

Vile 911

[Chapter 911 Down-To-Earth Character Vs Bragger](#)

"Hahaha. You are as feisty as always, Aunt Nina."

Eren chuckled as he steadied himself in the air. Nina and Amory had to look up to stare at the butcher. Nina smiled before responding.

"Hehe. And you are as horny as always, little rat."

Eren raised his eyebrows and scrunched his nose in dissatisfaction as he asked.

"Heh! Why is that a bad thing?"

Nina looked at him playfully as she replied.

"When did I say it was a bad thing?"

"Hmm. But your actions don't match your intentions, Miss Contradiction Incarnate."

Nina was taken aback by Eren's way of referring to her. The latter had forgotten that he used to call her by that name only in his head. The healer then got a bit serious before answering him in a serious voice with a bit of hesitation.

"Well... we are kinda under duress. My guild..."

Nina looked at Amory after she said. The latter made his intentions known that he was okay with Nina sharing information about the guild with Eren. This is because everybody in the kingdom will come to know about it eventually. But the old man told Nina that she should brief him after they got out of Monster Canyon.

"I'll tell you later, Erni."

Nina said and looked around herself. The butcher had asked Ror to get out of the zone after reaching the place. He wouldn't enter the zone meant for B-Rankers on his own.

He had taken help from Baran and his team of orcs before approaching Nina all on his own. Thus, Eren told Baran and Ror to meet each other to discuss the next set of plans arranged for them.

Nina did not know that Monster Canyon and the Badlands as a whole were relatively safer places for the butcher than inside Edinburgh. Inside the Badlands, Eren was creating a dominion for himself that was strengthening itself with each passing day.

Unaware of the mysterious pies Eren had dipped his fingers in, Nina grew worried about Eren's safety. She looked at him keenly before speaking in a grim tone.

"I wasn't expecting to be greeted like this by you. Especially here in the Badlands when we were supposed to hunt for a Monster Overlord. Let's get out of here, Erni. You really shouldn't be here. I wouldn't be able to protect you properly if we were attacked by a monster horde or..."

Nina was about to say something to Eren. But all of a sudden, his eyes opened wide in shock as she sensed his ranking status.

"Wait... When did you enter the solid stage of the Adept rank?"

Eren knew that Nina would be surprised once again because of his status. So he cackled like a baby hyena before responding.

"Kekeke. Did you notice it just now? A few days back."

Eren said and landed in front of Nina once again with his Wind-Fire Wings still dispersing into thin air behind him. He shrugged his shoulders and walked a bit toward Nina before speaking in a carefree voice.

"It's no big deal. Expert rank is just around the corner. And with a bit of effort from my side, I'll catch up with you soon."

Eren said as if he had never bothered to increase his ranking status through traditional methods. Which was kind of true. He had indeed put in more effort than anyone else in his generation. But they were not concentrating on doing particular things. Instead, he had diversified his areas of expertise.

Eren seldom practiced his ranking techniques after his breakthrough into the Adept rank. Most of his ranking progress was dependent on the peculiarity of his ranking technique as well as the "supplements" he had found along the way. Devouring those "supplements" regularly provided him with spectacular gains.

To someone who was not aware of the butcher's regular schedule, it looked like he had invested all his efforts into progressing further in his rank. Still, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the butcher had achieved something amazing.

Nina was impressed with Eren's progress as well. But she decided to be critical of him instead of praising him just for fun's sake.

"Ha. There he is! Bragging about his progress as usual. You play such a down-to-earth character in front of others. Why do you feel the need to be boastful in front of me?"

Nina's question had Eren stumped in his speech. She thought he was bragging when he was speaking the truth. He pursed his lips and stopped when he was only an inch away from Nina. He placed both his hands on her cheeks and cupped her face before speaking up.

"That.... That's a very good question, Aunt Nina. Hmm. I don't know how to answer that."

The warmth of Eren's palms could be felt on her face. He scratched the tip of her nose and played with her earlobes. The latter also wrapped her arms around his neck and spoke playfully.

"Hehe. Not that I'm complaining. I like you more when you are this confident."

Eren and Nina argued back and forth as if they were the only two people in the vicinity. They were about to kiss each other when they heard a cough so severe that it felt like someone was about to die.

The old man Amory was annoyed by their apparent failure to recognize that he was also present at the scene. He coughed like a mortal on his deathbed before addressing Nina.

"Lass, who is this distinguished young man?"

Eren and Nina both looked at Amory as if they had both registered his presence for the first time. The old man could understand this coming from Eren. But he wasn't expecting Nina to act the same way when she had helped him so much. It was as if she had stopped being a member of Healers' Nirvana when she was with Eren.

Nina bit her tongue when she realized her mistake. She got away from Eren's embrace and cleared her throat for no apparent reason before introducing Eren to Amory.

"This is Eren Idril I used to talk about, Uncle Amory. Umm... let's get out of the Badlands, shall we? That Ogre has run away and the place will only get more dangerous if we try to follow him any further."

"But..."

Amory tried to say something to Nina. But the latter cut him off right away.

"Think about Eren, uncle Amory. He is not meant to be in this zone at all."

[Chapter 912 Attack On Healers' Nirvana](#)

An eagle-type demon beast could be seen carrying three rankers on its back.

It flew at a higher altitude and cut through the air with such speed that the winds around it made howling noises.

This group of three rankers and one demon beast had gotten outside the Badlands and were now approaching the city of New Beginnings. They would then use the teleportation arrays inside the city to get to the city of White Raven.

Argo increased his speed. Amory was going to get dropped off Argo's back as a result.

"Kiyeeeh! Hang tight, Geezer Pipes. Or we gon hear some brittle bones pop like a mother..."

Argo said to Amory while the latter was busy filling his smoke pipe with his stuff. Eren and Nina had sat together over Argo's neck while Amory sat near his tail.

"How rude! Young man, does your demon beast have no manners?"

Amory asked Eren, agitated by Argo's way of speaking to him. The demon beast painted visuals in Amory's head of someone collecting his remains from the ground with a giant spatula. He lit his pipe right away and released fume after fume through his nostrils to register his anger.

