

Vile 991

[Chapter 991 Reunion With Ken & Roody P1](#)

Freja had a fire pit in the middle of its main deck.

It served as a source of warmth, light, and comfort for the travelers aboard the ship. The dancing orange-yellow flames were the only change of scenery in the surroundings that were shrouded in silence and darkness.

Four rankers were sitting around the fire pit. Three Master-ranked ladies and an Expert ranker young man who had just had his rank promotion.

Nina was wearing a white tank top under a dark denim coat. She wore dark blue pants and pearl earrings. Her necklace had a thumb-size cobalt blue gem as its ornament, which blended well with her overall ensemble.

She had let her hair loose and wore a simple perfume. Nina's curvy figure made her look flawless even without her trying. The warm light exuded by the flames made her look more alluring than before.

Nina was sitting to Eren's right, having dinner with him. It looked like these four days were just the kind of rest the three ladies needed to unwind. They also bonded well together during this time.

Dressed snugly in a mint green kaftan, Jiana Jihang sat to Eren's left not too far away from him. The elf was slightly less endowed when it came to having heavy breasts, but she made up for it with her charming and sophisticated looks.

Jiana wore ruby green earrings and green-beaded bracelets on each hand. She wore a relatively heavy citrus perfume with heart notes of basil and bergamot. As a result, Eren's olfactory nerves would be given a zesty treat whenever the nightly winds strengthened their presence.

Levine wore an off-shoulder light pink crop top and wide-leg pants of the same color. She didn't wear any jewelry or ornaments to go with her ensemble. But thanks to the top's deep cleavage cut, nobody would think she needed anything else to grab the onlooker's attention.

Eren felt like he was underdressed for the evening. Like he had missed the memo or something. Not that he would change into better clothes at this point. However, he enjoyed the view of his surroundings immensely.

"This is strange... how did you manage to stabilize your breakthrough so fast and with such finesse, guild master?"

Jiana Jihang asked while eating a barbecued fish dinner. The three ladies had come together and used their powers to reel in a bunch of E-rank fish from the river water. They cooked the haul together and talked about various topics even before Eren arrived on deck. It wasn't the most lavish impromptu dinner they had. Nonetheless, it tasted delicious for some reason.

The three Master-ranked entities aboard the ship thought that Eren wouldn't be able to join them tonight as well. But the butcher had his way of keeping them second-guessing about him. He smiled as he continued to eat the grilled fish with his bare hands as he responded.

"Hm? Frankly... I don't know. I guess it's just one of those moments in a ranker's life that he has no control over.

Could I predict that my breakthrough would be so early and effortless before it happened? Probably not. But am I glad it was handled so early and effortlessly? Absolutely yes."

Eren said while licking his fingers. He would often steal glances at Jiana and completely ignore Levine. He would touch and say something to Nina frequently as well, leaving Levine devoid of his attention for the most part.

Levine had also raised many topics with Eren at this point. But he would respond to them briefly before moving on to talking with Nina and Jiana. Jiana was too focused on Eren to notice anything. But the healer was paying close attention to what was happening.

Nina observed that Levine interrupted Eren's talk frequently. She showed all the telltale signs of a woman wanting to get her mate's attention.

Nina then looked at Eren who seemed busy talking to Jiana about the same topic, seemingly unaware that he was being eyeballed by his potioning teacher. She didn't believe for a second that Eren had not realized Levine's condition. She smirked and looked at him.

'Erni, Levine wants to get close to you. Is this some kind of reverse psychology you are pulling on poor Levine?'

Nina had witnessed Eren's psychological tactics. It could be said that she had fallen for those tactics as well. However, she also knew that these tactics only worked when the one for which they were being used wanted them to work. The tactics became the excuse they needed to close the gap.

Nina was at peace with her bond with Eren. She was also glad that Eren had broken the mental barriers she had in her head. Her bond with him had helped her in more ways than one. Plus, she was never desperate to keep Eren to herself. On the contrary, she accepted Eren for who he was and tacitly supported him in every way.

Nina's playful voice was heard in Eren's mind. The latter smiled for a fraction of a second and kept on talking to Jiana. He used the voice channel to respond to Nina as well.

'Hehe. No tactics, aunt Nina. Not really. But let's tease her a bit anyway.'

Eren then focused his attention on Nina. He had various stories in his head to keep the three ladies entertained. He knew that one could anger a woman and might get away with it. But keeping them entertained was a no-no.

The butcher mixed reality with the fabric of imagination to craft a wonderful story for the three Master rankers. When the tale took a romantic turn, Eren got closer to Nina and started getting cozy with her.

Nina also responded well by playing along. She didn't mind adding spice to her bond with Eren.

Jiana and Levine looked at each other with blank expressions when Eren and Nina started kissing each other in front of them. It wasn't helping that they were onboard Freya and there was nowhere else to go.

Eren was about to activate his Sin series Ability to tease Levine some more. But just then, the high-intensity sound of a runic conch horn was heard that shook Freya to its very core.

A giant ship was getting close to Eren and the rest.

[Chapter 992 Reunion With Ken & Roody P2](#)

"Eren... is that you?"

Hahahahaha... Long time no see, brother!"

A handsome man landed on Freya's deck uninvited. He was tall, muscular, and had a strong presence. He had made remarkable strides on his ranking path, thanks to his family background as well as his own relentless efforts.

This uninvited man had black hair and a chiseled face. In contrast to the butcher, his presence as an Expert ranker in the liquid stage was very vibrant and overwhelming. Under his alchemy clothes, he wore chainmail armor with intricate runic patterns that were the ranking items themselves.

It looked like the man was ready for war in the middle of nowhere. Plus, he smiled from ear to ear and approached Eren without any restraints— seemingly ignoring the ladies he was with. It was obvious he enjoyed seeing Eren- so much so that he completely ignored the three Master rankers.

'This pain-in-the-ass, do-gooder, cockblocking dunce motherfucker of a protagonist will never leave me be. Damn it.'

Eren sighed in his head as he managed to plaster a smile on his face and waved his hand. This man was the last thing he wanted to see at this point.

Eren had never used so many foul words in one go at anyone since leaving LA. But somehow, this man had managed to make him look like the old Eren he was at the time of his early academic days.

"Hehe. How have you been, Ken? I'm sure... Uggggh!"

