

## Vile 951

### [Chapter 951 Oliver's Forces P1](#)

'What will I do with the Lazarus Project?'

Eren repeated Ivor's question as if he was asking himself.

'Hmmm... that's a very thoughtful question, Ivor. My short answer would be that I'll do what is necessary for my well-being.

This project was mostly created by Layla and Sage Eliza. So I have very little say in this project. But I can assure you that Sage Eliza's plans won't derail me from what I want to do in the land of Anfang.

I know it is a simple way of putting things. But I say that with absolute honesty. As for the long answer, you'll have to gain my trust. Now I'll ask YOU— what can you do to make me trust you?'

Eren asked Ivor while narrowing his eyes in a particular direction. He could feel with his soul sense that there were a bunch of rankers heading in that direction. After pondering for a bit, he said to Ivor.

'No need to answer me right away. You can take your time. Come see me when you make up your mind. You must be aware of that by now but I'll just say it as it is. There's no safety in following me because I can't guarantee that on my own.

So think wisely before you decide.'

Eren said before changing the tone of his voice to that of caution. He addressed both Ivor and Layla to give them a heads-up.

'Buckle up. Target has arrived.'

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A ranger was traversing a dense forest at the crack of dawn. Two rankers followed this lady ranger from either side. The team of these three rankers served as the vanguard for the remaining 27 rankers.

A man in black followed the vanguard closely. In addition to wearing black attire, even his face was covered with black cloth, save his eyes. He was of average build. But he had striking blue eyes. One could tell that this man was the leader of the 30-member party.

This black-clothed man was often called by titles like Arthur's Hound by those who knew him well. And the reason for that was obvious. He was a loyal follower of the Duke of Edinburgh. The man would follow the orders given to him by Arthur to a T, ensuring the smooth running of Arthur's projects.

The task he was given this time was to capture Layla. It looked like a simple grab-and-present job at first. But the black-clothed man soon found out that he had underestimated his target all along.

It had been many months since he had started this task. But apart from many casualties from his side, the hound had nothing to show for his master. And Arthur's patience was running thin.

Layla had managed to slip Arthur's hound many times by now. She would always sense him and his forces coming for her through some unknown means. She would just vanish from the place before he

could arrive to get her, driving the black-clothed man to a point of utter frustration no matter how calm he wanted to be.

The black-clothed man then approached Cybil and Garvin on his own. The couple was experts in arrays, and their current field of expertise included seer arrays. Instead of asking how to track Layla again, the black-clothed man instead asked them to find out how she managed to escape him even before he could arrive at the place.

One could say that in terms of chasing their target, the hound was smarter than his master. He quickly came to know that Layla was using a unique set of potions to know about his whereabouts from miles away.

Despite Layla's countermeasures with potions, the hound managed to intercept her a few more times. However, she was able to use Hexen Bee to get away from them.

The hound didn't give up. He started integrating anti-flight measures. But by the time he did that, the black-clothed man found out that even that wasn't enough. That's because Layla now had another person joining her.

This person was as fierce as fierce could get. He managed to kill many rankers from his side with Layla's help before escaping the hound's pursuit. Each time he got nearer to Layla and this newly acquired member of hers, killings would occur and the rankers on his side would be culled.

This put the hound on edge. He also started doubting many things about the new member of Team Layla ever since he saw him using his weapons. He felt like he had seen the man's work somewhere but couldn't remember where.

The hound was therefore more prepared this time. His goal was to determine whether the new member conflicted with his actual appearance. Various countermeasures were also taken against Layla to ensure that the mission Arthur had given him would be completed.

This black-clothed Arthur's Hound was none other than Oliver. He had served as Jason's bodyguard for some time when the former was in LA. On the expedition to Purgatory, he was tasked with dealing with the Illuminati.

Oliver was then sent to the kingdom of Layos to kill Isen. Unfortunately, he could only track him and keep an eye on him for a few days before he was called back by Arthur.

Oliver had done many difficult missions given to him by Arthur at this point. He had come close to dying many times on a variety of covert and overt missions. But he would admit that pursuing Layla was the most difficult mission he had undertaken in his career.

Oliver knew how to remain patient under all circumstances. But he couldn't help saying something to the ranger who was sprinting ahead of him after getting deep into the Dark Daniera forest.

"How long further, Joanna?"

Oliver asked after he sensed something odd about the place. He and his unit of 30 rankers were following Joanna, their ranger.

'I want to see how you manage to run this time, bitch.'

Oliver narrowed his eyes ahead of him. Up until now, he had cared about Layla's well-being because Arthur had told him to capture her alive. But he was about to set that order aside this time to ensure the success of the mission.

#### [Chapter 952 Oliver's Forces P2](#)

Joanna stopped in her tracks when she heard Oliver's question.

Her bodyguards stopped beside her and increased their alertness to the surroundings. Ivor had targeted Oliver's ranger the last time they were chasing the duo. So this time, Oliver had assigned the team's ranger two dedicated bodyguards.

A few stress lines were visible on her forehead as she looked around with her beautiful eyes. She started casting a few tracking spells to get the feel of the land.

Joanna was a very attractive female ranker who looked to be in her early 20s. She had white hair that fell to her waist and clear skin. Her tall stature and gorgeous figure made her even more attractive. Apart from her long-range spells, she also had a bunch of tracking spells in her collection, allowing her to tap into her full potential as a ranger.

Joanna wasn't sure how to answer Oliver's question after getting feedback from her ranger-specific spell. It was clear from that feedback that something had happened over there not too long ago. It was either a duel between two ferocious rankers or two ferocious mana beasts. But for some reason, there were no trackable residual mana signatures she could use to continue her investigation further.

She could only draw one conclusion at this point.

'Someone has used that cursed Format History. We better not use Gian to get the answers.'

As Joanna looked at Gian, the party's historian, she concluded. Format History was what the rankers used to refer to Potion of Innocence. By now, everybody knew the repercussions of casting historian-related spells wherever this potion had been used. Joanna prevented Oliver from letting Gian take over the investigation.

Oliver looked around himself with a grim look on his face before nodding at Joanna. He trusted his ranger's judgment. But the question remained. How are they supposed to follow Layla and the unknown man who was with her?

