

# The Last Step

## Chapter 26 - The Queen of Curses

### Celia's Perspective:

My mind was in an emotional turmoil, questions coming left and right yet I had no answers. This place... it was clearly just in my head. An illusion of what's to come... but I won't accept it.

I stood in a dim corridor of swirling mists and flickering shadows—a place that felt both hauntingly familiar and eerily otherworldly. The air was heavy with secrets and whispers of destiny, each murmur different slowly pulling at the fragile threads of my resolve. In the midst of this chaos, I saw myself from the future whose presence radiated a calm certainty, as if she held the key to all my hidden truths.

She was me—only older, matured by the relentless march of time, a mirror reflecting the person I feared and never hoped to become. Her eyes, dark and infinite, met mine with a look that transcended the boundaries of age and reality.

Gathering every ounce of courage, I stepped forward, my voice trembling but determined as I asked, "What do you mean by all this? How are you here?"

She smiled, a hint of mischief and melancholy playing on her lips as if she had borne the weight of untold secrets for centuries.

"I am not here, Celia," she replied, her voice calm and resonant. "I am you—your future self. I have sent my consciousness back to speak with you, to guide you through the shadows that threaten to overwhelm your heart."

My mind reeled, the notion almost too fantastical to grasp. I took a trembling step backward, the echo of my own heartbeat a harsh reminder of how much I yearned for answers yet feared the cost of knowing them.

"But... why? How is that even possible?" I asked, my voice barely above a whisper, filled with both awe and trepidation.

Her eyes softened for a moment, and she spoke in riddles that was breaking on the edge of comprehension.

"It is within the realm of possibility for the Demonic Empress," she murmured, her voice carrying an eerie finality. "After all, I am the fear that haunts this world—the embodiment of its darkest nightmares. I have long surpassed the feeble limits that shackle mortals, wielding power beyond your comprehension."

Her words stirred something deep within me—a curious mix of hope and despair. I felt the weight of my destiny pressing upon my soul, as if the answers lay hidden in the darkness of my own emotions, waiting to be discovered.

Will I ever overcome this curse? Can I truly rise above the whispers that describe me as nothing more than a call of doom? My heart aches at the thought of a future where I become the fear of the world—the embodiment of its darkest nightmares. I never imagined that my gentle soul, my kind heart, could be twisted into something so terrifying.

Each step I take feels heavier than the last, burdened by the uncertainty of fate. Am I doomed to wander this lonely path, moving on the edge of chaos, or is there a way to rewrite the story that fate has chosen for me?

In that quiet, fragile moment, standing on the precipice of an unknown destiny, I vowed to seek the truth—even if it meant confronting painful doubts and the darkest corners of my soul.

Every whispered secret, every shadowed corridor seemed to pulse with a promise: that even if I am fated to become a creature of fear, perhaps, somewhere deep within, there remains a spark of hope—a chance to reclaim the compassion and light that is truly mine.

I took a trembling breath and forced my gaze upward.

"What did I do in the future?" I asked, my voice wavering with both hope and dread. "I need to know... I'm so scared of what might become of me."

She slowly stepped forward, her measured pace filled with an unsettling calm. With a demonic smile tugging at her lips, she replied,

"That's a very tough question to ask, especially coming from someone who hardly believes in herself—always so down, so fragile... so weak."

My heart pounded as I stuttered, "I... I—" The truth felt heavy on my tongue, each word a struggle against the wave of emotions flooding inside me.

She held up a hand, silencing my hesitant murmurs. "I'll only answer one of your questions," she declared, her tone both enigmatic and final. "May it be anything."

Swallowing hard, I pressed on, "Then... tell me. What did I do in the future? Why... why am I considered the fear of the world—if that's even true?"

**"Ara~ Ara~ Ahahaha~!"** A devilish laugh escaped her lips—a sound that chilled me to the core. It was as if a villainess had stepped out of a nightmare, her mirth laced with cruelty.