Eren was about to greet Ken Riverine by offering him a handshake. But the latter swatted it away and gave him a bear hug. Eren was made to sniff the man's chest hair that was peeking out of his shirt's unbuttoned area as a result.

"Hahaha! Man, look at you! What a growth spurt! You were so tiny back then. But look at you now- you've turned into a fine man."

Ken patted Eren's back as he said. The latter also returned the gesture weakly before channeling his mana throughout his body. Lightning struck and Eren managed to get away from Ken's overly affectionate hug.

"Not everybody can be flawless from the moment they start their journey, Ken. Some of us have to work hard to make an impression in this world."

Ken smiled and shook his head as if he was expecting to hear something like this from Eren. He was about to say something to Eren when he finally felt the presence Eren was surrounded by.

"Hmm? Oh!"

Ken pursed his lips as he looked at Nina, Levine, and Jiana. The guy was a strict follower of the rankers' code of conduct so he bowed at them before introducing himself.

"Um... forgive me for my intrusion... Hmm?"

Expert? No! Master Levine?"

Ken hadn't taken potioneering classes at the academy. But he knew Levine. It was just that he took some time to remember her. Levine had also heard about an exceptional talent from Eren's batch when she was in LA.

The fact that Ken had the name Riverine only contributed to highlighting him in people's consciousness even further. The Earl's House played a special role in Edinburgh's politics. Although it was still an Earl House that was beneath the Dukedom, it still had special rights. After all, it was the House the current queen of Edinburgh belonged to.

Levine was glad that someone had appeared out of nowhere to divert her mind. She was beginning to feel uneasy looking at Eren and Nina's romance. She and Eren introduced Ken to Nina and Jiana.

Nina was shocked to see Eren had such a close male friendship in LA. Although she could feel Eren's reluctance to mix with Ken, the fact that he hadn't completely pulled away from him meant Eren had somehow made peace with Ken. Knowing him, that was a huge thing.

Ken was also using the Water of Leith to travel to Edin. But unlike Eren, he had entered the main river from the easternmost part of the kingdom using tributaries from that side. That was because he was given an on-field assignment in the Lehan duchy.

He was traveling on a ship twice the size of Freya. After looking at it closely, the butcher snorted his nose. He didn't forget to mention to Ken that he bought the ship with his own money. He felt the need to state this fact for reasons only he knew.

There was also someone else who joined Eren onboard Freya. He introduced himself before greeting Eren in a friendly manner. He was also from LA and Eren's senior.

This man was traveling along with Ken on his ship. His name was Roody- a scion of Edinburgh's Viscount House.

Eren couldn't believe that Roody was traveling with Ken at first. The two were at each other's throats when they were in LA because of the conflict he had initiated between them.

Apparently, Roody's sister was smitten by Ken Riverine when they were stationed at the same army base for their on-field assignments. House Orton approached House Riverine about a political marriage.

Lensa had just broken the political marriage between House Carren and House Riverine for valid reasons at that time, and House Riverine had just received a blow from House Carren. House Orton's proposal was accepted right away. As a result, Ken was now engaged to Roody's sister. So Roody had to begrudgingly accept Ken as well against his better judgment.

Roody interacted with Eren respectfully. Unlike Ken, he knew about Eren's accomplishments in depth because he had kept tabs on him. Plus, Eren had left a lasting impression on Roody when their teams fought in the ranking wars. So it became easy for Roody to interact with Eren.

Roody graduated from LA last year because he was one year older than Eren and Ken. But since his sister was going to participate in the graduation event, Roody decided to accompany Ken as well. He was also in the Lehan duchy so getting aboard Ken's ship was a choice born out of convenience.

Eren had to say that Ken's protagonist halo was too strong. He had managed to turn the enemy into his ally just by acting like himself.

[Chapter 993 Discarding Hate Born Out Of Prejudice](#)

The three ladies retired to their rooms below Freya's deck when Eren had company.

Before she descended below deck, Nina assured Eren that she would assist him in his "endeavors" later. He needed to catch up with his academy mates at this point.

Eren uncorked a rare collection of White Raven ale he had in his collection and served it to Ken and Roody. As much as he wanted Ken to just leave him alone, the butcher didn't want to come across as a poor host to such influential people.

Eren, Roody, and Ken started talking about life after they left the academy. Upon completion of his on-field assignment, Roody was appointed as one of the Royal Guards within a dukedom in Lehan. He simply carried on with his on-field assignment duties, making full use of his academic background.

Due to this Roody also had an honorary post in Edinburgh's army as an officer. There was a chance that he would get transferred to the royal court if and when he broke into Master rank. Apparently, he also had a younger brother named Roody Jr who was from LA and in Ken's team serving as the captain. So Roody had many reasons to be present at the event.

Ken Riverine's life was not as straightforward as Roody's. His on-field assignment was at the border of Edinburgh. The Duchy of Lehan also had major parts of its eastern borders attached to the Badlands. Thus, operating at the borders was chaotic, even more so than at the Nightshade duchy.

But the monsters weren't the only opponents Ken had to face. Lehan's borders were also shared with the kingdom of Layos to a small extent. As a result, Ken had come face to face with Layos' forces many times.

Ken had many close calls during his on-field assignments. War teaches a lot to even its most dense students. Ken had learned to kill on the battlefield. And since he had chosen Fist Saint as his class, the kills were always up close and personal.

Ken took his time to deal with the reality of the world. He had his fair share of mental struggles. Through those struggles, he had come to realize that things were not all black or white as he thought them to be. It could be said that the on-field assignment's job was to teach exactly that to the academy brats stationed there.

Ken realized that what Eren had said to him at the time of their mission together was right all along. A ranker's path was wrought with death and destruction. One could limit its extent but not prevent it from being present in their life.

As a result, Ken started respecting Eren in his head a lot. He came to realize that Eren was way ahead of him when it came to having the mental fortitude of a successful ranker.

Ken was involved in a lot of search-and-destroy operations against Layos' forces. He also participated in a few rescue operations and then some espionage missions. Doing these kinds of missions non-stop had turned him into an experienced man.

Most of all, Ken didn't use his family background to help him in the pinch when he was in serious need. He stuck to his principles and found his way through the mountain of problems he faced. This was what made him particularly popular with the core of the army responsible for the duchy of Lehan.