The butcher was busy flirting with Nina. The healer sat in front in the same way she would ride a colt. Eren sat right behind her. Nina's back touched his torso. He had wrapped his arms around her waist as if protecting her from falling off.

Of course, being B-Rankers neither Amory nor Nina needed anyone's help. Even with such a high altitude, falling off Argo was a minor inconvenience. Still, Eren acted like the knight he was and offered Nina his services.

The healer could feel Eren's hands venturing to some of the sensitive parts of the body. As if they were asking for some form of compensation for acting like harnesses for her. She would pinch the back of his hands from time to time whenever he did that to prevent him from showing public displays of affection.

Eren chuckled before responding to Amory.

"Haha. That's him trying to speak to you politely, Master Amory. He is just a kid who has a bit of a mouth on him."

Nina chuckled when Eren defended his demon beast. She could tell where Argo got this trait from. Basically, the demon beast took Eren's way of cursing or criticizing someone in his head and ran with it. He was just outspoken about it.

Eren let an agitated Amory cool down before asking the question he wanted to ask both the Master rankers.

"Why were you trying to fight Ro... Errr... I mean why were you trying to fight a Monster Overlord anyway?"

And both of you were inside Monster Canyon for quite some time. What were you trying to find for so long?"

Nina wanted to answer Eren's question herself. But she let Amory speak so that he could feel a bit lighter in his head after talking about it. The old man smoked his pipe some more and sighed before answering.

"I was trying to break into the Grandmaster rank, Eren boy. Monster Canyon is... or was my last hope of ever achieving something like this before..."

"Before you die?"

Eren said in a neutral voice. Yet, for some reason, Amory could not find any disrespect for his seemingly futile efforts in Eren's voice. The old healer felt as if Eren had also gone through similar experiences before.

"Yes. Before I die."

Amory subconsciously felt comfortable speaking to Eren as if he was talking to an old pal from his era. He added further.

"They were my last-ditch efforts. Guess I will never know what it feels like to be a Grandmaster ranker anymore. This is sad news for me and also for the guild I have been a part of for almost all my life. Just when my guild and that child Jiana needed me the most..."

Amory kept on talking about his problems to Eren. But then he carried on monologuing, not caring if anybody was listening or not.

Eren listened to Amory's story keenly and was reminded of his last-ditch efforts inside Monster Canyon. He could relate to the old man because he had been in his shoes in his past timeline. It was just that he was nobody at the time. The stakes for his breakthrough were also much lower.

Through Amory's statements, Eren learned that Nina and Amory had been trapped in an isolated dimension in Monster Canyon while exploring a ruined site. It took them only a few days to get out of the isolated dimension successfully. But by the time they did, months had passed in the real world. Since

the isolated dimension observed the accelerated passage of time within it, both rankers were unable to contact anyone while they were inside.

'What is up with this Monster Canyon? Why is it so bizarre?'

Eren thought to himself as he listened to two Master-Ranked entities' experiences. He was sure that he would have had a much harder time dealing with the dimension without Alephee's help if things were this difficult for two B-Rankers.

The butcher knew that Monster Canyon always had space-time anomalies. But he noticed that the instances of these anomalies appearing had increased in the current timeline when compared to the last time.

He wondered if he had any hand to play in this phenomenon. Alephee only activated the dialing back of time while he was inside Monster Canyon. He thought that maybe Alephee's powers permanently altered the place, giving rise to such instances.

Nina prioritized Amory's task when they learned that the outside world had observed a different passage of time and that a few bad things had happened to their guild. She didn't contact Eren because he couldn't help her at their level. At least she thought of it as such.

Unlike a certain individual among them, the Master rankers couldn't turn back time for themselves. So all they could do was prioritize Amory's advancement to Grandmaster rank. That was the only thing that could help both Amory and his guild at the same time.

"Your guild was attacked? By whom?"

[Chapter 913 The Biggest Anomaly Of Them All P1](#)

"Your guild was attacked? By whom?"

Eren asked while caressing Nina's thighs. The latter didn't know what to say about his behavior. She slapped his hands away before speaking up.

"Yes. We discovered this after we got out of the isolated dimension. The guild master of Healers' Nirvana— Jiana Jihang sent a one-way message to uncle Amory describing the event.

It's only been a few weeks since the attack. The guild has only 20% of its workforce left. Most died. A few managed to flee, never to be seen again.

The most shocking piece of news is that the attackers managed to critically injure guild master Jianna's demon beast Bilo. Since she was connected to Bilo, guild master Jianna also received a soul-related injury, making her unable to retaliate anymore for the time being."

Eren stopped doing his shenanigans with Nina when he heard that Healers' Nirvana was attacked. He was quite perplexed. In the last timeline, Healers' Nirvana only kept on prospering for as long as he could remember. He wasn't sure what happened to Amory in that timeline, but Jianna Jihang had managed to make more of a name for herself when she became a Grandmaster ranker. She already had a kingdom-certified title attached to her name.

*sigh! At this point, I have lost all my advantages from knowing past events. This timeline had gotten more muddled than I thought it would be despite my efforts to preserve it as much as I could.'

Eren sighed and shook his head before asking the rankers.

"A guild like Healers' Nirvana has its say in the kingdom's affairs. The royal court wouldn't want to see a healer-specific guild being destroyed on the brink of war.

Why didn't Edinburgh's forces intervene? Was it another prominent guild or..."

"Cultists!"

Amory spoke up while releasing some more smoke through his nostrils. He hit his smoking pipe on his palm a couple of times to get rid of the burnt material, then refilled it with fresh herbs before adding more.

"The kingdom's forces wanted to intervene. Jianna was assured that a couple of army units had been deployed to assist the guild. But the attack was too sudden and took place on a much larger scale than one could imagine. It was as if these cultists had no intention of calling it quits when they were ahead."

Eren narrowed his eyes as he listened to Amory's words. As much as the masses liked to believe, he knew that the cultists weren't ragtag bands of lunatics. If one was willing to dig deep, one would always find the motives behind the cultists' actions.

Eren could only think of one reason why the cultists would want to attack a non-aggressive guild like Healers' Nirvana. A foreign hand. The butcher's suspicions were confirmed by Nina's next words.