A man in his early 60s appeared beside Oliver when it looked like the party had gotten into a stalemate. He looked at Oliver before speaking in a doubtful tone.

"Sir Oliver, how about we split the team into four and follow the trails of that homunculus separately using the four cardinal directions? Grid searches can be performed using this part of the Dark Daniera search as the base."

Oliver looked at the impatient man as if he had said something unbelievable before commenting.

"Split the teams into four? You thought you were some kind of genius by coming up with this solution, didn't you, Castro?"

Castro was tongue-tied when a mild speaker like Oliver criticized him. He wouldn't admit it to Oliver but he thought that he was the only one who could come up with such an obvious solution to their current predicament.

Oliver controlled his frustration and took a long breath. His tone softened before he spoke to Castro further.

"Do you know what happened to the rankers who were part of my unit before you came along?"

Layla just used array traps and potion bombs when we started the grid search. She killed more than half the number of my previous two parties with that. Her partner also played a huge role in that.

That homunculus has too many tricks up her sleeves. They killed and managed to run away from us despite the number of disadvantages they had to face. And you want to make their job easier by splitting this party as well?"

Casto just shook his head in denial when Oliver asked him the questions patiently. Only now did he understand why a guy like Oliver was struggling to apprehend a homunculus and her partner in crime.

"But sir Oliver, we can't stay here for longer as well. With how crafty that homunculus is, this place might turn into a trap if we wait long enough here."

A blonde woman in her mid-30s named Tamara spoke next. She was the party's archer and a very capable ranker in the liquid stage of the Adept rank.

Tamara was at Oliver's party chasing Layla from the very beginning. She knew what the latter was talking about regarding Layla. So she brought up another possibility.

"Hmm. You are right, Tamara."

Oliver agreed with Tamara's suggestion right away. He decided to use his Trump card at this point. He turned around and said something to seemingly nobody.

"Master Biru, I know that you are not supposed to get involved in the hunt directly. But could you help us get a lead on the investigation?"

Nobody replied for a while. But then the space-time fabric rippled and an old man who looked to be in his 120s appeared at the scene out of nowhere. He looked old and frail and was only wearing a simple white long coat. And he supported his stance using a wooden support stick.

One could say that the white-clothed man had one foot in his grave. He looked like he would not survive a fight if and when he got involved in one. However, his ranking status as a Master ranker was undeniable.

Biru was involved in Oliver's last two investigations under Arthur's orders. The Duke was running out of patience so he asked Biru to aid Oliver should there be a need.

This was the reason Biru hadn't directly involved himself in Oliver's previous instances of confrontation with Layla. But that was about to change. Not because Oliver had asked for his participation. But because Arthur had ordered him to do so.

Biru was an array expert. This time, he had come prepared to handle Layla who had tricked him a couple of times. He took out his array disk from his storage and was about to say something to the entire party. However, he sensed a strong ripple of mana all around him that shut him up.

All of a sudden, a large, prism-shaped, semi-transparent barrier appeared in the surroundings that took everyone in Oliver's team inside it. It was as if someone was waiting for Biru to show up at the scene before activating the trap.

#### [Chapter 953 \[Bonus \] An All-You-Can-Kill Buffet](#)

"Hehehehe. This old fart finally decided to get out of his comfort zone. I'll not spare him this time."

Supposedly coming from all directions, Layla's voice could be heard in the surrounding area. She sounded joyful as if she had caught a pretty-looking butterfly in a jar.

"Boys... you can now join this all-you-can-kill buffet. The one who kills the most will get a kiss on his preferred cheek from me. Exciting, isn't it?"

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Warning bells sounded in every ranker's head who was part of Oliver's force. This was the first time Layla had launched such a large-scale isolation array. They were all sure that knowing the homunculus' weird tricks, it wouldn't be easy to escape.

Layla had planted this array only for one reason - Biru. It served less as an isolation array and more as a prison to trap the B-Rank entity that was the old man. When sprung, the array will use all the B-Rankers as batteries to power the barrier walls.

The array was supposed to be a defensive array that the Master rankers would use on their own initiative. But Layla made some changes to the array design while introducing some potions as the array eyes to get the desired effect.

As a result of this array, Biru felt like his already frail body was now subjected to fatigue of unknown origins. He could move inside the array just fine. But he couldn't use any form of magic anymore. The array disk of unknown effect that Biru had taken out of his storage became useless after Layla sprung the isolation barrier.

If Oliver's forces decide to attack the barrier, they'll only make Biru's condition worse. Layla had also told Eren and Ivor to leave Biru all alone and not attack him. Layla wanted Biru to stay alive for as long as he could before Oliver's forces figured out the trick.

The isolation barrier would have affected a select few entities like Oliver too if Eren and Ivor hadn't spoiled the base of the array due to their duel. Now they needed to kill more to justify their actions.

Thankfully, Layla had a stun effect on the isolation barrier using her supplementary potions. This stun effect would not work on Biru but he was not the target of the effect in the first place.

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'Ugh. Who would want to be kissed by this little brat? Ivor... you can go ahead and claim that "reward" all for yourself.'

The joint voice communication left Ivor speechless and Layla grumpy as Eren spoke. He decided to focus on the quality instead of the quantity of his kill.

But first, he needed to follow one of the core tenets of his attack. This had been ingrained into his mind in the past timeline by the Paladin of Pain.

'Always attack the healer first.'

Eren repeated the line in his head before spearheading the kill campaign.

Demon Beast Transformation

Mark of the Seven Sins: Domain of Wrath

Stunning Speed

Total Control

Blink

Eren appeared behind the group's healer and grabbed her by the throat. He had decided to amplify the stun effect's advantage further using his time element spells.

Twist and pull.

He twisted her neck 360 degrees before lifting her head like some kind of chalice for toast. The carotid artery and muscle groups hanging from the neck were gripped. He used them like a lasso to throw the head in one direction after a single spin.

Interestingly, the pulled head was heading toward a ranker while Eren was heading the opposite way. Of course, the head was laced with a potion. But it was a silent poison concoction this time instead of a simple bomb. Something most rankers would not run away from just after a single glance.