Ken had entered the Expert rank a few months back. His breakthrough generated a very eye-catching phenomenon that shattered a bunch of mountains in the region. It was a testament to the difficult path he walked along as well as his grit and determination.

Of course, Ken kept goodness in his heart despite the challenges he faced. He would still prioritize his teammates' safety over his own well-being most of the time. He was willing to walk the extra mile for his friends. He still refrained from killing anyone unless he absolutely had to.

But after living through so many life-altering experiences and close calls, Ken had stopped being naive enough to think that others would return the favor to him. He had his own share of betrayals as proof of the cruelty of the world.

It was Roody who told Eren about Ken's operations and his heroic acts in the army. Ken scratched the back of his head and just laughed it off, feeling awkward about being celebrated as a hero by his army core.

Eren reviewed his hate for Ken as he listened to the hardships he had to go through. Eren found out that Ken was probably as miserable inside as his past self was behind his laughter and smiles.

Eren could see many regrets hidden behind the facade Ken had created for himself. Ken was still trying to come to terms with them.

Ken's suffering made it easier for Eren to accept him. His prejudice against Ken started dying. Misery loves company after all.

Eren also came to realize that Ken was genuinely a good guy. Something he refused to believe when he was in LA. His second chance at life had given him a lot of advantages but it also restricted his mind in a certain way at that time.

One of these restrictions was the assumption that everybody he met was a wolf hiding in sheep's clothing. Which was true for the most part.

Eren refused to accept that there were guys like Ken who were kind without there being reasons to be that way.

That refusal made him unable to accept Ken for who he was. The fact that Ken was indirectly responsible for Eren's downfall in his previous timeline was just an excuse his subconscious mind was telling him to stick to.

Of course, if Ken had not learned from his experiences and remained as dense as he was, Eren would not have lost all hope in him. The previous Ken was a liability. This Ken was tolerable to be around.

Ken in Eren's previous timeline was being used by the so-called goddess inside a mortal shell that was Sienna Slughorn. Alephee had said to Eren that the goddess had the power to interfere with the cause-and-effect system of Anfang to a certain extent to make a bunch of possibilities come to pass.

If Alephee's words were to be believed, Ken was just one of the tools the goddess had used to hurt him. The "tool" itself had no ulterior motives against him.

[Chapter 994 Misery Loves Company](#)

As he talked with Roody and Ken, Eren realized that his anger at Ken was misplaced.

Maybe one of the reasons he hated Ken was because of the latter's ability to nurture goodness in his heart even after coming to terms with the cruelty of the world. Ken maintained his fairness-and-justice-seeking path despite knowing the potential repercussions.

No matter how he tried or pretended to, the butcher wasn't capable of nurturing goodness in his heart anymore. For better or worse, he had aligned himself with the cruel side of the world. So in the past, to make sense of his inability to nurture goodness, he branded Ken as his opposition.

Eren could say that he was still in his growing phase as well. Because it took him this long to realize how naive he had been in his academic days. This is despite being the only student there at the time with the mindset of an old man.

He also understood that getting old and having past experiences didn't turn a person into an all-knowing sage. It just made them better at taking certain life decisions in the future. And that was it.

But to see what was hidden beneath the surface-level view, one would require more than mere experience. They needed the insight gained from those experiences. Eren's interactions with Ken and Roody were giving him the insights he needed to see the things around him he wasn't noticing because of his own prejudice.

When the two finished speaking about themselves, they asked Eren what he had been up to. Both of them had heard about Eren's success while they were busy with their own lives. But they wanted to hear straight from the horse's mouth.

Eren told them what was public knowledge about him and his city. He told them about his guild briefly before moving on to mention his on-field assignment in the army at the Nightshade duchy.

Roody gulped down a few chugs from his pitcher and pondered a bit. He chuckled to himself before commenting.

"Ken... Eren... your batch is really something if you think about it. It produced Osan Woods' Butcher. Then Sienna Slughorn died in a royal conspiracy. Other rankers in your batch made names for themselves as well.

Lastly, you two. Ken made a name for himself in the army. So much so that even the kingdom of Layos is wary of him at this point. Eren proceeds to establish a fucking city on barren land and turns it into one of the rising places in the kingdom.

It was as if everyone in your batch was meant to shake the kingdom in their own ways."

'It's because that beldam messed up cause and effect with you as its center.'

Eren heard Alephee's voice in his head. Then he and Ken looked at each other. The former pursed his lips before speaking.

"I'm sorry for Sienna's death, Ken. I know you guys had separated long before she died. But I believe you knew her well enough to feel sorry for her."

Eren offered a made-up courtesy to Ken. The latter scratched his beard and gulped from his pitcher before responding in an emotionless tone.

"Stop saying things you don't mean, Eren.

As for Sienna... How should I put it without speaking ill of the dead?"

Ken looked at the star-studded sky and seemed lost in his thoughts before speaking up.

"Now that I look back... she was a problematic girl, to begin with.

I learned from trusted sources that she was planning to control me using some shady means. She had plans to use me and my family by proxy after the graduation event.

I'll be honest... I never wished for her death even after finding out the truth. But am I glad that she isn't my problem anymore? Absolutely, yes."

Eren raised his eyebrows when he heard Ken's thoughts on Sienna. He had to admit that he had obviously underestimated the Fist Saint's growth.

After emptying the pitcher, Ken accessed the pitcher's rune to draw more liquor stored inside his pitcher. He drank from his refilled glass and narrowed his eyes at Eren before asking him another question.

"Sienna is one thing. But you... you snatched my fiance from me, didn't you? Lensa is with you, right?"

Eren looked Ken in the eyes before admitting the truth.

"Yes."

Ken didn't lose his gaze on Eren. He paused before asking him another question.

"It was you who got cozy with her and blamed it on me, didn't you?"

Eren nodded once again. Ken was gullible but he wouldn't stay gullible all the time. He had met Lensa a few times during the period they were engaged. And he could guess what kind of girl she was based on his interaction with her. It didn't take long for him to guess who the real culprit behind the incident was after Eren and Lensa were said to have gotten together.

The butcher saw a wind-element fist directed at his guts as he used Sedated Perception subconsciously. But instead of dodging, he let that punch hit him because he knew who had cast it.

Swoosh. Zoom. Punch.