"Everything was over even before the kingdom's forces could play their part in the incident. The royal court tells us that the kingdom of Layos has a hand to play in the attack. It doesn't want Edinburgh to have so many healers taking active roles in the upcoming war. So it influenced the cultists to attack the entire guild and all of its members.

The cultists also destroyed the guild's properties and the land it used to own. It got rid of all the healing-specific resources we were cultivating. It bombed our warehouses and destroyed our stocks of healing potions and more."

Eren shook his head as he listened to Nina's explanation. He lay flat on his back and took out his Sativa Stick. He used Argo's feathers as something to scratch the back of his neck before lighting his smoke.

He looked at the dim evening sky with a blank expression before voicing his thoughts.

"It doesn't matter if the cultists were influenced by the kingdom of Layos. What I'm more concerned about are players from the enemy kingdom who organized the whole thing.

They targeted and destroyed your guild's warehouses and other properties. Cultists would have tried to loot everything if they were acting on their own.

The cultists were tamed and made to operate like one force. This is not something that can be done remotely. My guess... There was a commander present at the scene who was not a cultist. They choreographed the event and did not let the cultists have their way."

Eren smoked his Sativa Stick leisurely as he made his predictions known to the two rankers. Nina started missing Eren's touch on her body when he lay flat behind her. She readjusted her derriere and made it touch his crotch ever so subtly.

However, Eren was on a different tangent at this point. He looked at Amory like one of his smoking buddies before starting to converse with him.

"This is worse than it looks, Master Amory. Layos has managed to get their prominent rankers into Edinburgh. Something like this should have made a beep on their radar.

What the fuck has Edinburgh's intelligence network been up to all this time? Why weren't you informed about this? How couldn't it see this big event coming from miles away?"

Eren knew exactly how Edinburgh's army operated. It remained alert to internal threats more than external pressure. A movement this big should have been noticed by the kingdom's intelligence agencies long ago.

A cultist attack of this magnitude cannot be handled by the city administration at all. Special forces should have intervened or the Army should have deployed its troops to handle the situation. There were other covert and overt preventive measures that should have been put in place.

Yet, a prominent guild like Healers' Nirvana was attacked and almost destroyed by the cultists. A large group of the kingdom's healers getting killed before the start of the war was akin to Layos dealing double the damage to Edinburgh using one move.

The attack on Healers' Nirvana was a slap in the face for Edinburgh's forces. The guilds' trust in the kingdom's forces was bound to be negatively affected by this single incident alone.

Amory knew what Eren was talking about. All of his assumptions were right on the mark. At first, he thought that Eren was just another young blood. But he changed his mind as he listened to Eren's predictions.

Amory continued to smoke his pipe as he replied to Eren.

[Chapter 914 The Biggest Anomaly Of Them All P2](#)

Old man Amory kept smoking his pipe as he replied to Eren.

"The kingdom knew the possibility of an attack like this, lad. But it wasn't able to pinpoint the target on time. Still, it tried to prevent the attack from happening by launching a preemptive strike."

Eren narrowed his eyes as he listened to Amory.

"Are you telling me this attack happened after their preventive measures failed? When did they become so useless?"

Eren asked this question to nobody in particular as he released white clouds of his own through his mouth which were swept away by the winds. Amory's nostrils flared when he smelled the stuff Eren was smoking. Even with his B-Rank constitution that was almost impervious to Adept-ranked resources, he could tell that the herbs the butcher was smoking were very potent.

'This lad has the smoking habits of an old man. I don't know how he functions normally with smoking herbs like those.'

Amory noticed that Eren was especially critical of Edinburgh's army and special forces. The old man sighed before answering.

"Yes... we can say that.

I made some personal inquiries after we got out of the Badlands. My contacts say that this cultist group was recently attacked by Edinburgh's army. It had conducted a search and destroy operation in the Delva Gorge to wipe out the cultist base.

Now the army believes that the cultists were somehow tipped off."

A metaphorical bomb was detonated inside Eren's head when Amory spoke about Delva Gorge. This was the same site he had been dispatched to for his exit mission. Where he ended up killing Gilhouse and all his retainers. He also killed an Expert-ranked army officer there because the guy had tried to follow Gilhouse's trail.

'Don't tell me... Gilhouse fucked up the entire operation to mess with me. And I just added fuel to the fire by finishing what he started.'

Eren had a blank look on his face as he thought of an almost confirmed possibility. Since the awakening of his soul sense, his mana sense didn't fluctuate easily under sudden mental stress. As a result, he still appeared to be listening intently to Amory's explanation without any changes to his expression or presence. However, there was someone else who couldn't understand the importance of keeping his mouth shut.

"Delva Gorge? Wait a damn minute..."

'Shut the fuck up, you fat bird. Eyes on the skies.'

Argo was shut down by Eren as soon as he opened his mouth. The demon beast complained to Eren about how he was not given enough red meat to be treated like this. Yet, he shook his eagle head and released an angry eagle cry before doing what Eren asked him to do.

Thankfully, Amory and Nina were too immersed in their own chain of thoughts to care about Argo's intervention. The former took a brief pause before explaining further.

"The main force of the cultist organization escaped before the operation even began. What was even more surprising was the fact that the left-behind cultist force managed to kill two Expert-ranked personnel from the Edinburgh army.

The C-rank cultists that were left behind managed to escape the operation as well. The army couldn't do anything further because of Delva Gorge's peculiarity. The two army personnel that were killed in action were also supposed to be handling the aftermath of the mission and conducting follow-ups. But since they were no longer there, the army couldn't assign other officers to the case on time.

The army's job was to raid the cultist base and destroy the accumulated resources. The special forces' job was to intercept the higher-ranked cultists and destroy them. The army deployment was supposed to shake the hornet's nest and let the big bad boys come out.

But apart from the two Expert-ranked cultists, no other high-ranked cultists could be found at the scene. And even they knew how to escape the traps laid by the army in the Gorge. Thus, the army and special forces both believed that the cultists had been tipped off.