Lightning struck in a near-stagnant world and a confused-looking ranker found himself staring into Eren's eyes up close. The butcher's hands had turned beastly. They ripped out the newly promoted Adept ranker's arms from their shoulder joints in a single pull.

Eren then used the ranker's body being put into shock to his advantage. He inserted his right hand into the man's rectus abdominis with his beastly claws.

The ranker's heart was grabbed before it was destroyed using Blitz Bolt.

Since the isolation array had been successfully erected, Eren decided to start with his fiercest powers. He stacked Demon Beast Transformation with Sin of Wrath to elevate his body stats by a huge margin. As a result, he became faster, stronger, and more brutal than was previously expected of him.

He could pull off stunts like these at this point because he had trained his mana circuits to a degree of expertise. Otherwise, stacking body stat increments would have remained a fantasy.

Her torso was missing a head. Her body, on the other hand, was turned into a wraith creature. Her stature increased and a horrified-looking head appeared in her original head's place.

Her muscles ruptured and increased in size and quantity before ripping her skin apart. The new skin was replacing the old skin which made her look red and hideous.

The evolution of Eren's Ability increased hand in hand with the increase in his ranking status. The domain of wrath now allowed him to summon fiercer and more powerful wrath creatures than before. They were also under greater control than before, allowing Eren to concentrate on his fights instead of worrying about regulating the wrath mana inside them.

Ivor had also started attacking Eren while Layla was regulating the prism barrier in hiding. She didn't like dirtying her own hands when dressing if she could avoid it. She judged that Eren's presence in the battle was more than enough to fill her absence.

Everything happened so fast that only Biru was able to keep track of what was happening. He sensed a powerful barrier overlapping the prism barrier, turning this place into a prison for all of the rankers involved.

Biru looked around and found that Oliver and his forces were too stunned to speak or do anything. And when he looked in the healer's direction and saw the state she was in, his face became devoid of blood.

Biru immediately understood that Layla had invited a different ranker to take care of Oliver's force for him. An ambassador of violence they had never encountered before.

#### [Chapter 954 Exposed Identities](#)

Eren had killed three rankers in total by the time the stun effect on Oliver's forces was over.

Eren's wrath creature managed to injure two rankers in the next two seconds before the rankers were able to respond to the attacks launched at them.

The two rankers that were injured by the wrath creature were also affected by the wrath mana. It was just that neither they nor their fellow rankers were aware of what was happening to them. This is why they suddenly started hating the situation they were in.

Between the butcher and the fake butcher, Oliver immediately understood who was more dangerous. He intercepted Eren after he managed to get out of the stun effect. By doing so, he prevented the butcher from killing any more rankers from his side.

Ivor had also killed three rankers so far. Unlike Eren who was very handsy with his approach, Osan Junior preferred to use his spells and his daggers. Plus, by the time Oliver kept Eren busy, Ivor was able to catch up with Eren.

Oliver was very shocked that Layla had another partner in crime joining her team. He had no time to observe the man closely. However, the way Eren killed the members of his team told Oliver that he was a bigger threat than Layla's previous partner.

Oliver kept all his random thoughts at bay and decided to prioritize his team's safety. He kept his eyes on Eren while shouting.

"FORM A FUCKING CIRCLE!"

Oliver ordered his rankers to assume a defensive position. The remaining rankers didn't need to be told twice. They immediately assumed their intended position, keeping Oliver and Biru in the middle of the circle.

Death was part of life in the rankers' world. So nobody let their fellow rankers' deaths get to them. Some of them did not let it affect their morale or actions. However, many rankers failed at this basic task after observing the dead bodies of the deceased.

Ivor and Eren were almost alike in the way they killed their enemies. Their opponents' dead bodies would usually be unrecognizable after they were done. One would only see the mark of a veteran killer on the bodies of the two rankers' victims.

Eren felt his wrath domain getting stronger as he felt the growing hate in the hearts of the rankers with each passing moment. He, the wrath creatures under his control, and Ivor were standing at a set distance from each other, forming a circle of their own to surround Oliver's team.

Both sides observed silence for a while. Oliver's 30-member party had been reduced to 24 just a few seconds into the confrontation. Eren's side had managed to cause so much violence in such a short time that it felt unreal to most rankers.

"Master Biru..."

"I can't help you, lad. I can't use my mana for some reason."

Oliver tried to seek help from Biru but was silenced soon afterward. He cursed the old man for being so useless in his head before looking at the two wrath creatures. These two wrath creatures were part of his team just a few moments ago. And Eren's domain Ability had changed them into something entirely different. Someone who would not hesitate to kill the rankers who broke bread with them.

Only now did Ivor understand why Eren didn't want to show his Sin of Wrath to him. The effects of this Ability would have been too prominent for a day or two even if a Potion of Innocence had been used at the scene. Oliver would have never gotten anywhere near this part of the forest if he had sensed the residual wrath mana.

Osan Jr. also understood that the Ability Eren had unlocked was stronger than his for the simple reason that it affected multiple people. It turned him into an efficient killer whether he was up against a single ranker or a group.

"What... What kinds of powers are these? Are you a cultist?"

A ranker on Oliver's side asked Eren the question with her voice coated in disbelief and weariness. She was named Gigi, and she was in the late stages of her Adept rank.

She looked to be in her early 40s and had an olive complexion. She was wearing body-hugging chainmail armor, which highlighted her curves beautifully.

Gigi was going to get attacked by Eren when Oliver intercepted him. At first, she thought that she was ready for Eren when she saw him approaching her. But after seeing him fight for a bit longer, she was glad that Oliver had come between them. A second or two with Eren would have injured Gigi, if not killed her.



Oliver had a similar question in his head when he saw the wrath creatures beside him staring at his group with their rage-filled eyes. The Ability the butcher displayed so far made it abundantly clear to Oliver and his forces that its source was not the land of Anfang.

Oliver decided to carefully observe his enemies before taking any action. Ivor had assumed an altered appearance using the artifact given to him by Eliza. Eren on the other hand changed his appearance using his bloodline Ability.