The three rankers were sitting around the fire pit. Eren was shot straight into the water off Freya's deck as Ken's fist hit him. It took a while for Roody to catch up. He didn't know what the two Expert rankers were talking about. Or why one of them had chosen to unleash violence.

"What the..."

Roody was about to get up and search for Eren. But he felt another wind-element hand land on his shoulder to keep him in his place. He looked at Ken to see the guy shaking his head in dismissal.

"He is fine."

Blink.

Eren suddenly appeared at his previous seat. He was dry and looked fine. It was as if Ken's attack on Eren hadn't taken place at all.

Eren caressed his tummy with his hand and drank from his pitcher. He sighed and commented casually.

"Fair enough. I probably deserve that."

Eren could understand Ken a bit at this point. The guy wasn't angry that he had taken his fiancée from him. That Lensa chose Eren over him. He was angry at Eren for using his identity to get close to Lensa.

"I won't ask why you did it. But I'd appreciate it if you treated Lensa well."

Eren looked at Ken intently before speaking up.

"I will."

The butcher finished his drink before speaking in a serious tone.

"I'll give you free advice as compensation, Ken. Take it or leave it, it's your call. But I'll say it just for the sake of it.

Watch your back at the graduation event. Not everyone is worthy of your kindness. And not everyone will return the favor done to them.

I acknowledge the hard work of people like you but I could never count on them to get things done. Because you guys can be psychologically damaged in so many ways.

I'll be honest. People like the current me will fuck with you and then leave you to die on your own if you don't change your heart."

The pitcher in Eren's hand disappeared and he got up. The butcher walked up to the deck's ledge and listened to the sounds of the ever-flowing Leith before speaking further.

"I can see that you are trying to change. That you are slowly trying to adjust to the world's reality. But I have to say that you are doing something horribly wrong. Before you can change your ways of managing the situation, you need to alter your nature as a ranker.

If your heart suffers from the decisions you make, then the favorable outcome that you get from those decisions will not solve anything. It will only push you further into darkness.

Emotional fools suffer more than rational dickheads.

I was probably more gullible than you in the past. As a result, I was more broken than you. So I understand this better than you.

I am not saying this to win the "who had it worse?" award. But that's the truth of the world I have come to realize.

Look what this world has turned me into. I should serve as living proof of what lies at the end of your road. That is if you survive long enough to become like me."

Ken seemed lost in his thoughts as he listened to Eren's words. In the end, he sighed and decided to not think about it for the time being. Then he looked up and beckoned Roody to follow him.

They too got up from their positions. They stood on either side of Eren and looked at the surroundings for a while.

The three kept talking to each other after that until dawnbreak. They also found out that a lot of ships were traveling close to them.

Edin, the capital city of Edinburgh, would soon receive them.

[Chapter 995 The Capital City Edin](#)

The capital city- Edin.

This city could be considered the heart of the kingdom. It was as lavish as the word lavish could allow it to be. It was as grand as the word grand could allow it to be.

Edin had harnessed the power of the River Leith to its advantage. It created various artificial tributaries of the river. The city's giant structures integrated the river's flow into their construction.

The city of Edin was only slightly smaller than the city of New Beginnings. But what it lacked in sheer carpet area, it made up for with skyscraping constructions and levitating islands.

The river water would travel upwards in streams at various places. These tributaries and upward streams were capable of letting ships enter their waters and travel from place to place.

It was as if the Water of Leith was the thread that had woven the city's fabric together. It was a beautiful sight to behold from anyone outside Edinburgh Central.

However, the Water of Leith was not the only mode of communication available in the city. Edinburgh did not have teleportation portals like other major cities in Edinburgh. But it had its own vibe as the capital of the kingdom.

The city could be explored using aerial means as well. Various flying ships were hosted by aerial ports located at fixed distances from each other. These runic ships and other legalized flying artifacts would allow people to travel from place A to place B in the shortest possible time.

The city also had underground constructions meant for the bottom feeders of the city. The Water of Leith would run underground as well, creating subterranean canal travel.

Then there was a web of roads spread all over the city. The city of Edin was one of the rare cities in the kingdom that was allowed to feature two, three, four, and six-wheeler vehicles.

Each type of vehicle had its own lane. The runic vehicles would be powered using Extols and other forms of mana. This was the mode of travel for low-ranked entities in the city who liked to show off using their luxurious vehicles.

The city had locomotive trains that would use the Water of Leith instead of the typical rail tracks. The trains were an affordable means of travel for most ordinary rankers inside Edin. If they could be called ordinary that is.

Just like the city of new beginnings, Edin was also divided into various districts. Each district was under the administration of a district governor. Even the lowest-qualified district governor had the ranking status of the solid stage Master rank.

The city's atmosphere would always be pleasant and sunny in daylight. The city's nights were vibrant and full of activities. It was as if the city never knew how to stop.

The city was home to around 40 million rankers and mortals. The city accommodated anyone and everyone who had the guts to embrace its busy and fast-paced lifestyle.

The city's population was as multi-ethnic as it could be. Each district had a culture of its own. The food choices were even more diverse. From a myriad of apparel and ranking resources, the city had something for everyone— mortals and rankers alike.

The city even had a dedicated monster region where sentient monsters registered by the city administration would be allowed to leave. The city also had various habitats for mana beasts which could be employed in various ways by the city administration and the denizens of the city.

The city of Edin even had a dedicated region meant for demon beasts— those with humanoid and beastly features alike. In short, the city of Edin was a culture shock for people visiting it for the first time.

Even the most ordinary citizens of the city would be considered somewhat successful by people outside of Central Edinburgh. The city's surface and its skies were taken over by the rich whereas the relatively poor people were restricted to the city's underground.

The city was completely surrounded and blessed by the Water of Leith. Because of this, it had many constructions all around it to accommodate ships of different sizes.

There were small piers made for boats and other small water-based vehicles. The aptly designed quay bays were meant for small to medium ships. Then there were docks built for giant ships. Although the ships could travel inside the city, outside ships were not allowed to do so. Only royal vessels could enter the city without any hindrance.

The city administration kept a very close eye on Edin's security. Even the city's underground zones weren't something the administration's investigative rounds couldn't penetrate. As a result, there was a very low crime rate inside the city, most of which was restricted to the bottom feeders living underground.