In the end, the cultists just expedited their plans after Edinburgh's preemptive strike failed. The cultists that managed to escape from Delva Gorge reached the city of Curar and initiated their plan right away, catching all of us by surprise. I'll go ahead and say that the preemptive strike was beneficial for the cultists. This is because they managed to deal such a severe blow to our guild right after its failure.

So yeah, we can say that the enemy rankers have managed to infiltrate the kingdom. And Layos has a hand to play in it since the cultist organization was known to be funded by it in recent times. Edinburgh's failed strike cost my guild dearly. And the effects of a healer-centric guild getting wrecked will be visible in the upcoming war."

'*Sigh. I also had a hand to play in the mess, I guess.'

Eren sighed as he confirmed his predictions. He was sure that it was Gilhause who had tipped off the cultists to set a trap for him. He thought of the mission as an opportunity to get rid of the butcher and prioritized his clan's interests over the kingdom's well-being.

The whole mission was rigged. So it was natural that it would give a negative outcome. Still, everything could have been prevented to some extent if Eren had only killed Gilhause. But the butcher's killings of multiple prominent army personnel aggravated the negative impact.

Only now did he understand why Healers' Nirvana was attacked by the cultists in this timeline. The war with the kingdom of Layos was the major reason for which he was directly responsible. The second reason was the cultists' escape from the trap Edinburgh's forces had set for them, for which he was indirectly responsible.

He was wondering about the anomalies in the two timelines a few minutes ago— not realizing he was the biggest anomaly of them all.

'Heh! It's not like I could have done things much differently. Those bastards hardly gave me any choice.'

It didn't take Eren long to shrug off the consequences of his actions, claiming they weren't his to bear. He was just glad that Aunt Nina was not caught in the Domino Effect he was responsible for directly or indirectly.

'Erni, today's color is fuschia.'

Eren was lost in his thoughts when he heard Nina's voice in his head. He looked at his aunt and raised his eyebrows before asking.

"Hmm? What color?"

A low-key angry hmph was heard. In the next moment, the butcher was ejected from his fully reclined seat and approached the ground at critical velocity.

'Fuschia, huh!? I... I don't know what that color looks like.'

Eren thought to himself as he smoked while falling.

[Chapter 915 Friendly Takeover? P1](#)

Eren's study. Kukenan Plateau. The city of White Raven.

A spectral array link had been established inside the study, allowing a B-Ranked elf to be present inside Eren's room in a spectral form.

The butcher was sitting further back near his study table. He let the two sides talk peacefully before getting down to business. Argo lay on the ground near his feet in his lion form. He opened his beastly maw to chew on red meat which was still sending out threatening vibes.

Even though he could not eat it using regular means, he would often use his Ability from time to time. In doing so, he could obtain the potent essence contained within it. One would have to wonder who would let their D-Ranked demon beast eat the flesh of a Monster King.

Nina, Amory, and one other member of Healers' Nirvana were interacting with the spectral rendition of their weak-looking guild master. The rankers from both sides had exchanged their situations, enabling them to understand what had transpired at the time of the attack on the guild.

"I see. It couldn't be helped if you were trapped inside the ruins. I'm glad that you are all okay."

Jiana Jiang said with a weak smile on her face. It was clear that she was struggling with her problems. But she didn't want to burden Nina or Amory with them.

Amory could understand Jiana's pain the most because he had been a long-standing member of the Healers' Nirvana even before the current guild master herself. The guild was established by Jiana's parents and handed to her when she achieved Master's rank. Her parents had left Anfang to pursue their breakthrough into Sage rank, handing all their responsibilities about the guild to her.

Jiana was in the prime of her life when she was given the responsibility of handling such a prominent guild. It was low in terms of guild members. But it made up for that by hiring only select rankers who were a cut above the rest in their generation.

Amory was like a caretaker of the guild who had close relations with Jiana's parents from his young days. Since he had stayed within the guild all these years, he had witnessed the guild's affairs up close. Jiana was the guild master of the guild. But even she would ask for Amory's advice from time to time regarding administrative matters of the guild.

Thus, Amory could understand how hurt Jiana was. The guild's strength was the elite rankers, which were already few. And even that number had been cut down to almost nothing.

Jiana was a very caring ranker. She was too attached to the guild members she could count on. As such, she was even involved in their personal lives as well.

Thus, when the attack on the guild took place, she tried to prioritize protecting all the guild members' lives. And in doing so, she couldn't save any of them. Her emotionally-driven decisions at the time of the attack also made it possible for the cultists to cause such destruction to the guild's resources.

In the end, Jiana's demon beast Bilu was critically injured while trying to protect her. Jiana also received a soul-related injury in the process. As a result, she looked like she was having a series of nightmares.

With only 20% of the guild's total members alive, Healers' Nirvana could not continue their business as usual. They had to give up all the pending missions, not having the strength to complete them.

The loss of ranking resources was tremendous. A lot of the guild's wealth was invested in the resource-rich lands it owned. The destruction of such lands flushed all the investment down the drain.

The kingdom tried to help. But it was like dousing a burning house with a glass of water. Almost all the survivors of the tragedy were injured and needed constant care, which also needed money. And the members that had survived and were physically fine had applied for their contract termination. That's because of the fear of the cultists coming back to finish what they had started.

Jiana was broke. Due to various reasons, her workforce was no longer able to function. She couldn't even blame the guild members who were trying to leave her. It was natural that everybody would try to leave the sinking ship.

It was safe to say that the guild known as Healers' Nirvana was about to become extinct. Jiana's parents' legacy was about to end at this point. Despite her status as a high-ranking entity, Jiana looked physically and mentally weak as a result of suffering through all this.

"Kiddo, don't give up. It'd sound rich coming from me but breaking into Grandmaster rank won't be too difficult for you. I'll even go ahead and say that you have the potential to become a Sage.

Even if Healers' Nirvana is... even if it is no more.... You still have a future. You can start the guild anew when you become a Grandmaster ranker."

Amory said to Jiana in a voice coated with emotions. He tried to cheer the girl up because he had seen her grow up into a fine woman. Amory had no family of his own.

So he treated Jiana as his daughter and most members of Healers' Nirvana as part of his extended family. He had already decided that he wouldn't leave Healers' Nirvana until its last breath. Ironically, both his days and the guild's days seemed to come to an end at the same time.