Oliver refused to stare at the wrath creatures for more than a second. He was about to open his mouth to speak to Eren and Ivor when he felt he finally remembered where he had seen the two men fight.

The man had his mouth open in shock. But he shook his head in denial and mumbled a few words of disagreement to himself.

Oliver was present in the audience when Eren's team fought Jason's team. He had seen both of them use their spells and felt their presence up close. He couldn't make a connection when he fought with Ivor in their previous confrontation. But doubts had been planted in his mind since then.

That's why he was carrying the monocle artifact with him. This would let him see the actual appearances of the rankers that had modified their looks with the help of external factors. He intended to use it on Ivor at first.

Oliver immediately took out a monocle from his storage and looked at Ivor and Eren. The man's face was painted in shades of utter shock as his conjecture was confirmed.

"Osan Woods' Butcher and Eren Idril!

What... What the fuck are you two doing here?"

#### [Chapter 955 Battle Formations](#)

"Osan Woods' Butcher and Eren Idril!

What... What the fuck are you two doing here?"

Oliver finally deciphered the identities of his attackers, thanks to his preparations and his prior one-sided interactions with them. And he couldn't have been more surprised to find out that Osan Woods Butcher was working with Layla.

Of course, Oliver couldn't find anything wrong with Eren even after using the monocle. because his bodily transformation wasn't dependent on external factors. However, Ivor's real appearance was identified by the monocle. Plus, the addition of the butcher's live demo in front of him at this point and in his academic days allowed Oliver to connect the dots and decipher Eren's identity as well.

Eren and Ivor looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders as if giving up. They both reverted to their original appearances in the next moment, giving Oliver another visible shock.

The rankers in Oliver's forces also started mumbling to each other when they saw Eren and Ivor's real appearances for the first time.

"Hold up... where have I seen this guy..."

"Hmm? Yeah. now that you mention it..."

"I... I remember seeing bounty posters throughout Edinburgh... this... this is that infamous Osan Woods' Butcher... Ivor Osan!"

"No way...."

"Yes way..."

Ivor had a green vein pop on his forehead when the rankers started identifying him as the Osan Woods' Butcher. He pointed at Eren before almost yelling at them.

"That guy... that green-eyed bastard is the real Osan Woods' Butcher. Not me.

NOT ME... DO YOU GET IT?"

Oliver and his team members were stunned by his proclamation. They all turned towards Eren in unison and then started chatting among them in chatters right away.

"I didn't know the fabled butcher is also a liar..."

"Isn't that the White Raven city's founder or something..."

"Yes. As the captain said, his name should be Eren Idril. I knew he must have himself involved in a lot of shady deals. But to form a connection with such a radical person and fight with him is a bit..."

"What the fuck is going on? Weren't we supposed to chase a homunculus that used to host Purgatory? How did we find ourselves in front of Osan Woods Butcher and Eren Idril fighting for the same homunculus? Can somebody fill me in on details I missed?"

Ivor clenched his fists when he heard the rankers' whispers clearly in his ears. He didn't know how to prove to them that he was framed by his circumstances to carry the mantle of Osan Woods' Butcher. In the end, he just dropped his shoulders and gave up.

The rankers were so shocked that they forgot to use their voice communication channels and said things openly. At this point, there was no need to hide the surprise or conundrum they felt in their hearts anyway.

Oliver didn't speak after he voiced his conjectures. He just observed the two rankers silently as he processed the details in his mind.

'This is too big to pretend it never happened. I must tell Sir Arthur immediately. He must have come out of his secluded ranking practice by now. He'll want to hear about Ivor Osan the most— the most wanted man on his list.'

Oliver also looked at Eren with malicious intent. He didn't know about the connection Eren shared with Layla and Ivor. But he could guess that he would never come to Arthur's side. And anyone who was not on Arthur's side was their enemy.

Eren chuckled when he read the things going on in Oliver's mind. The guy was picturing his city's ruin after the news was out that he had collaborated with the so-called "Osan Woods' butcher."

Eren stepped forward a bit and observed Oliver's forces getting tensed. He observed every single one of them with a single glance and found them to be most prepared for his attacks.

Eren immediately realized that Oliver had practiced a battle formation with his members. A battle formation was a lot like a non-elemental array except it used rankers as its nodes and array eyes.

A strong battle formation would allow a group of rankers to challenge and overcome their opponents stronger than them. They increased the group's attacking and defensive capabilities as a whole, preventing them from being killed by their opponents randomly.

The presence of battle formation meant that Eren and Ivor could not casually attack Oliver's rankers individually. They would have to face severe consequences if they tried to attack any of the rankers carelessly.

Ivor had also come to realize the presence of battle formation from the slight mana ripples he felt coming from Oliver's group. That and the way Eren had stopped attacking made this thing obvious to Oliver.

Even though he had dropped out of LA, Ivor was very studious and knew about the academic curriculum. Battle formations were one of the most important subjects in the final year of the academy. After all, academies were created so that they could give trained rankers to kingdom-run organizations.

'What should we do now? I heard you bomb people in cases like these. Now might be a good time to...'

Ivor asked Eren while fixing his eyes on the group. He must have been filled in the details by a certain young witch who was nowhere to be found at the scene. So the butcher wasn't surprised when Ivor knew a few things about how he fought.

Eren quickly thought of many possibilities at once after looking at Oliver's team. He then shook his head visibly before responding.

'Nah. Potion bombs can't be used everywhere. They need to have an element of surprise to them. Otherwise, a blast would backfire on us. Especially against a battle formation.'

We weren't in the academy to study this shit. I don't think you, I or even that brat will be able to crack the formation.'

Eren sighed and finally regretted the fact that he had opted out of a lot of courses in the academy to prioritize his personal growth. Ivor regretted the fact that he never even got to complete his studies in the academy.

This thing called higher education had the habit of showing its importance unexpectedly in one's life on rare occasions.

#### [Chapter 956 \[Bonus\] Soul Sense Induced Illusions And Sedating Gaze](#)

The stalemate continued for a few more moments.

Oliver's team was waiting for Eren or Ivor to attack them. It looked like they wanted to be attacked by the duo so they could retaliate right after.