However, one had to look really carefully to find a few shades of poverty present inside the city. The opulence of the city, however, was on full display.

The city was home to various organizations present all over the kingdom.

The Royal Renar Academy was located in the heart of Edin. The academy had its own district named Edinnica. It had its own set of rules that were not present in other parts of the city.

The district governor of the academy Edinnica also served as the dean of the academy. He was a Sage ranker. He had served in that position for the last six centuries and still looked to be in his early 50s. His name was Hansen Lehan.

Edinnica was where the graduation event was going to be held for students from all five kingdom-approved academies together. No ordinary ranker or mortal was allowed to enter the region on a whim. It was only reserved for a select few people apart from the Royal Ren students and their associates.

Since Edinnica was at the heart of the city, it was almost equidistant from any outer region of the city. One could use their own choice of transport to get to Edinnica after reaching the city by ship.

Edin's quay bays and piers were busier than usual because of the graduation event that was going to be held at Royal Renar. The city was welcoming a new generation of young and talented rankers from the four corners of the kingdom.

[Chapter 996 Demonmir's History](#)

Morning 8 AM. The Capital City Edin. The kingdom of Edinburgh.

Freya had just finished getting docked at a quay bay, which was relatively close to Edinnica. A bunch of rankers got off the ship and stepped foot on Edin for the first time.

Eren and the three Master-ranked ladies had arrived in Edin.

Eren could see loads of people rushing off to do something or go somewhere. It was as if the whole city was one giant, well-oiled machine and the crowds of people were levers inside it. They moved about in complete sync with each other like clockwork.

Some rankers used their movement spells without disturbing anyone. Some used artifacts to move the items they had. Others traveled directly to the city entrances in flying bubble vehicles.

The City of Edin had countless entrances and exits. But to enter the city, one needed to have proper documents. They also had to pass through certain identity-confirming matrixes, assuring the administration they were who they claimed to be.

Edin had an unstoppable tenacity to it. Even with all its security protocols installed, the place itself had a liberating vibe. Mortals, rankers, monsters, demon beasts, and mana beasts. Even halflings were an integral part of the city. At least they were not as discriminated against as in the duchies outside of central Edinburgh.

There was a reason for the city's all-inclusive attitude and it wasn't all rainbows and sunshine. Edin made use of every community to get what it wanted from them. It employed every stratum of people, demanding their skills in exchange for the illusion of freedom.

Still, Eren didn't find anything wrong with extracting someone's worth and offering them compensation in return. He felt that those who were made to feel they were needed by society were particularly better off than those who weren't. This was how the world worked anyway.

With various thoughts like these running inside his head, Eren watched the city's hustle and bustle with a stoic gaze. He stood above the head of a White Raven figurehead and thought of his next set of plans all over again.

Due to Ken's ship's special access to the city, Roody and he separated from Eren as soon as they arrived. The latter regretted that they couldn't do this sooner. He didn't know when he would get the chance to speak with Levine. So he cursed Ken some more before jumping off the ship's ledge.

Step.

When Freya docked, Eren stepped lightly onto the dock. The three ladies followed him immediately. The butcher took a deep breath and took the air of a brand-new city into his lungs before commenting sarcastically.

"Look at these people moving about. They are not even paying attention to the three Master-ranked beauties that have come to visit the city. I have to say this is my first time experiencing something like this."

Eren was being honest. If it was any other city outside Central Edinburgh the arrival of three Master-ranked entities would have created waves in the hearts and minds of the citizens. And it would have sent the city administration running to receive them if they had come together.

However, everyone treated Nina, Levine, and Jiana normally. The lower-ranked entities would bow to them without stopping their work. The Expert and Master-ranked entities would nod at them or flash a light smile before proceeding about their ways. It was as if they had no time for anyone at all.

Jiana chuckled at Eren's comment as she observed his expressions of curiosity and wonder. She looked at him like she was looking at a country bumpkin before responding.

"Of course, guild master. Edin has thousands of Master rankers and about a few hundred Grandmaster rankers inside its territory at any given time. They are the best of the best in their regions financially and otherwise.

Most come here if and when the kingdom summons them. Some come here when they hit a bottleneck in their journeys. The city also keeps on organizing a lot of ranking events on any given day. So some are here as participants... just like you."

In Edin, Jiana could always use her title holder identity to expedite the entry process for herself. She would also be treated very differently from the rest once her identity was established. But she decided that she should stick with the group she had come with.

Eren nodded his head as he listened to Jiana's words. It seemed that she had also visited the city before like Levine. So he let her lead the way after bowing gracefully.

Levine looked around suspiciously as if someone was watching her. She knew that Demonmir was here and his forces could be all over the place. So she remained vigilant about her surroundings while adding up.

"Eren, we didn't have a chance to talk about a lot of topics when we were traveling. First, it was due to your breakthrough. Then it was due to those friends of yours. Now that we are here, I want you to pay attention to something.

I'm sure you must have been told to be wary of Ottoman by other rankers countless times, including me. But I'll have to reiterate that at the cost of sounding like a broken record— don't provoke that bastard. You don't know what he is capable of."

Eren raised his eyebrows as he listened to Levine's warning. He was walking in the middle of Nina and Levine whereas Jiana was leading the way from the front. It looked like an Expert ranker was being protected by three Master ranked entities to the onlookers.

Eren's group was walking towards a giant gate that was the nearest entrance to Edin from where they were. Countless other rankers were walking with them.

Eren was about to say something. But then Jiana turned around before commenting.

"Master Levine is right, guild master. Nobody knows what Demonmir is capable of. There is something special about his existence in the land of Anfang after all. I'll go ahead and say that there's a part of him that's a lot like your demon beast Argo."

Jiana was sure that she wasn't mistaken in her conjecture because she had seen Argo up close. She then looked ahead and narrowed her eyes before using the group communication channel to speak.

[Chapter 997 \[Bonus \] Demonic Ranker](#)

Jiana looked ahead and narrowed her eyes before using the group communication channel to speak.

'I don't think the forces of Anfang have grasped Argo's status as a prince yet. But if and when they do, Argo will either be made to swear allegiance to the kingdom or made to disappear from the land of Anfang.

They say the same thing happened to Demonmir as well. The reason he has been given free rein to some extent is that he is still under the kingdom's thumb.'