"It's a lie, isn't it?" I stuttered, my voice barely above a whisper as panic crept in. "I can't be the fear of the world..."

Her laughter grew, echoing around us like a cruel symphony. "Oh, my naive little self," she mocked. "The most heartless, merciless, cold woman in the universe speaks in such hesitant tones."

Tears threatened to spill as I pleaded, "That's not true... I would never hurt anyone. Please, tell me it's a lie." Every word was laced with desperate hope, each word trembling under the weight of my misery.

Her eyes hardened and grew a darker shade of red as she stepped closer, her aura darkening with an intimidating, murderous intensity.

"Now," she intoned softly, "I can either tell you a lie—one that might ease your troubled heart and let you live in a pleasant fantasy—or I can give you the crushing truth that will force you to face reality."

I steadied my shaking hands, summoning every ounce of courage despite the quiver in my voice. "Then tell me the truth," I insisted. "I don't care how harsh it is... I know I'm not merciless. I wouldn't do something like that."

A long pause filled the space between us before she finally spoke, her voice low and unwavering. "Then truth be it." As she moved closer, a menacing aura radiated from her—a presence that made the air itself seem heavy with impending doom.

I recoiled slightly, my heart pounding in terror as she loomed before me. In that moment, I could feel every beat echoing the fear of what lay ahead.

"Six years from now," she began, her voice cold and absolute, "You will wage war against the entire world and humanity. You will slaughter 4.2 billion people—men, women, and children alike. There will be no mercy, no hesitation. The world will drown in the blood of your revenge."

Her lips curled into a slow, knowing smile. The amusement in her eyes was anything but kind. It was as if a demon had crawled out of the abyss, whispering prophecy with the certainty of fate itself.

The words struck me like a blow to the soul. I stood frozen, my insides shattering with each word. I couldn't accept it—this future was a nightmare beyond imagining. Yet, deep within, I knew: there was no escaping the cruel logic of fate. Every step, every doubt, had led to this inevitable truth.

"You're lying, I won't do such a thing!" I cried out, tears blurring my vision as I stuttered, "I-I won't—"

She arched a delicate brow, a mocking smile curling her lips. "Aww, how cute of you, crying already?" she purred, a faint blush softening her otherwise cold features as she took a slow, deliberate step toward me.

"I-It's not possible..." I managed between trembling sobs, wiping at my tears with shaking hands. "Why would I ever do something so cruel?" My voice quavered with desperate uncertainty.

She chuckled, a sound that sent shivers down my spine. "Why indeed?" she mused, her tone laced with a sinister amusement. "Sometimes fate has a wicked sense of humor, Celia. But understand this—what you do is not a choice born from whimsy. You made the decision to do it, known as destiny."

"D-destiny?" I echoed, my heart pounding painfully in my ears. "Please—please tell me why! I beg you, I can't bear this uncertainty any longer!" I pleaded, my words faltering as they tumbled out in a torrent of emotion.

A cold laugh escaped her lips, chilling the air between us. "Oh, you're begging me now, are you?" she said, her voice dropping to a dangerous whisper. "The truth, my dear, is hidden in shadows. It is not for you to grasp completely yet, but to accept in time."

I stepped back, my voice barely a whisper as I continued, "But I have to know... why are you here? And why must I... become this—this fear that haunts the world?" Each word was punctuated by a stutter, a tremor of both fear and sorrow.

Her eyes gleamed with a merciless light as she leaned in closer, the space between us crackling with an ominous energy. "Because," she stated coldly, "this meeting is not about your tears or your doubts. It is about destinies intertwined. You exist on the razor's edge between hope and despair, and I am here to ensure you walk the path fate has laid out for you."

I could barely breathe as her words sank in, my inner turmoil rising with every syllable. "P-please, just tell me why I'm meant to do this," I sobbed, my voice trembling with a mixture of defiance and fear. "Why must I bear such a burden? I don't want to be the fear of the world."