The kingdom of Edinburgh would provide special privileges to rankers who had managed to break into the Grandmaster rank. It was a way for the kingdom to incorporate these A-ranked monstrous individuals into its fold.

This was also one of the reasons why Amory was trying so desperately to break into the Grandmaster rank. The dying guild would have been given a new lease on life if he had managed to pull it off.

Alas, Amory's dream was about to remain a dream. And Jiana's chance to resurrect her guild was deemed a lost cause without it.

Or so they thought.

[Chapter 916 Friendly Takeover? P2](#)

Healers' Nirvana lost a huge chance to retaliate when its two prominent rankers got trapped inside the ruins in another dimension.

Amory was already a well-established ranker in his generation. And Nina had proved her mettle by mastering the Nirvana array. The absence of such powerhouses in the guild at the time of the attack made things more difficult.

The act of forcefully exiting the isolated dimension had made Amory expend his already dwindling life force. It was no longer possible for him to sustain a serious duel for a long time. Something that was required for a forced breakthrough.

Nina had tried to help Amory. But both of them had come to realize that their attempts were futile after exiting the Badlands with Eren. After all, it was counterproductive to help someone when the task was meant to be completed without anyone's help under tremendous duress as a requirement.

"Hehe. No need to worry about me, Uncle Amory. I'll be fine."

Jiana flashed an assuring smile to Amory that looked genuine. She then turned to Nina before speaking up.

"Master Nina, I'll approve your contract termination immediately if you wish to. There's no need for you to suffer with us. You are steadily rising in rank. We wouldn't want to hamper your growth because of the guild's setback."

Nina was glad that she got to work in such a caring environment. She smiled at her current guild master before responding to her.

"About that... Guild Master Jiana, there's someone else present here who wants to talk to you about the future of Healers' Nirvana.

Eren?"

Nina called out to the butcher who was watching their conversation from the sidelines. He stepped forward when Nina called for him and bowed to Jiana. Nina made brief introductions before Eren took the reins from her.

"I am sorry for all you are suffering through, Master Jiana. I understand that it is a difficult time for you and your guild. Due to the emotional turmoil you might be experiencing, I didn't want to bring up the subject so early.

However, I have a limited amount of time to devote to guild matters. And there's sort of an emergency in my guild. So I hope you'll forgive me for what I'm about to say. That's because I know it may come across as a rude thing to say even if it is spoken with only positive intentions. That is, if and when you permit me to speak on the issue."

Jiana had a visible frown on her face when she listened to an Adept-ranked junior as Eren spoke. She looked at Nina and Amory for an explanation. The latter did not know what Eren was about to say and the former pleaded with her to listen to Eren.

Jiana sighed before nodding to Eren. The latter had chosen his words aptly, giving Jiana a sense of control over Eren's opinions. It was the kind of control she was psychologically seeking to have in her life these days.

Eren pursed his lips and nodded to Jiana before speaking in a careful tone.

"Why don't you consider dissolving your guild into mine, Master Jiana? I'll take your guild members and your remaining resources under my umbrella. Of course, I'll look after the guild's current expenses for maintaining the guild lands."

Jiana was stunned when Eren tried to take over her guild using the most benign language possible. His words were soothing but his intentions were anything but. At least that's what Jiana felt immediately upon hearing his proposal. She was not the only one thinking that.

"You insolent brat. Are you trying to sully a Master ranker's pride?"

Amory's aura exploded in the room, creating a suffocating atmosphere for a few novice-ranked servants present in the room. They collapsed on the floor with their eyes turning red, as if they were subjected to the most brutal form of torture possible. This happened silently as if the Novice-ranked servants had lost their voice in the process as well.

The butcher was not affected by Amory's aura. His lack of response to Amory's presence shocked the three B-rankers the most.

"Pride isn't enough to fill an empty stomach, Master Amory. And listen to what I have to say first before passing judgment."

Eren said in a serious tone. He chose his words carefully. But one could feel that he wasn't scared of someone like Amory even with such a big ranking difference between them. The old man had one foot in his grave and the butcher had a home-ground advantage.

It could be seen as a humiliation for the B-Ranker if someone like Eren tried to have designs on their possessions. Still, there was something about Eren that made Jiana not take offense. His body language was non-aggressive yet confident. This was not the behavior of a hot-blooded ranker but of a veteran businessman who knew how to run an organization.

Jiana then looked at Nina who stood right behind Eren to show her support. Jiana finally sighed before giving Eren a green signal. She also gestured to Amory to cool down before that.

"No promises but I will listen to what you have to say."

"That's all I asked for from the beginning, Madam Goldy Wings. Thank you."

The butcher nodded and bowed once again to Jiana. He had referred to her kingdom-bonafide title to highlight the fact that he recognized her as a powerhouse.

The butcher first made all the Novice-ranked servants leave his study before speaking further.

"I intend this merger to be a friendly takeover rather than being seen as a hostile one. Of course, I neither have the capacity nor the intention to launch a hostile takeover of a wrecked guild in the first place.

To do so would be like a mortal disturbing a beehive, knowing that it will not have enough honey for them. A successful gambler and a successful businessman have one thing in common. They prefer to bet on a fit horse.

Please don't mind me when I say that your guild can't be referred to as a fit horse anymore. It's a dying horse that needs to get out of the race if it wants to survive."

While looking into Jiana's eyes, Eren spoke calmly.

'Damn, those eyes. She's a pretty elf. I'll give her that.'

Eren thought to himself as he maintained a stare-down. At the same time, for some reason, Jiana felt that the butcher was an apex predator in more ways than one.

[Chapter 917 Investment Done Right](#)

'This brat enrages me to no end. I don't know what that lass Nina sees in him.'

Amory flared his nose as he listened to Eren's words. However, he did not speak nor did he attempt to create any tension. He had full confidence that Jiana was about to say no to the butcher's absurd offer.

Eren didn't care what Amory was thinking in the first place. He cleared his throat once again before addressing a pensive-looking Jiana.

"You must be aware that investing in guilds like these is considered a risky investment. There's no assurance of obtaining a guaranteed return on investment in such cases. There's also a chance the attacked cultist organization might target my guild as a whole in the future if I successfully absorb your guild into mine.