Eren's curiosity was piqued when he heard that Argo and Demonmir had something in common. No matter how he tried to make sense of the information, it still confused him quite a bit.

There was obviously a context to that link he was missing. It seemed there was something else about the warnings he wasn't seeing. Curious, he turned to Levine and asked.

'What do you guys mean, teacher Levine?'

Levine took a deep breath before responding in a grim tone.

'You know why he is given the title of Demonmir? Not everybody is privy to this information. Only someone like Jiana who is a title holder would have some information.

Demonmir's history is a closely guarded secret, despite the title he was given. It's like his title is an inside joke. But I'm from the same clan as that man. So of course, I know.'

Levine and Jiana looked at each other for a bit. As if to determine whether the information should be shared with Eren and Nina or not. The two then decided that Eren should know Demonmir's history because there was a chance that he would meet him.

Levine's voice turned grimmer as she spoke.

'Eren, I'm sure you must have heard about the origins of demon beasts and demonic possessions. But have you heard about demonic possessions done on rankers?'

The butcher was taken aback by what Levine was implying. However, the latter continued before allowing him a chance to speak.

'Ottoman is one of the rare rankers in Anfang who had to go through demonic possession. It is the same demonic possession that is usually restricted to mana beasts during their breakthroughs. The fact that he survived and managed to retain control of his body makes him even rarer to the point of being precious.

The man managed to keep his mind intact through demonic possession. He defeated the demon soul fragment and took its powers for himself. And this was when he was a mere Ace ranker.'

Eren's expression turned grim as he listened to Levine's words. He wanted to say that he might not win against Demonmir but he wasn't scared of him. But that only applied when Demonmir was a normal ranker. Or as normal as he could be without some wild powers helping him.

But Levine's latest information put Eren on alert. With such an impressive Trump card, it would be foolish to underestimate him. A Trump card he didn't know or understand the scope of.

'Hmm? An awakened demonic ranker? I didn't know there would even be demonic rankers in the land of Anfang. Someone must have performed a demon-summoning ritual here.'

Eren heard Alephee's surprised voice in his head. It seemed that she couldn't believe that there was someone in the land of Anfang who could keep their sanity and control intact after demonic possession.

Mana beasts getting possessed by demon beasts was a different thing. It was because the mana beasts did not have strong and fully sentient souls at the beginning. As a result, it became easier for the demons to possess them at the time of their breakthrough.

However, demonic possession done on a ranker was a different ball game altogether. No ordinary demon would be willing to take such risks. In addition, the average ranker would never remain the same following demonic possession. Therefore, Demonmir was treated as a special presence in Edinburgh for this reason. Due to his status as an awakened demonic ranker, he had gained elite status.

Eren wanted to ask Alephee a lot of questions about the term demonic rankers and what it stood for. He decided to keep quiet and listen first.

Levine let Eren digest what she had said so far. After a brief pause, she spoke.

'While Ottoman was under demonic possession, the forces of Anfang dispatched to the scene were about to kill him. Ottoman had almost gone insane and was about to die at that point. With sheer willpower alone, he managed to tame the demon inside him.

The kingdom-sanctioned assassins who had come to kill him became witnesses to his achievement. Thus, he was given the title of Demonmir then and there.'

Nina and Eren both looked at each other with grim faces when they heard about Demonmir's past. The two of them had never been involved in the kingdom's affairs in this manner. It was the first time they'd stepped foot in Edin after all. So they were uninitiated about a lot of things only a certain stratum of people like Jiana and Levine knew.

Jiana was the next to speak.

'Ottoman de Montmorency is not your typical big bad guy. He possesses a very powerful demon soul fragment. This is why we urge you to be wary of him and the demonic side inside him as well.

Because we are not sure which side is more sinister and blood-thirsty.'

From her end, Jiana finished speaking and brought the matter to a close. She then focused on finding her way through the sea of crowds.

Levine de Montmorency looked agitated for some reason when she thought about Demonmir. It was as if there was a distant memory she was trying to prevent from resurfacing in her head.

Eren had stress lines on his forehead as well. Not because he thought that he had underestimated Demonmir. But because he was made aware of these things too late. The butcher wanted to slap Levine's bum for not telling him this crucial information sooner.

[Chapter 998 Demonkind](#)

'So Demonmir's demon soul fragment is on the same level as Argo's is?'

Eren asked Alephee out of curiosity. The latter hadn't come into contact with Demonmir so she couldn't tell. However, she had something else to tell the butcher.

'Eren, I am not saying you should become irrationally fearless. But don't worry too much about demonic rankers like this Demonmir guy. At least not because of their demonization.

From the looks of things, Demonmir's standing in the kingdom's eyes is not something you can ignore. His faction of the Montmorency clan and his reach within the royal court can hurt you more than the demon inside him ever will.'

Alephee had a completely different opinion than Levine and Jiana on the same matter. She was more concerned about Demonmir's political might than his individual power. She also understood the question Eren wanted to ask her. So she added further.

'You want to know more about demonic rankers? To put it simply, they are rankers seeking blessings from the demon realm. They will offer their bodies as shells to the demons in exchange for demonic powers.

They can be considered uninitiated demonic rankers if they perform demonic rituals to attract demons and have yet to become successful. Some rankers manage to attract a demon soul fragment into their bodies through ritual. They manage to keep it slumbering for the most part so that they can use their powers passively without any risk. They can be called initiated demonic rankers.

Lastly, rankers who managed to not only attract demon soul fragments inside their bodies but also tame such fragments to do their bidding for them are called fully awakened demonic rankers.'

Eren kept walking towards the giant gate with the three ladies surrounding him in silence. Jiana had told him that the demon soul fragment inside Ottoman was as strong as Argo.

Eren didn't understand what it meant by any demon soul fragment being as strong as Argo. However, the news still put him on edge. Especially after witnessing the feats Argo could perform when he was battling Oliver and his forces.

Alephee allowed Eren to take a mental breather before speaking up.

'Of course, what I have told you about demonic rankers is a simple way of putting it and there's obviously more to it. But that should be enough for you for now.

The degree of demonization and the power of the demon soul fragments dictate the boost a ranker would experience in terms of their raw power. A strong demon produces a strong demon soul fragment. With a strong demon soul fragment, demonic rankers can unlock more demonic potential.

