblivious to some truths that couldn't be seen unless one had lived a life like him.

Kirin pondered for a bit before nodding a bit. But she couldn't help putting what was on her mind.

"I can agree that freedom of choice can be an illusion here, Eren. But I didn't even have that illusion to count on when I was in the Oni dungeon. My entire society was based on absolute obedience.

All I want to say is that rankers who haven't seen anything other than the world of Anfang don't understand what you strive for. But I do.

Freedom to be free. Freedom to pursue what you want on your own terms.

Only after seeing you interact with this world like oil to water did I realize the true importance of striving for something seemingly unachievable. You have managed to carve out a piece of freedom for yourself in the pursuit of your goals.

People are not after you, Eren. Not really. They are after that piece of freedom you have for yourself. And they don't want that piece for themselves either. They just want to destroy it so that nobody can claim that for themselves."

This was the first time since his second chance in life that Eren felt beaten in an argument. Kirin was very articulate in expressing her inner feelings. And in doing so, she had tried to put him on a higher pedestal than the rest of the rankers.

The butcher smiled mirthlessly and looked at Kirin. He placed his hands over the table and reclined on his chair. The butcher looked at the half-elf with a playful look on his face before speaking up.

"All I can say is that I'm glad that we are together, Kirin darling. I now understand why you gals like being praised. This shit can be addicting. Haha."

The butcher then narrowed his eyes and looked at the chandelier that was hanging from the ceiling before continuing.

"As for people wanting to destroy the piece of freedom I have for myself. They must be ready to forfeit all they hold dear including their lives if they hope to target it."