Plus, there's a thing about paying Master-ranked entities like you, which is not a sum that can be simply shrugged off by an upstart guild like me. My guild has just started earning what it was due from its inception. So we can say that I'm taking a really big leap when it comes to absorbing your guild."

Jiana was not pleased with Eren's words. At first, he made it sound like he was ready to gulp down her guild without even letting out a burp. Then he started listing all the negative points of doing so as if she was forcing him to do the same.

Eren could feel Jiana's displeasure from miles away. And he didn't need his soul sense for that. The elf woman had a pretty expressive face. He didn't let her register her dissatisfaction and proceeded to speak further.

"Of course, I'm not saying that to get a better deal for my guild. I'm just saying how much trust I am ready to invest in you. And I think you and your guild would be worth this investment."

Eren genuinely believed what he was saying to Jiana. He knew the healer would be able to break into Grandmaster rank without any difficulty. By this point, he had come to realize that the butterfly effect of his interventions also had its limitations. In the absence of external factors directly affecting the outcome, things will proceed more or less in line with the last timeline when it comes to one's personal growth.

Investing in a potential Grandmaster ranker alone made the friendly takeover worth it. Everything else was a bonus.

At first, Eren had only thought of making Nina and Amory enter the elemental pool and ask for compensation from Healers' Nirvana. However, he changed his approach when he learned about the

guild's current condition. Forget about paying for two Master rankers' elemental pool sessions, the guild couldn't even afford to keep them anymore.

Plus, the butcher did not believe in deferred payments. He was especially skeptical about an irreversibly damaged guild like Healers' Nirvana paying him money in the future.

So he decided to buy the guild instead when it was at its lowest point like a smart investor.

He was sure that other prominent guilds would send their offers to Jiana soon once they learned the news and generated a damage report for themselves. He didn't need to do the same. He was not investing in guild assets but in the guild master herself.

Jiana was no idiot to not understand the intricacies of Eren's offer. She also came to realize that the butcher was indeed taking a huge risk by giving her this offer. This too, without confirming anything and taking everything at face value.

"Why are you doing this? What would you get?"

She finally asked after pondering for a few minutes. The butcher smiled as if he had almost reeled in a huge fish. He responded casually.

"My aunt Nina and you. You two are enough reasons for me to invest in your guild."

Amory had an ugly expression when he heard Eren's statement. His nose flared-- his hands turned into fists. His aura fluctuated once more, reflecting the anger he felt towards the butcher.

"*Cough. I kinda mean you three. I am sorry Master Amory. I forgot about you since you might... you know..."

Amory had grim lines on his face as he listened to Eren.

"Insolent brat, you think I'd drop dead at any moment. Is that it?"

"To be honest, yes."

Eren replied to Amory fearlessly. Which made the old man even angrier than before. Even he knew that Eren had said nothing wrong. But that didn't mean that Amory would have to take Eren's underestimation of him lightly.

Nina, on the other hand, was all smiles about the way he had prioritized her well-being. She would have been hesitant if Eren had simply offered to join his guild. That's because he didn't have the necessary resources to support her healer-specific needs. Plus, she didn't want to leave the bond of comradeship she had developed with Healers' Nirvana behind.

However, everything would turn out to be better if Eren managed to assimilate Healers' Nirvana into his guild. He could officially use its assets-- which included unique potion formulas, arrays, limited-access spells, guild lands, and various other ranking resources.

Nina wouldn't have to deviate from her path or her guild members if and when the deal came through. She would also be able to stay as close to Eren as possible when it happened.

A friendly takeover by Eren would be a win-win situation for her. She wasn't sure if Eren could afford to initiate such a takeover at first. But one look at his newly erected city was enough to tell her that he had progressed far beyond what she could comprehend.

Nina was reminded that there was a time when she had to pay for Eren's academic studies. And the same guy had grown up to buy a prominent guild on a whim. One could tell how proud she was of his progress by looking at her face and body language.

'It... it feels like yesterday when he didn't even have the money to buy his undies. Hehe.'

Nina thought to herself and smiled as she looked at Eren's back. In her eyes, the latter had grown big in more ways than one.

[Chapter 918 Jiana Taking Her Shot](#)

Eren's honest answer had Amory stumped.

The butcher used this opportunity to carry on with his talks once again.

"I don't need a deeper reason than this to extend this offer to you. Yet there is one more reason for me to purchase your guild at this point.

As I said at the beginning, there is an emergency in my guild. We need high-ranked entities like you guys in my guild. We have this rank-up program that we have initiated for a select few guild members..."

Eren offered a brief introduction to the rank-up program to Nina, Jiana, and Amory. He also mentioned its pros and cons without holding anything back. He also mentioned Levine and Zethos who had already been enrolled in the rank-up program. This was so that they knew they weren't the only B-rankers who were lining up for it.

"You mean... there's still a way for me to break into the Grandmaster rank?"

His anger toward Eren and his nefarious plans against his guild seemed to vanish when he listened to Eren's offer. The thing he was searching for in Monster Canyon had come looking for him when he gave up hope. It was safe to say that the butcher had Amory smitten with his offer even if the old man didn't care to show it on his face.

Amory didn't say anything to Jiana. He didn't want to influence her decision in any way since the guild was her parents' legacy. Still, he couldn't help looking at Jiana with hope in his eyes.

"Yes, Master Amory. Since you are only a step away from reaching the Grandmaster rank, the only way for you to advance in the elemental pool would be to achieve a ranking breakthrough.

This is provided you can survive the program. There's a high risk of you dying in the process as well. But at this point, I'm sure you won't care about something like that."

Eren looked at Amory and confirmed the possibility for him. Both Nina and Jiana looked at Amory's hope-filled eyes and could see the desire to achieve a breakthrough getting reflected in his eyes.

Nina was all for the takeover. And at this point, the butcher had subtly nudged Amory into coming on board with his plan. Still, Jiana looked unconvinced. Eren knew what she was about to say, so he addressed her next issue on his own.

"Of course, you and your guild members would be treated as a separate division within the White Raven guild, Master Jiana. Within the guild's framework, I will give you full autonomy to lead that division.