However, with increased benefits come additional risks. Strong demons are not easy to control. If someone loses the mental fight they had with the demon soul fragment at the time of demonic possession, they may have to say goodbye to their ego forever.

After all, the first goal of demonic possession for demons is to have mortal shells. Stronger demons would just take over the possessed entities in one go. Or they'll wait and bide their time until an opportunity arises. They'll take over the ranker when they are at their weakest, finally granting them the mortal vessels they needed all along.

The two Demon Princes sending their soul fragments into the same world at almost the same time is no coincidence. It is obviously due to the unnatural interference of the cause-and-effect fabric of the world. That harlot and I are both to blame for this, I guess.

Still, something doesn't quite add up.

I find it completely unbelievable that someone from the land of Anfang managed to tame a demon soul fragment of a Demon Prince. There's obviously something more to the story.'

Eren processed Alephee's words slowly in his head. A chronic planner like him didn't want to face Demonmir until he knew enough about the topic. However, he couldn't just go back to White Raven the way he came.

Eren needed to get through the whole ordeal to get the things he wanted from the graduation event. It was the whole reason he had come here. He wasn't sure how much he should ask without triggering the continental array's response. But he decided to push its limits for his own sake.

'Alephee, how are demons categorized? And what is a Demon Prince?'

Alephee took her time to reply. Her words were carefully chosen so as not to cause a scene in Edin.

'There are countless demons who infiltrate various worlds of all sorts looking for God Sparks. But not every demon is the same. Just like the royalty of Edinburgh, demons have a hierarchy to them.

Lesser demons, greater demons, archdemons, etc. are as countless as the stars in the cosmos. But there are only seven Demon Princes at any given time in any world.

Previously, all demons were chaotic beings that didn't believe in order. But then a certain someone came along and established an ironclad rule of hierarchy for them.

Things changed for the demon kind after that. Now a demon would have to rise through the ranks and defeat any of the existing Demon Princes to take over their domains.

These Demon Princes are like de facto leaders of all the demons that are below them.'

Alephee's answers only created more questions in Eren's head. He sighed in his head before responding.

'My dear Alephee... While I understand that the Demon Princes are rare, it does nothing to solve the mystery around them in my head. I don't know anything about demons. And I understand that I won't be able to for a long while.

Please answer this in a way I can understand. For example, how many Sages would it take to defeat a Demon Prince? This is the kind of scale I can understand at my current level.'

Alephee chuckled when Eren wanted to give him a simple answer to a complex question. She pondered for a bit before responding.

'I'm not sure how many Sages it would take to defeat a Demon Prince... But...'

Alephee took another long pause as if choosing her words carefully after doing some sandboxing in her head.

'But... A Demon Prince can take on 100s of Sages attacking him as one entity and still win.'

Eren stopped in his tracks when he heard the answer he received from Alephee. The Sage scale of measurement he had created for himself quickly became insufficient in his head to measure an actual Demon Prince's might.

[Chapter 999 Might Of A Demon Prince](#)

"Eren?"

Nina and Levine soon found out that Eren had stopped moving with them. They looked back to see Eren had stopped in his tracks. He looked like he had just found something shocking.

Saying that Eren was shocked was an understatement though. Sages were the pinnacle of existence for him for the longest amount of time. He knew that there were more powerful beings than Sages outside of Anfang. But he had never stopped to think about the extent of their powers.

The butcher tried his hardest. But he still couldn't wrap his head around the amount of accumulation one needed to face 100 Sages at once without breaking a sweat. As a result, his brain was short-circuited which made him stop in his tracks.

Alephee on the other hand thought that she had undermined the existence of Demon Princes by comparing them with Sages. She was sure that all seven Demon Princes would take offense if and when they learned of her doing.

However, the homunculus did not have the heart to tell Eren about it. The butcher looked like he would summon a table from his storage just to flip it up. All so that he could derive some form of mental relief from that act.

Alephee felt like she had to say something to make Eren react. His current thought process was too chaotic for her to read.

'Of course, what I said is only valid if we consider the actual Demon Princes and not their soul fragments. Demons or demonic rankers will be able to exert only a fraction of their original power with soul fragments. It is also limited by the state and accumulation of the vessel the fragments of the soul occupy at the time.

The Awakened demonic rankers certainly become more powerful than their counterparts after they tame the demons inside them and make them stay that way. However, they still have limitations.

No matter which world, certain rules can be bent but not broken. And therein lies the beauty of the game.'

Eren felt like he was hearing his name being called out in the distance. But he was too preoccupied with his current thought process to respond to any of those calls. He clenched his fists and narrowed his eyes before saying something very diabolical to Alephee.

'Power to contend with 100s of Sages... I want it. I want it, damn it.

Alephee, what is the demon-summoning ritual? How can I attract a Demon Prince's soul fragment and then tame it?'

Eren's stunned expression subtly turned hungry. A certain hunger for power could be seen in his eyes. His sheathed presence kept things under wraps. But nobody knew better than his victims that the butcher was at his most dangerous when his mana signatures were as calm as a serene sea.

It felt like the continent-spanning array was bound to react if Alephee answered Eren's question directly. But the butcher didn't care. His thirst for power had skyrocketed after hearing about power to rival 100s of Sages. He had even forgotten the fact that he was a mere Expert ranker and it was way too early for him to think along those lines.

Alephee couldn't blame Eren. She was only to blame for telling him information that she thought he wasn't supposed to know. It was better to keep certain things under wraps until the right time came to unwrap them.

She also found it satisfying that Eren wasn't really overwhelmed by the existence of Demon Princes. Instead, the news fueled his desire to reach their level. All while not underestimating the Sages in any way because he was still in touch with his own reality.

Alephee chuckled before answering honestly. She also knew that her answer wasn't enough to trigger a response from the continent-spanning array because she was not telling him the process to perform the demon-summoning ritual.

'Hehe. You don't need any demon soul fragments in you, Eren. Why become a Prince if you can aim for something even higher?'

She paused before asking him another cryptic question.

'Have you not realized... what Argo calls you these days?'

"EREN!"

Eren was finally snapped out of his thoughts when Nina shook him by his shoulders and yelled his name. She looked worried and tense, thinking that he was dreading his meeting with Demonmir.