Ivor and Eren both guessed that Oliver's team had adopted an attack response battle formation. Something that would allow them to use their opponents' strengths against them.

The more Ivor and Eren waited, the more precise the battle formation would be. Thus, Ivor spoke in a grim voice.

'We can't just wait here, Eren. That old man or Oliver will figure out what is going on sooner or later with Layla's array. This hound must be eager to see his master so that he could tell him I was here.

Your identity has also been revealed. I fear Oliver will engage in a friendly fire to escape the prism barrier just so he can contact Arthur.

You don't want us to wait until that happens, right?'

Ivor had the brains to analyze the situation rationally. Eren agreed with his prediction right away before commenting.

'You are right. We can't wait for long. But let's not attack carelessly either.

Oliver's revelation has rattled these rankers a lot, preventing them from feeling anger and other dominant emotions. I need to break their formation a bit.'

Eren scratched his chin as he looked at the two rankers who were injured by his wrath creatures. Their transformation was delayed because they had stopped feeling anger towards him or anyone.

Eren needed these two rankers to break Oliver's formation from within. He looked at Ivor and smiled wickedly before concluding.

'You wanted to see my Ability, right? I'll provoke them. Let's see what happens afterward.'

Under his wrath domain, Eren commented on the rankers' changed psyches. He narrowed his eyes and pondered a bit before coming clean to his audience.

"Ivor is right, you know. He is not what you think he is. Poor guy was just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Eren summoned Rigor Mortis and Anduril in his right and left hand respectively before finishing what he had to say.

"I am the Osan Woods' Butcher. Arthur and all his minions are just too stupid to see the truth. Imagine all the grown-up rankers getting duped by a then-nobody teen like me.

Hahaha. It's like a kid swindling a bunch of grown-ups with his shoddy lies.

Don't believe me, right? Let me prove it to you."

Eren spread his soul sense as he spoke. After that, a bone-chilling bloodlust swept over everyone's minds.

All of Oliver's soldiers felt as if they had been summoned to a different reality. A different world. This world had blood-red skies and blood-red soil. The barren expanse of land with heaps of bones littered on the ground.

The white and yellow carcasses of monsters and humans. The skulls of various beings and beasts. A red moon suddenly appeared in the sky before red lightning cackled through red clouds.

Except for Biru, all the rankers including Oliver fell prey to this psychedelic-like phenomenon. They heard Eren's words while finding themselves inside the illusion. As a result, they heard his voice like some kind of prophecy revealed to them by the world itself.

Eren had found another way of using his soul sense. He could overwhelm the slumbering souls of his opponents by sending them bits and pieces of his memories through his soul sense. Those memories would be interpreted in different ways by all the rankers depending upon their souls and their abilities to keep tabs on what was going on for real.

Biru was a Master ranker. His soul was strong enough to resist the effects of being exposed to Eren's soul sense. His sense of being was also too strong to get stuck in a soul-sense-induced illusion.

Others were not so lucky.

All of the rankers were then summoned to a peculiar place inside that world. They were summoned to a forest that looked like regions found in the Lionheart Duchy.

The sky and the soil were still as blood-red as ever. That was because they were part of the illusion. But the other renditions of the illusion felt real to these rankers. They felt like they were reliving a real memory from a third person's perspective.

A memory from Eren's past when he was still living in Osan.

The rankers saw how Eren had gotten in touch with Dom Walker. How he had used him to tame a strange demon beast. Then saw him killing Isaac's party using that strange form, grotesquely.

Various macabre scenes unfolded before the rankers' eyes. They soon found out that they couldn't even close their eyes as they had no bodies in the illusion. They could also not run away or willfully take their consciousness out of the illusion. They couldn't look away from what the butcher was showing them.

They lived through various of Eren's memories like these in fast forward. They felt as if they were present in the vicinity of Eren's audience when he did what he did best—killing and more killing.

Eren's eyes turned white as he activated Sedating Gazes to change the perception of time for rankers who were trapped inside the illusion. Now every second in real time would feel like a week or two for them.

After experiencing an extreme form of violence in such a way that altered their perception of time, they felt shattered. Their slumbering souls were affected by Eren's soul sense so much that they started having soul-related injuries.

Eren too felt a heavy burden on his soul after using his soul sense like that.

'Stop the madness this instant, Eren. Your soul is not strong enough to influence so many rankers like this.'

Aleph's intervention finally made Eren stop what he was doing. He felt a huge headache and soul-related fatigue. But when he looked at his audience, they seemed to be in much more trouble than him.

"Aaaaaaaa!"

"The butcher.... He is the butcher..."

"Demon...."

"Abomination..."

"Why... Why did we accept this mission? Our captain didn't even know who we were chasing."

"How can Captain Oliver be so careless..."

"It's all my fault. I... I shouldn't be here. I... I hate myself for being here."

The feeling of fear opened the gates for a lot of other emotions the rankers were preventing themselves from feeling. The butcher then just needed to crank up the feelings of anger and wrath inside these rankers.

And crank he did.

#### [Chapter 957 Countermeasures Against Battle Formation](#)

"Soul powers! He has soul powers!"

He really is the butcher of Osan Woods. We were chasing the wrong man all along."

Drops of sweat trickled down Oliver's face as he looked at Eren's torso with a look of disbelief and fear. He would stop his gaze at the butcher's neck and refuse to meet eyes with him because his consciousness wasn't allowing him to do so.

Oliver knew more about Arthur's plans than the rest of the rankers combined. The more Oliver looked at Eren and Ivor the more he realized that it was just what Eren had said. And that they all had really been fooled. By Eren, Ivor, Layla, and who knows who else.

Oliver could guess that Arthur might severely hurt himself from excessive anger and frustration if he came to know the truth as he did. After all, he had lost almost all his resources in first making the artificial demon beast and then hunting down the Osan Woods' Butcher. He was then told to cough up even more money just to get the benefits he was promised from the beginning.

Oliver wasn't sure at first. But Eren's revelation made him realize something else. The otherworldly powers he was using were the very powers Arthur was talking about and wanted to have for himself. Having these powers did not only serve as Aces in one's possessions but also spurred individual growth, allowing rankers to traverse their ranking journeys with relative ease.