Yours would not be a solo case. I have also offered a similar proposal to a guild member and he is leading his team while still being part of my guild. I intend to make more divisions in the guild when my existing guild members grow further."

The butcher was talking about Tumko's team in this situation. He knew the potential of Jiana, so he granted her the autonomy he so desperately needed. He didn't have any problem extending the same offer to Jiana as well. Offering such autonomy to Jiana made more sense on both sides since she was a B-ranker herself.

Eren had a bunch of B-rankers stationed inside his city at this point. A majority of them belonged to Levine's faction and the rest were rankers dispatched by House Derringer. Levine had also assured him that there was at least one A-ranked entity looking over the city at any given time to assure the city's safety.

Yet, amid all those fortifications, the butcher did not have a powerhouse in his guild. Someone who truly belonged to his guild and his guild alone. He wanted to change that equation by getting Nina, Jiana, and Amory onboard at once. And the sooner any one of them manages to reach A-rank, the better the prospects will be for him and his guild.

Jiana was intrigued by the rank-up program as well. She knew that a similar array was run by Edinburgh's royal family. But since it was under royal control, it would only be offered to those who had sworn absolute fealty to it. And even that was a rare case.

Jiana wanted to try her luck. So she narrowed her eyes before proposing a counteroffer.

"Eren, you say all the right things. But you forget that you are only an Adept ranker. And no matter how much freedom you would offer me, the fact that a lower-ranked entity like you serves as my guild master still doesn't sit right with me.

Why not make me the guild master of your guild? I can assure you that I'll take your wishes and opinions into account if you relay your position to me?"

Jiana flashed a generous smile looking at Eren. But one could tell that the smile had a hint of wickedness mixed into it. Even Nina was surprised by how a seemingly selfless ranker like Jiana was able to put her interests forward when it came to negotiating with Eren. She could only blame him for being a terrible influence on everyone.

Amory, on the other hand, was lowkey proud of the little girl. This was the first time he had seen this form of her. Someone who wasn't willing to settle for less just because her situation wasn't in her favor.

The butcher started laughing when he heard Jiana's counteroffer. He licked his lips and his emerald green eyes shined with a shade of dominance before he spoke further.

"Hahaha. That's what it takes to be a guild master, Master Jianna. Unfortunately for you, I'll have to treat it as you trying your luck. Something that doesn't have much conviction behind it."

Eren's jet-black hair threatened to turn white. The tribal tattoos on his skin flashed faintly before disappearing.

"You know..."

Eren started walking towards Jiana's spectral form as he kept speaking. His presence in the room started getting sharper with each step. The Death element and the Sin of Wrath were manifested in his aura. The ever-restless tongues of lightning around him turned purple to red. A bunch of Wind-Fire shards appeared around him like fireflies.

Both Nina and Amory felt as if Eren's victims had been resurrected around them. And they were whispering something into their ears. Cryptic whispers that did not hold any meaning. But the intentions behind those whispers could be felt deep in one's consciousness.

'Do not mess with him if you value your safety.'

[Chapter 919 \[Bonus\] Jiana's Fatal Flaw](#)

Eren ran his fingers through his hair and tilted his neck to his left as he kept walking. He stopped only when he was only an inch away from Jiana.

He smiled graciously before speaking to the Goldy Wings in the most welcoming manner.

"You know... I can only hope you are joking for everyone's sake.

Someone else becoming a guild master of White Raven? I'll burn this whole setup down to cinders if anyone even comes close to snatching it away from my hands. Only I can enjoy the fruits of my labor. If I can't have them, I'll make sure nobody can claim them for themselves either."

Eren's aura had manifested around him for the first time in the room. Even Nina was shocked by his sinister presence, a testament to how much death, destruction, and resentment he had caused till now.

Amory was even more taken back. He only had one thought running through his head as he looked at the butcher with apprehension.

'This man... How many people has he buried to lay the foundation of his city?'

Jiana had similar thoughts running through her head. She couldn't feel Eren's dominating presence because she wasn't physically present in the room. But there was something about the butcher's presence that affected one's very consciousness.

Her soul was already susceptible to such exposures due to her injury. As such, there was a part of her that was overwhelmed. Still, she felt that her rank had granted her some form of leeway. She took a deep breath before voicing her opinions.

"I understand how you must feel. But I feel the same way about the thought of assimilating my guild into yours, Eren. How about this? Give me administrative rights for the entire guild instead of a single

division. As a Master ranker entity that has so much to offer to your guild, there's nothing wrong with me having these rights."

Eren shook his head in denial and cut her off.

"One's ranking status doesn't mean jack shit when it comes to handling guild-related affairs. It requires a calm and collected mind as well as the ability to keep emotions out of the decision-making process.

That position is already filled by Ace-ranked Agatha. And no offense to you Master Jiana but she's doing a better job than you ever would."

Jiana was ticked off when Eren claimed that as an Ace ranker nobody was doing a better job than her. She wanted to demand an explanation from the butcher for such a statement. But he beat her to it.

"You know what I'm talking about. It's your fatal flaw. It's just that your defense mechanism is preventing you from listening to your inner voice.

I quickly read through the incident report of the attack on your guild before coming here, Master Jiana. And I see a lot of glaring errors you committed in the heat of the moment. Due to this, your guild and guild members had to pay a heavy price.

You prioritized your guild members' lives when you could have finished off your opponents. You prioritized citizens' safety over the guild lands, resulting in both being compromised in the cultists' indiscriminate attacks."

Eren stopped giving Jiana the kind of respect her rank demanded of him. He knew he couldn't come across as weak when dealing with her. As weak as she looked in her current predicament, she was still a Master ranker.

The butcher also knew that hiring Master rankers into his fold when he had almost no prior background wouldn't be an easy process. One of the reasons he had avoided approaching the known Master rankers despite having sufficient funds to do so was because he expected some difficulty controlling their actions.

For all his achievements, Eren was still a weaker party when it came to individual strength. Yet, handling guild affairs was not related to one's individual strength at all. Thus, the butcher ignored the concerns of Aunt Nina talking to him in his mind and marched on.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Did I say anything wrong?"