Her expression hardened, and she straightened, her voice turning steely and unyielding. "Enough," she commanded, cutting through my pleas like a sharpened blade. "I have given you hints for too long. Now, it is time to explain why I am here in the first place."

The air grew colder, and the shadows seemed to lean in as she continued, her tone a chilling blend of menace and inevitability. "You are here because you are destined to be more than you ever imagined—a force that will reshape the world, whether you wish it or not. Every tear you shed, every stutter of fear is but a prelude to the power that lies dormant within you."

I trembled, caught between a desperate hope and a paralyzing dread. "No... it can't be... Please, I don't want this," I whispered, voice barely audible as I pleaded for some semblance of mercy.

I slowly wiped away my tears, trying to steady the quivering storm within me. For a fleeting moment, I closed my eyes and let the suffering wash over me. How many lives will be torn apart by this fate? I thought bitterly, my hands clutching my head as if to silence the screams echoing inside.

Then, unable to contain my rising panic, I shouted, "You're lying, stop lying!" My voice shattered the heavy silence, each word fueled by raw, desperate fear.

Her lips curled into a chilling smirk as she stepped closer, her tone as cold as a razor's edge. "How amusing of you," she drawled, a mocking lilt threading through her voice, "but I'm not here to prove your innocence. I'm here to show you your powers."

I blinked, stunned by the implication, and stuttered, "M-my powers?" My heart pounded, the word echoing like a death knell in my ears.

She nodded slowly, her eyes dark and unyielding. "Yes, your powers. Listen carefully, Celia. In this moment, you are surrounded by your so-called friends: Kiel, Sword Saint Levi, and the demon who is the king of flames merged with Ronan—all controlled by the silent executioner. Without me, you're doomed. You're bound to die."

A cold shiver ran down my spine. I tried to steady my voice despite the terror creeping in. "I... I will die?" I repeated, each syllable punctuated by another tear as I fought to reclaim some semblance of resolve.

A cruel laugh escaped her lips. "Indeed," She said with a sinister glint in her eyes. "I'm here to tell you how to use your powers—to kill them all—"

I interrupted, my voice shaking violently as I cried out, "No... I won't kill anyone. I'm no murderer—" My plea died on my lips as the reality of her words crashed over me.

Her gaze hardened into something unrecognizable—cold, remorseless, and frighteningly detached. "You do realize, Celia, that if you continue on this path, you will die?" she stated, each word a final verdict.

Swallowing hard, I mustered the strength to speak through the torrent of fear and sorrow. "So be it then... if my death means billions of innocent people get to live, I will change fate with my own sacrifice." I looked straight into her eyes, a spark of determination igniting amidst the despair.

For a long, excruciating moment, she stared at me in disbelief. "You can't be serious right now..." she began, her voice dripping with condescension.

Inside, a whirlwind of memories and regrets surged. My whole life, people wanted me gone—whispering behind my back, glaring at me like I was a mistake, a stain that should be erased. And yet... I was the reason they were suffering. Even if they hurt me, even if they cast me aside, I would be no different if I let them die.

The world wanted me gone, and I was just a curse to them. But the thought of me killing them all in this fate—this future soaked in blood—was unbearable. How could I let them suffer because of me? How can I let 4.2 Billion people be slaughtered by my own hands?

This wasn't right. This wasn't even human anymore.

No matter what they did to me, they didn't deserve this fate. They hated me, yet I couldn't leave them to die alone. A future drowned in destruction, a world reduced to nothing—it had to be stopped.

Even if it meant giving everything up, even if it meant my own end, I would do it. The guilt of letting them die—my own existence bringing this darkness—was too much to bear. I had to be the one to stop it. Even if the world never loved me, I couldn't stand to see it burn.

Even if it meant sacrificing everything... even if it meant I would never see tomorrow.

I took a deep breath, steadying the storm inside me. No more doubts. No more hesitation.

Lifting my chin, I declared, "I am. I won't accept this fate—even if it means I die."