Eren's possession of these powers confirmed one thing for Oliver. Eren played a key role in matters relating to Purgatory.

Layla had offered Arthur many rare resources as compensation for Arthur's involvement in the artificial demon beast creation project. But she was holding back on giving him access to these powers.

Arthur could only grit his teeth and use what resources he was given as charity. He was making staggering progress on his ranking journey. But he felt that it wasn't enough until he got hold of the Sin Series Abilities.

Only now did Oliver realize why Arthur thought the way he did. He was desperate to have what Eren had and it was driving him crazy.

How could Garvin and Cybil miss by such a huge margin after using the Seer array? What was Layla doing outside with the very man who was supposed to have the artificial demon beast she had ordered Arthur to bring? What happened to that beast?

What was Layla trying to accomplish outside of her home? Was there someone else behind Layla who was the mastermind behind the whole thing?

Oliver had too many questions in his head as he processed the information in real-time while under the effects of the Sedating Gaze. And doing something like that after being exposed to Eren's soul sense was messing up his head.

Oliver had come prepared to take on anyone Layla throws his way during this mission. But he wasn't expecting such a revelation. And he wasn't expecting someone to exert their soul powers on him and his team members. Unlike Goro, Oliver didn't have any soul-strengthening potions in his storage he could use. Nobody on their team did.

Eren was also breathing deeply when he was done using the soul-induced illusions on his spectators. Ivor wasn't subjected to these illusions but he was shocked by the effect the butcher had had on the rankers.

This much intimidation was enough for Eren to get the results he wanted. They started shapeshifting after being injured by the Wrath creatures. By changing into Wrath creatures, they attacked their own mates.

"Graaaaaaaaaa!"

"Skraaaaaaa!"

Mayhem ensued afterward. Something that Oliver and Biru couldn't control with their authority alone. Eren didn't even allow the current battle formation to do its job as it was broken from within.

Ivor summoned his golden armor right off the bat when he saw the opportunity. He approached a group of rankers who were separated from the large group due to the wrath creatures' attacks.

Ivor had learned quite a lot from his battle with Eren a few hours before. His pain tolerance had also increased, giving him more leeway to use his pride armor. Plus, he didn't want to fall behind Eren who had decided to target the prominent players in Oliver's team.

Ivor created a pseudo barrier made of green lightning water and isolated himself and the 12 rankers he was fighting with. He had planned to lower the barrier only after he had killed the 12 rankers he was assigned to.

The remaining rankers decided to target Eren. But the latter had his own army ready to serve him wholeheartedly at a moment's notice.

Woodland Summon

Goliath

Army of the Dead

Contract Undead

Oliver and his forces were given another jolt of surprise when Eren's hair turned white and he started summoning various creatures. The woodland creatures cried for battle and the undead screeched. The Goliaths stomped their feet and hammered their chests to express their intentions.

Eren's force was more than three times bigger than the remaining rankers on Oliver's team. The earth summons were more dominant in numbers than the rest. Whatever Eren's summons lacked in quality, they made up for it in quantity.

Eren had summoned his contract Undead Meera Medinah to target Oliver. He knew that the guy had a lot of defensive artifacts on him. It wouldn't be easy to get rid of Oliver. Otherwise, Layla would have been done with him a long time ago.

However, Meera was a former special force member working for the kingdom. She had what it took to compete with him. She could at least hold him off until Eren was done with his share of kills.

Eren and Ivor had segregated the rankers from Oliver's team so that they couldn't assume the earlier battle formation. Without the battle formation, each ranker would be dealt with individually one at a time until none were left.

Layla also helped the duo by introducing various debuffs to rankers while they were under the prism barrier. This allowed Eren and Ivor to get breathing room for themselves while they were dealing with multiple opponents at once.

#### [Chapter 958 Surpassing Expectations](#)

The battlefield was expanded and divided into many smaller parts.

Ivor looked busy handling his share of rankers in the pseudo-lightning domain. Eren's summons kept the remaining rankers busy until Ivor was done with his ongoing assignments.

Meanwhile, Meera forced Oliver to take their fight to a different zone under Eren's orders. He coordinated with Layla and lowered the prism barrier just at the right time before springing it back up, making Meera leave the isolated zone along with Oliver.

The butcher didn't want the duel between two Expert rankers to disturb his summons and prevent them from doing their job. Plus, he didn't want Oliver to assemble his team under his orders again.

When all this was done, Eren was left to choose the opponent he wanted to target. He glanced across the region and narrowed his eyes to a single man who was destroying his summons before they had a chance to fully recuperate.

Blitz Bolt



Eren appeared right beside a quasi-C-Rank rogue just when his summons was destroyed. The ranker's name was Rondo. He looked to be the second-strongest ranker on Oliver's team who could fight after Oliver.

Clang!

A pair of swords clashed against a pair of Jambiya— or curved daggers. There was a mana ripple in the surroundings that made everyone on Oliver's team give Eren and Rondo space.

Rondo looked to be in his fifties. He had a muscular build and a stature as tall as Eren. The guy was too heavy to be called a rogue. Rogues were supposed to be lean and nimble on their feet. However, Rondo broke away from that rudimentary concept in his way.

Rondo had shoulder-length purple hair and sharp purple eyes. His nose was that of an eagle's beak, as curved as his daggers. The wind element attainments would create mini wind blades around him that were also curved and spinning about themselves.

Rondo and Eren clashed with each other a few more times before the former managed to create distance between them. He had various injuries on his body before he forced Eren to back down.

The butcher was not completely unscathed by Rondo's jabs either. Rondo fought exactly like Eren if he was using katars or daggers. That kinda threw the butcher off and allowed Rondo to injure him in their duel.

Eren had to admit that Rondo had top-notch skills as well. His elemental attainment and his weapon comprehension were leagues above the average ranker. It was as if he had been tutored by exceptional teachers from the very beginning.

Eren's injuries didn't stay on his body for long. With the enhanced recuperation granted to him by his bloodline and his healing ability, he was able to get over the injuries in no time.

"That illusion... that was a pretty neat trick you did there, Osan Woods' Butcher. I believe it's the right time for me to reveal my real self.