Maybe your guild would have still been in a precarious situation even if you had taken those ruthless decisions. But it would have protected a lot more of your guild assets and guild members. And it would certainly have sent the right message to the attacking cultists. They wouldn't have dared to attack your guild again if you had just remained steadfast in your role as guild master.

You made tons of emotionally driven mistakes when your guild needed you to be a cold and callous guild master. And you still expect me to give you administrative rights over my guild?

Hahaha. What a joke. There are easier ways for me to destroy what I have built so far, Master Jiana. I would opt for those if there ever comes a time when I have to give you my guild's admin rights."

Nina and Amory both looked at each other and had blank expressions on their faces as they listened to Eren. Only now did they realize why Eren kept asking them questions related to the incident.

The butcher had also employed some of his channels to get an incident report from the city of Curar. To get a true picture of the incident, he paid extra and had his channels locate and interview eyewitnesses as well.

Eren was provided with an almost complete picture when all these pieces of information were provided to him. Jiana felt like she was standing naked in front of the butcher when he started listing her faults. She felt exposed and her mental condition was shaken even further.

"I... I only wanted to help my people..."

Jiana clenched her fists and looked down as she admitted to her fault. Her body was slightly shaking and her eyes were dilated as if she was reliving memories of the incident. One could see the corners of her eyes getting red and moistened.

Eren looked at the shaking Jiana and sighed. He didn't want to bring this subject up because he knew it would have negative effects on his friendly takeover. However, Goldy Wings forced his hand.

He retracted his presence and gave Jiana some space. He knew she needed some time to sort her feelings out.

[Chapter 920 "I'm Being Kind To You By Not Being Kind To You"](#)

"Master Amory, can you hand me your spare pipe?"

As Eren inquired of Amory, he subtly infused his voice with his soul sense. The latter said some curse words under his breath before giving Eren what he wanted. The old man then cursed himself for being so easily swayed by his supposed enemy.

The butcher filled Amory's spare pipe with his herbs with the snap of his fingers before lighting the apparatus with his fire-element mana. He inhaled a big dose in one go and turned the herbs into black ash instantly before speaking in a deeper voice.

"Sometimes those with virtuous intentions do us more harm than so-called "evil" people ever could. If you try to give someone an ax to make their woodcutting easy and end up splitting their toe in two by accident, can you expect that person to reward you for your so-called help?"

Your intentions don't matter if the outcome is shitty for everyone involved, including you. Having flowers of virtue blooming in your heart is not enough. Thinking of everyone's well-being is not enough.

The land of Anfang is not as kind as you might have been made to believe, Master Jiana. Kindness is a luxury here. Not everyone can afford it.

You need effective mechanisms to make anything positive happen for the organization you are leading. Mechanisms that prevent you from looking at people individually without hampering their individuality. It's not something everyone can pull off."

Eren said before releasing a dense cloud of white smoke through his mouth in one go. He then gave Amory his pipe back and looked at Jiana carefully. She looked like she had an epiphany when he said

those things to her. She stopped shaking and tears ran down her cheeks. However, there was no sign of helplessness on her face.

Eren walked up to Nina and placed his arm across her shoulders. Leaning on Aunt Nina as he stood, the butcher continued.

"You are not fit to lead a guild in any capacity, Madam Goldy Wings. The legacy your parents passed on to you did nothing to make you grow as a leader because it was handed down to you on a silver platter. You did not earn the right to lead your guild. To be honest, Master Amory was a much better choice than you.

Anyway, I am not criticizing your parents' choice or your actions that led to this day. I am only stating the circumstances that caused the events to turn out like this."

Eren was suddenly reminded of an almost forgotten memory. He was not sure if he could ever call it fond. But he started finding something positive in it while looking at Jiana's condition.

"I remember what my father said to me when I was small. He had said, "I'm being kind to you by not being kind to you." I didn't get the meaning behind that sentence until now. I thought he was just being a hardass about everything when it came to me.

Just your average father who is too busy to look after his kid, right? But looking at you, I realize what my old man was trying to say to me.

Kindness at the wrong time, at the wrong place, towards the wrong people would only release more pain into the world. If not through those around you, then through the very person who showed kindness in the first place.

I have always known this fact ever since I started walking on this path for real. But it took me this long to re-realize who had instilled it in me. Guess I'm still growing— still learning."

Nina was taken aback by what Eren had said out loud about his father. This was the first time he had talked about him in a long time. Being an ex-member of his party, she could imagine Elijah saying something like that to his kid.

'Like father, like son.'

It also took this very moment for Nina to realize that Eren had turned out to be much like his father even without his influence guiding him on his path. Elijah Idril was a ruthless man when it came to dealing with his enemies. Yet his kindness would often reflect in the harsh decisions he would willingly take.

It was just that Eren was a much more extreme version of his father. He had doubled down on his father's ruthlessness and there was practically no kindness to show for it.

For a brief moment, Nina felt like Elijah had come to visit her as she felt Eren's presence around her. He had treated her like his little sister. He had done everything to make sure she survived "that" tragedy. And he started turning even more reclusive after the incident. In the end, he left Eren in her care before commencing his solo journey.

Nina was snapped back to reality from her memories when Eren spoke his next words.

"I am sorry for being so blunt with my words, Madam Goldy Wings. But I am not sorry for what I have said to you. You already knew what I said. You just needed me to show you the mirror.

I am not saying that one can only prove their mettle by being a successful leader in some phase of their life. We are not cut from the same cloth, after all."

Jiana looked up and met Eren's eyes when he said that. She looked like she was trying to say something to him but was still struggling to come up with words. The butcher smiled before continuing.

"It's completely fine if some of us are not leader material. It's okay to be a solo hustler. Frankly speaking, I am not a particularly effective leader either. But I am aware of myself and I can hire capable leaders to do my job for me.

This is why I said one's ranking status has nothing to do with leadership qualities. You can be a Sage and still live a lonely life because you failed to bring everyone on board with your plans. Or you can be a Novice ranker and have the capacity to run an organization that has both covert and overt faces to it.

Know thyself, Master Jiana. Tell me, do you believe yourself to be a capable leader or administrator? Or do we talk business for real?"