**"Ara~ Ara~ Kufufu~ Ahahaha~!"** A devilish laugh escaped her lips—a sound that chilled me to the core.

"What's so funny?!" I screamed, my voice raw with desperation. "I'm serious—I'm going to sacrifice myself to change fate!" My words burst out in a rush of emotion, my hands trembling as I wiped away my tears.

Her eyes narrowed, and she spoke in a tone as cold as ice. "You do realize your actions have consequences, don't you?"

"C-consequences?" I stuttered, my resolve faltering for just a moment as doubt crept in. My heart pounded, each beat echoing with fear.

**"Are you really going to betray him?"** she pressed, her voice laced with cruel amusement. "For strangers who never cared about you?"

"H-Him...?" My voice cracked in confusion. I couldn't believe the very notion was being suggested. My mind whirled, Who could possibly be worth saving billions of lives?

"Kaiser," she said, her tone cutting through the haze of my thoughts. "The man who risked his life for you. The first person who ever saw past the curse and liked you for who you truly are—even when the world despised you."

My breath hitched. "K-Kaiser? No, it can't be—" I tried to protest, but the words died in my throat as the gravity of her words sank in.

"The moment you reject my offer," She continued, her voice dropping to a threatening whisper, "**He will die.**"

"No... that's not possible," I murmured, my heart shattering with each syllable. The thought of Kaiser—my first, most cherished friend—dying because of my decision was unbearable.

"You'll die first, and then he will be killed by them," she said, her tone unyielding and merciless. "Do you really wish to betray the last person who wholeheartedly trusted you?"

"You're wrong... He can't die..." I pleaded, tears streaming down my face as the realization crashed over me like a tidal wave. How can I let him pay for my weakness? The pain in my chest was almost too much to bear.

"His injuries, his wounds—they're all your fault," She declared coldly. "And if you refuse right now, you'll never be able to save him, for you'll die as well."

"Stop it! No... it's not true..." I screamed, the desperation in my voice mingling with uncontrollable sobs. My mind raced with images of Kaiser, smiling despite the odds, a beacon of hope in my otherwise cursed life. He was the person, who made me smile for the first time in years...

Then, as if cutting through the suffocating weight of my despair, she extended her hand toward me.

"Hold my hand," she commanded, her voice as chilling as the wind of a winter storm, "And you will unseal some of your instinctive powers. You can save him—just like he saved you with his life."

My breath caught in my throat. Kaiser's name, spoken like a lifeline, shattered every doubt I had. My world had already begun to crack, but this... this was the moment that could break it entirely.

I stared at her outstretched hand, my own trembling at my sides. Could this power truly save him? Or would it only drag me into something even darker? My mind screamed warnings, urging me to step away, to refuse the unknown, to run from the abyss opening before me.



I knew deep down that saving billions for one was the right choice... even if it shattered my soul. Humanity didn't deserve to be slaughtered, to be torn apart by a fate that was beyond their control. They didn't deserve this fate, and yet, it was the path I was on.

Only I could stop it. Only I had the power to stop myself—to stop the monster I was becoming, the destruction I was destined to bring. If I didn't act now, there would be no future left to save.

**But my heart—my heart was already reaching for him.**

I had only known Kaiser for a few hours, but it felt like a lifetime had passed in that brief span. In such a short time, he had given me everything. His trust, his care, his unwavering protection. He had taken care of my wounds, offered me warmth when I had nothing, and comforted me when the world felt like it was falling apart. And even when everything seemed lost, he risked his life to protect me, to ensure I wasn't alone.

Each night, I cried alone in the darkness, drowning in despair and my misery. But he... he made me smile, made me laugh, and filled my heart with light in the bleakest of times. Even now, as tears welled up in my eyes at the memory, I could still feel the warmth of his love—a light of hope that refused to be engulfed in darkness.

I had been betrayed by the world—betrayed by everything I ever believed in. They had cast me aside, abandoned me when I needed them the most. Yet, despite all of that, I still wanted to save them. I still hoped that somewhere, deep within their hearts, there was good left to salvage.