'It's fine, Eren. Demonmir... that bastard will not be able to do anything here in the capital. And we'll make sure to exit safely out of the city once your graduation event comes to an end. I'll be with you.'

Levine and Jiana both looked at each other before speaking in unison.

'We will all be with you.'

Eren looked at them confusingly before finally understanding that his inaction was being taken as him getting scared. He laughed in his head but decided to use the opportunity to pursue advances with Levine nonetheless.

'Yes... yes... I'll need all three of you to be with me when the event ends. Thanks... thank you for being with me throughout my struggle, ladies.'

Eren replied in a voice coated in dread before taking all three ladies into his embrace. They had all stood close to him so it became easier for him to do so. The people walking by were a bit puzzled by the group's bonding activity. But it wasn't enough to make them stop and stare at them for more than a second or two.

Jiana had flushed cheeks when she was embraced by Eren along with the other two Master rankers. She then inhaled the smell of the butcher, and for some reason, her mind was lost in lustful thoughts. She felt like tearing the man's clothes apart before planting a kiss on him.

Things got worse for Levine. She felt like a fire had been ignited deep within her that could only be extinguished in a certain way. She willingly sank her head into his chest and started inhaling Eren's scent intently as if her life was dependent on it.

Nina was the normal one among them. And yet, even she felt like her urges were getting rekindled just by being embraced by Eren.

Nobody realized that Eren's forked tongue stretched way longer than usual as he licked his lips, smiling wickedly.

[Chapter 1000 The Cure For Pain Is More Pain P1](#)

"Identity checks out - Eren Elijah Idril.

Student of Lionhearts' Adventurers' Academy— an army veteran. Here for the graduation event.

Expert Eren, welcome to the capital city Edin. Please be mindful of the rules and enjoy your stay."

An emotionless voice sounded from nowhere as Eren passed through a certain identity-confirming array. He saw that the three ladies were waiting for him at the other end of the pathway.

Eren's view consisted of a pair of giant doors. There were no visible city walls surrounding the capital city Edin. But that was because the city had even stronger measures of security put in place.

A distortion in the spatial fabric served as Edin's first line of defense. It blurred the view of the city for outsiders, forcing them to only look at the giant doors serving as the city's entrance points.

Eren's group needed to pass through the giant door to enter the city officially. The butcher was walking up to Nina and the rest when he saw a flying vehicle approaching them.

This flying vehicle looked like a giant fish with live fins in all four cardinal directions. It had metallic bat wings and a glass deck serving as its face. It stopped right in front of the three Master-ranked entities as if wanting to get them aboard.

By the time Eren walked up to Nina and the rest, an adept-ranked elf had climbed out of the flying vehicle. He approached the group and bowed at all of them before speaking in a voice coated in courtesy.

"Good morning and welcome to the capital, Madam Goldy Wings and her friends. My name is Duja Katak. I'm here to serve as your city guide and helper."

Eren and the rest looked at Jiana who nodded at Duja Katak before speaking up.

"We wish to travel to Edinnica. Take us there."

"Certainly!"

Duja Katak responded promptly before gesturing to them to board the flying vehicle. The vehicle's size made it convenient for the group to board. Duja came prepared to look after Jiana's needs.

Jiana looked at the group and flashed a smile. "Let's go."

Nina, Levine, and Jiana boarded the vehicle. Eren was about to follow their lead as well. But then he stopped. He felt like he was being watched by a certain someone and the gaze felt familiar.

The butcher stepped back and looked ahead. There was a certain ranker looking at him from a distance at the city's entrance door.

'There she is...'

Eren mumbled to himself and kept looking in the ranker's direction for a bit. He then pursed his lips before saying something to Nina and the others.

"You guys go ahead. I need to catch up with someone. Maybe explore the city a bit."

Jiana and Levine both looked at Nina accusingly as if it was her fault he was behaving so erratically. Nina had stress lines on her forehead before she spoke.

"Eren... it is YOUR graduation event we are attending. And we are already running late. This is no time to..."

Lightning struck and Eren disappeared from his place. Nina sighed before shrugging her shoulders. Her body language screamed, "I tried." The vehicle took off immediately, heading straight to the Edinnica district.

'Hmm? He noticed me?'

Reva Rain couldn't help feeling amazed by Eren as she saw him approaching her. The way Eren reacted to her distant gaze amazed her. Furthermore, she could see that he was approaching her as if he knew her personally.

A tussle between the Escalon guild and the White Raven guild had already been established and well-known. But she didn't feel like it warranted such a personal response from Eren who hadn't even met her as far as she could tell.

'Her smug face... it takes me back.'

The butcher thought to himself as he walked toward the Paladin of Pain. A distant memory from his past timeline resurfaced in his head as he released smoke through his nostrils.

It was as if the smoke reshaped itself to play a certain scene in front of him. Soon, the smoke blurred his vision and pulled him into the past timeline.

An underground facility for the Escalon guild. The smell of blood, violence, and misery ran wild in the air. This air was then mixed with a certain rotten smell to make it even more pungent.

There was only just enough red light in the room to see 10 meters into the distance. A bunch of dead bodies could be seen lying on the ground with cuts and wounds all over them. It was clear that they had not died because they were already injured. They died because they couldn't handle the pain they were subjected to.

"Aaaaaaargh!"

An old man cried in agony as he finally couldn't take the abuse he was subjected to. This old man had white hair and a receding hairline. His emerald green eyes had lost all shine in them. And his skin was wrinkled.

This old man was an Adept ranker who had been fighting for survival almost his entire life. It was a wonder that he had managed to break into the Adept rank given the conditions he had been subjected to all his life.

His ranking status was of no use in the underground facility. Under the effects of a suppression array, his body had become as mortal as it could be. As a result, he could feel intense pain with no chance of relief from mana recovery.

This green-eyed old man had been tied to an X-shaped structure with his limbs stretched and pinned to it. He had a bunch of stakes running through various parts of his body.

Inhale. Smoke. Release.

Reva Rain got close and released a mouthful of smoke over the green-eyed man's face. The latter started coughing because his mortal-like body had lost the ability to sustain the side effects of smoke released from a ranked pencil cigarette.

"Tch tch tch. You failed this mission as well, Old Idril. Just what I expected from you. Another pathetic performance. Another excellent reason to punish you."

The Paladin of Pain— Reva Rain said in a condescending tone.