It's an honor to meet you, Eren."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Rondo speak. The latter also gave him a bow as a form of respect. One had to know that even while bowing, Rondo did not take his eyes off Eren. Against Eren, he was the most vigilant he had ever been since he gained the rank of Adept.

Rondo chuckled when he saw Eren's emotionless face. He decided to state his stance clearly.

"I was having a hard time advancing in my dagger arts. No amount of training or plunges into Monster Canyon could solve the bottlenecks I faced. That was until I started studying the way you kill.

All the known, unknown, and rumored records of your kills inspired me. They allowed me to get over the bottlenecks and combine my elemental attainments with my dagger arts. It allowed me to reach new heights as a ranker.

I also progressed further in my ranking status when I progressed in my elemental attainments. So we could say that I stand at the doorstep of the C-Rank because of you.

This is why... It's an honor to meet you."

Eren was a bit taken aback when he found out that Rondo was a fan of his renegade identity. Usually, the fans of such figures were more twisted than the figures they were inspired by.

Rondo took Eren's silence on the matter as a cue. He flashed a grin before adding further.

"The illusion you showed us didn't make him fear you. Perhaps I am the only one on my team who can see the potential you have to reach seemingly unattainable goals.

Why would I fear when I want to walk on the same path you have been treading all along? On the contrary, I'm even more impressed than before."

Rondo charged his daggers with his wind-element mana and prepared himself to face Eren once again. He narrowed his eyes at him while speaking in a tone laced with fascination.

"I saw how Oliver chased after you for so long. I was part of the hunt when you were in the city of Osan too. I ventured into the Osan Woods after the official investigation was over. I could decipher some clues you left behind as well.

Thus, when I was getting inspired by work, I also started creating your backstory in my head. Something that makes sense to me.

I thought that a killer like you must be a lonely cultist who wanders from place to place to avoid getting caught on the kingdom's radar. Someone who hides his identity by staying away from the reaches of civilization."

Eren narrowed his eyes at Rondo as he listened to him. He could tell the guy was up to something. But he kept quiet and let Rondo make his move.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with hiding your identity when an entire kingdom is after you. Those who parade themselves out in the open after achieving no success won't understand the beauty of hiding one's claws.

But you... you have surpassed my expectations.

Osan Woods' Butcher is a well-functioning member of the rankers' society. He is successful in all aspects of his life. He has an entire city to his name. And his guild is the dark horse organization within the kingdom.

Hahaha.

What a twist! Sounds like a grim fairy tale, if you ask me.

Who could have believed that reality would be more twisted than the fantasy story most of us had built around your name?"

[Chapter 959 \[Bonus\] Layos' Royal Scion](#)

"Who could have believed that reality would be more twisted than the fantasy story most of us had built around your name?"

Rondo took a long breath. He glanced at his mates fighting around him before looking in the direction Oliver had disappeared in. He started laughing as he spoke.

"I must confess... I have secrets of my own, Eren. I am not the Rondo that these guys know. I am... Well.... I'll just show you who I am. Hahahaha."

Rondo declared maniacally before pulling the skin off his face. It took him a bit of effort to pull off the mask because it looked like it had been glued to his original skin. However, it only took him a second or two to get rid of the mask.

In the next moment, a strange ripple of mana spread through the surroundings as Rondo took out the mask he was wearing. The mask turned into a face-shaped wooden artifact with runes and formations carved into it. It was clear that the artifact was what allowed Rondo to change his identity.

One had to say that Rondo's way of masking his identity was more secure than the one Eliza had provided him with. It couldn't even be detected by the inspection artifact Oliver had used before the start of the battle.

Then again, Eliza did not really care that much about letting Ivor hide his identity. She didn't invest much effort in Ivor because he was even more of a disposable pawn to her than Eren.

Rondo turned into a completely different person than he was before he pulled out the skin-like face mask he had. He turned into a handsome elf.

Rondo now had bluish-gray eyes and shoulder-length jet-black hair. He had an attractive square-shaped face and a copper-brown skin tone. His jewelry consisted of long earrings, which looked precious.

The elf smiled wickedly as he looked at Eren. He then stared at the members of his own team with evil intentions when they forced themselves to look at him. Fortunately or unfortunately, these rankers had stopped getting surprised because of so many revelations given to them one after another.

The spectators neither had the time nor the means to join Eren and Rondo's battle. They were too occupied with their respective battles to ask the HOWs and the WHYs.

Eren, on the other hand, did not know what to say about what he was seeing right now. He had to admit that he had attracted a weirdo's attention with his altered identity.

'Hehe. Your fans are bound to be a lot like you, Eren.'

Eren scrunched his nose when he heard Alephee's comment. She was busy writing new runes in her grimoire inside the pendant abode. He didn't need her presence in his fights either. Only if she could keep her commentary to herself, the butcher would really appreciate it.

The butcher had a secret fanbase from known and unknown cultists as well as rankers' communities. The people saw him as some kind of rebel, rebelling against the kingdom's restrictions. In some of the stories, he was painted as a good guy who turned bad due to unforeseen circumstances.

Many origin stories around him portray him on the receiving end of some kind of injustice. A person who was constantly suppressed by the kingdom's policies until he couldn't cope.

There was the other faction of the fanbase who treated him as a malevolent character that only knew how to kill. According to them, he had no real talent other than dismembering organs. In their eyes, he was a lonely monster who could take on the kingdom's forces all by himself. Someone who fought solo and won solo.

Contrary to what all those people thought about him, Eren was nothing like those assumptions. At least not entirely.

Eren couldn't call himself suppressed anymore after he had obtained a piece of freedom for himself. The establishment of the guild and the foundation of his city liberated him in more ways than one. He wasn't completely free of the kingdom's restrictions. But nobody could treat him as nobody anymore.

Eren killed only when there was a need for him to do so. He would slay his opponents without hesitation. But that didn't mean he would be looking for trouble when there was nobody for him to mess with.

Eren wasn't a saint by a long shot. But he was also not some knucklehead wandering evil some people believed him to be.

He could guess that Rondo or whatever his real name was, had also assumed a lot of things about him. The butcher just let that stuff be as it is. He didn't need to explain his stance to a stranger.