But if it meant losing him—someone as kind, as loving as Kaiser—someone who had done more for me in a few hours than anyone had in my entire life... then I would burn the world to the ground without a second thought.

**I would not lose him. Not now. Not ever.**

And if the world had to pay the price for it, so be it. They had abandoned me once; now it was their turn to suffer the consequences. Kaiser had given me everything, and now, I would make sure I protected him, no matter the cost.

If this was the only way to bring him back, then what was there to fear?

With a shaky exhale, I reached forward. My fingers brushed against hers, ice-cold against my skin. And in that instant, I made my choice.

**No matter the cost, I would not lose him.**

As soon as I held her hand, a devilish smile played across her lips as she gazed intently into my eyes. The moment our skin touched, a dark, bloody aura exploded around me—spirals of shadow twisting and coiling in horrific circles. I could feel the power seeping



into my veins, each pulse a hint of the transformation that was about to shatter every limit I once had.

Before I could process the onslaught of sensations, future me stepped back, her figure framed by the swirling darkness. I lifted my hands slowly, my trembling fingers searching my palms as the shadows moved over me.

Then it happened—a murderous red aura cascaded down from the sky like a storm of blood and fury. I looked upward, my eyes wide and unseeing as an immense pressure robbed me of all sensation. The fog that had once obscured my vision cleared in an instant, the red moon overhead soon began to crack and shatter into countless splintered pieces.

I turned my gaze back to my future self. There she stood, hands clasped behind her back, her smile unwavering and laced with a cruelty that sent shivers down my spine.

"This," she pronounced with chilling clarity, "is just 1% percent of your total power. The rest must be achieved and earned by your own efforts. The path you've chosen... it is yours alone." Her voice, cold and commanding, resonated in the cavern of my soul. "The True Queen of Curses."

As her words faded, my consciousness began to slip away. I watched in horror as she started to deteriorate, her form scattering into a fine dust that mingled with the crumbling illusion of the world around me.

Suddenly, I was left alone in an empty, blinding white room. I clenched my fists so tightly that my knuckles turned white, hundreds of questions roaring in my mind—questions I couldn't quite focus on.

Reality crashed down on me like a tidal wave as the image of Kaiser flooded my mind. In the real world, my dear friend lay unconscious on my back—wounded, bleeding, his life slipping away with each breath. The thought of him, the only person who had ever truly cared for me, ignited a burning resolve within me.

Memories of my past, the times I felt utterly worthless and hopeless, resurfaced in that moment. I remembered the loneliness, the isolation, the crushing belief that I was nothing more than a cursed soul, destined to be despised by everyone I ever encountered.

I had spent so many years believing I was unworthy of anything—unworthy of love, unworthy of peace, unworthy of life. Each night silently crying to myself. But Kaiser... Kaiser had shown me what kindness and love felt like. He had believed in me when no one else did, had given me hope when I had none left in me.

His trust, his kindness, his sacrifice—everything he had done for me, for us—was now slipping through my fingers, as fragile as the air in my lungs. I couldn't let him die. I

couldn't let him suffer because of my failure. I couldn't lose the only person who had ever cared.

With each painful breath, with each heartbeat that threatened to shatter me, I swore to myself—no matter the cost, no matter the pain—I would not lose him. Not now. Not ever.

Before meeting him, I was nameless—a nobody cursed as the "Queen of Curses," shunned and hated. Yet, he saw past the darkness. He gave me a name—Celia—out of pure, Love, not pity or mockery.

Anger surged through me as I recalled the threat: if I did not fight, if I did not harness this newfound power, he would die.

I couldn't let that happen.

I glared into the blank white expanse, my eyes burning with murderous intent. With just a focused gaze, I felt the aura around me begin to ripple. The room trembled, then violently convulsed, shattering like fragile glass as I fell into the void beneath me.

I whispered fiercely to myself, "Now it's time to face them all—Kiel, Levi, Ronan, and the Silent Executioner. I will save Kaiser. I will not be the weak, helpless soul I once was."