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Eren was curious to know about the elf's identity though. He made a guess based on his precious earrings.

If the butcher had to guess, he would bet on the fact that the elf he was seeing in front of him was part of Layos' royal family. That's because those precious earrings would only be worn by members of the royal family of Layos.

That's right. Layos, unlike Edinburgh, was ruled by elf royalty. It had a majority of elves as residents compared to humans.

'So what Sirius said to me was true. The forces of Layos have infiltrated Edinburgh. But it is not just the rankers who have infiltrated. The Layos' royal scions are also here— possibly trying their luck in some kind of royal competition.'

Eren guessed as he took a keen look at Rondo. He was only recently informed by Sirius and Fiona about the infiltration. The butcher didn't care about the cold war between the two kingdoms at this point. He had decided to let his guild participate in the war as well. But that would only happen when the war officially begins.

He also acknowledged Rondo's boldness in getting employed under Arthur who was Edinburgh's legit duke. If he had to compare, he would rate Layos' royal scions higher than the scions of Edinburgh.

#### [Chapter 960 Offer From The Enemy Kingdom](#)

The royal family of Edinburgh pitted the royal scions against each other.

While Layos let its royal scions light fire in the enemy kingdom. Of course, the risks of all royal scions getting killed in the enemy kingdom were very high. But at least they wouldn't try to murder each other.

The elf followed Eren's gaze at his earrings and realized what he was thinking about. He laughed out loud before commenting.

"Hahaha. That's right. I am from the kingdom of Layos and my real name is Shandil Oloris. I am the 18th seat in the line of succession to the Layos throne. A royalty."

There was a sense of pride attached to Shandil's voice when he spoke about his real origins. He felt liberated to reveal his identity as if he was finally allowed to breathe again after so long.

Shandil had used his Rondo identity to infiltrate the kingdom of Layos as soon as he found out about the undercurrent developing between the two kingdoms. At that time, the Osan Woods' Butcher was a hot topic among Edinburgh's masses.

Shandil did his research and used his connections to find out that the matter was connected to Arthur. To get to the bottom of this, he decided to work for the Duke.

It had been a long time since the butcher's first kill site had been revealed to the masses. It didn't allow anyone to decipher his identity but Shandil made a point to visit the Osan woods nonetheless.

The elves of Layos investigated in their own way. Shandil also couldn't find out the butcher's identity per se. However, he learned a bit about what kind of person he was using his first kill site.

The Anfang alliance had made it difficult for anyone to learn about intent-based magic. But that only mostly applied to humans.

The elves were always focused on feelings and emotions. The Elven wines, in their purest forms, were the creation of intent-based magic after all. Its strange effects were linked to intent-based magic as they amplified a select set of emotions in consumers.

The elves were the old practitioners of intent-based magic even before the lost era. Thus, it wasn't too difficult for Shandil to employ his means and learn what kind of person the butcher was.

Shandil found out that the butcher did not hold his kingdom in high regard. He used anyone and anything for his profit without remorse. That his help could be bought with the right rewards.

These small and seemingly insignificant tidbits were enough for Shandil to seek out the Osan Woods' Butcher. He wanted to bring the butcher to the kingdom of Layos. All so that he could serve as the poster boy for inciting a select stratum of people within Edinburgh to rebel against their state.

Shandil also benefited on an individual level by following the butcher's lead. Investing in him and his kills had inspired him for real and enabled him to progress in his dagger arts and elemental attainments as well.

Of course, Shandil had his political interests added to the equation. Contributing to Layos' welfare in any way or form would allow him to progress further on his royal succession ladder. And bringing Eren to the kingdom of Layos would be seen as a major victory for him.

He wanted to present Eren as the representative of the suppressed people in Edinburgh. The butcher's fame or notoriety was well-known within his kingdom. If he joined hands with Layos, Edinburgh politics at all levels would receive a huge shock.

Shandil was shocked to find out that the butcher was not the lone wolf his investigation had him believe. At least not on paper. He couldn't be the representative of oppressed people because he freaking owned a flourishing city to boot. He had risen above the ordinary rankers.

However, that didn't deter Shandil from wanting to take Eren under his wings. In fact, his desire to get the butcher onboard increased when he found out about his real identity.

Opinion building has no limits. And stories could be spun in any direction depending on the target and the desired results.

Shandil could portray Eren as someone who was fed up with Edinburgh because of its internal politics in not letting him run his city. He could say that Edinburgh didn't want him to succeed and so conspired against him.

Eren then manages to escape Edinburgh's conspiracy to find a new and better city in the kingdom of Layos. A kingdom that welcomed him and appreciated his talents. He could become the representative of rankers who had broader ambitions.

Edinburgh was doing the same thing. It would portray the rebels in Layos as freedom fighters and welcome them into its territories. Layos was just returning the favor.

Shandil looked at Eren with an amused look before speaking to him amicably.

"I have wanted to meet you for a very long time. You'd have to forgive me for not approaching you sooner. I didn't know how to contact you, you see. The reason I revealed my identity to you was that I wanted to give you the opportunity of a lifetime.

Your identity as the Osan Woods' Butcher would always put you in Edinburgh's crosshairs. Even if the kingdom and the masses forget about you over time, I can assure you Arthur would never let it slide. He would keep hunting until you were dead.

Don't believe me? Ask Isen Osan."

Eren knew bits and pieces about what was happening inside Layos, thanks to the information provided to him by Sirius. He knew that Arthur had sent his special squad inside Layos to target Isen. It was only due to the precautions taken by Saisha Goren that Isen managed to stay safe. Otherwise, he would have died a long time ago.

Shandil chuckled when he saw Eren still maintaining his stoic look. He wasn't scared or intimidated by Eren. At least not anymore once Shandil became aware of Eren's identity as the Butcher of Osan Woods. He thought that he could control Eren with that kind of information.

"Want to know about the opportunity the kingdom of Layos has for you? You will get a new city inside Layos' borders, which will be entirely under your control.

Layos will provide you with funds for establishing a city and a new guild. And complete protection will be provided by Layos' special forces to assure your complete safety. How about it?"