A surge of dark, overwhelming energy pulsed through me. I fell amidst the collapsing remnants of the illusion, every fiber of my being alight with a newfound ferocity. I was no longer the broken, despairing girl who once cried in the darkness alone. I will become the embodiment of destruction, and nothing could stop the path I was about to carve with my own hands.

I Screamed into the silence, the sound echoing off the shattered walls of my former self...

**I am the Queen of Curses! And I will bring the world to its knees.**

## **Chapter 27 - Reawakening Conquest**

### **Celia's Perspective:**

I was back now, back in the real world.

Kaiser lay heavy against my back, his unconscious body pressing into me like a painful reminder of everything that had happened, of everything I had lost. The forest around us burned with an eerie glow, flickering shades of orange and crimson that painted the night sky. Embers floated like dying stars, carried by the wind, whispering of destruction and betrayal.

And yet, I stood.

I was no longer the weak girl who had to depend on others, who had to run and cower behind the strength of someone else. I could feel a fierce, cursed energy pulsing within me, a testament to every scar, every tear, every moment of fear that had once bound me. I was no longer nameless. No longer powerless.

I was myself. Celia. A name that belonged to me alone—a name that carried the weight of my past, the strength of my present, and the power to carve my own future.

I clenched my fists as my vision sharpened, the world before me peeling away to reveal the battlefield in its purest form. Levi, a blur of motion even when still, crackled with untamed speed.

As I glanced back at Ronan, he was already charging up a wave of hellfire, its molten glow illuminating the twisted grin on his face. Kiel, no different, stood with his arms crossed, his cursed magic seeping into the earth. From the ground, tendrils of vines erupted, writhing like living serpents, ready to ensnare me.

For a split second, the air shifted. A rustle of wind, almost imperceptible—Levi. His shadowy aura flickered for the briefest moment before vanishing entirely. The world itself hadn't realized he had already left, moving faster than perception could track. He was already in motion—to kill.

Then they moved.

As if fate itself had conspired against me, they all launched their attacks at once. Every second counted. I held my breath, my mind racing back to the power I had awakened. My reawakening was my last hope, my only chance to stand. For me. For Kaiser—who had risked everything to protect me.

"With this power, I summon the cursed race—rise, and drag my enemies to their knees."

My voice cut through the air like a blade of ice, my words laced with a quiet, inescapable doom. It was not a plea, not a desperate call for strength—it was a command, absolute and merciless.

A chilling wind howled through the battlefield for a moment, as if the world itself recoiled at the authority in my voice. The air thickened, pulsing with an unseen malice, a force far beyond mortal comprehension stirring at my will.

From the darkness, they answered.

"As fate would have it, you will die here, Queen of Curses."

The Silent Executioner's voice, hollow and unwavering, carried no doubt. "My lord's foresight is unbreakable. He saw this moment long before it came to pass. Your awakening, your struggle—everything has already been written in the pages of fate."

But then... his thoughts stilled, a single flaw etching itself into the certainty he had always known.

"...But who is that?"

His gaze locked onto the unconscious figure draped over my back—black hair, a still body with injuries, and eyes he had yet to see open.

Him.

"My lord told me everything—every face that would be present tonight, every outcome." His mind raced, calculations snapping together with chilling precision. "Yet... this one... this person... was never mentioned."

Something was wrong.

"As if he doesn't exist... yet is present in this world."

And then, their attacks flew across the sky, about to land.

A massive explosion ripped through the forest, sending shockwaves through the air. Smoke and debris spiraled upward in a violent cascade, a blinding surge of light piercing the sky.

The sheer force of the impact howled through the battlefield, an ear-splitting resonance that shattered the very foundation of the land. Trees snapped like brittle twigs, the ground split apart, and the sky trembled beneath the weight of destruction.

And yet, in the silence that followed, they all stood still. Watching. Waiting.

They had won. It was over. The Queen of Curses had finally perished from the world.

Or so they thought.

"Now that it's over, I will return to my lord."

The Silent Executioner remained composed, stepping back as the smoke slowly began to thin. "He was kind enough to grant me a glimpse—one page of the future. And I was given a single order to follow after the Queen of Curses' death."

Reaching into his cloak, his gloved fingers pulled out the prophecy that dictated this night's end. The sight of it was meant to confirm his triumph. A formality. Nothing more.

Yet, the moment his eyes fell upon the inked words on the page, his entire body tensed.

"???"

His pulse slowed. His breath hitched.

Impossible.

That was not what it had said before.

"No... The prophecy stated 'The Queen of Curses will die.'"

This wasn't a contradiction. It was a correction. The future had shifted somehow.

His grip tightened on the page, his mind spiraling into disarray. "How? The future cannot change. My lord's foresight is absolute."

But as he watched—his own hands trembling—the ink bled, shifting, reforming before his very eyes.

"What...? How is the page changing?"

"Reawakening Conquest Beings." This was the new fate written on the page.

His stomach twisted with something foreign. A creeping, suffocating realization.

"How is fate being rewritten?"

For the first time in his existence, The Silent Executioner felt it.

Doubt.

As the smoke cleared, the battlefield fell into an eerie silence. The moment their eyes adjusted, shock gripped them all.

A massive sphere of chains loomed in the center, its form shifting and tightening with a slow, ominous creak. The interwoven links, jagged and unforgiving, curled tighter and tighter, fortifying the prison that had encased me and Kaiser. Each movement sent sharp metal fragments grinding against one another, the spikes along its surface gleaming with a merciless edge.

Gasps echoed through the air. Disbelief painted their faces.

Before they could even react, the chains shuddered—then slithered away. One by one, they coiled back like serpents, retreating toward the sky. Their ascent was slow,

deliberate, as if drawn by an unseen force. And at the center of it all, beneath the unraveling mass of steel—stood me.

I stood there, my eyes burning with a crimson glow, my breath steady, unwavering. The cold bite of power coiled around me like a second skin. Kaiser remained behind my back, his presence grounding me, but not shielding me.

I took a step forward.

Unlike before, fear no longer gnawed at the edges of my mind. It didn't drip into my veins, didn't claw at my resolve. I wasn't running. I wasn't cowering.

I was nervous—this power was unfamiliar, raw, and untamed. But my instincts? They murmured in the depths of my mind, low and unwavering. They didn't waver. They didn't doubt.

They would fight. They would tear through anything in my way.

And they would win.

My voice rang clear through the battlefield, slicing through the suffocating air like a dagger.

"You said my death was fate?"

The Silent Executioner remained motionless. Words evaded him. The cracks in his certainty were minute—subtle—but they were there.

I stepped forward again, the weight of my presence pressing against the silence.

"Then let me tell you this—" my voice dropped for the first time, a cold whisper laced with the promise of defiance.

"Fate will not stop me. It never could. I will curse it. I will rip it apart. And I will be the one to rewrite it with my own hands."

"Watch closely, as I carve my own future."

The page of the future still trembled in his grasp, the ink shifting, betraying his lord's will.

Even then, even as the foundation of his certainty cracked beneath his feet, The Silent Executioner met my glare with a response just as cold. He spoke—slow, deliberate, each word dragging the weight of inevitable death.

"Curse fate? Rip it apart? Rewrite it?" A low chuckle, empty of mirth, like bones scraping against stone. "You're nothing but a powerless child, clinging to the illusion of strength, thinking you can tear apart destiny with the remnants of a past you can't control."

His head tilted slightly, the movement eerily unnatural. "Rewrite fate all you wish... but even if the ink fades, even if the paper burns, every story has an end."

Then, softer, almost a whisper—one final nail in the coffin.

"Your hands will write nothing but your own death. Your own end."

Unshaken. Confident.

But beneath it all—a sliver of doubt gnawed at him.

The chains that were coiling around me then rushed ahead, slowly dividing to target each one of them. The noise and the air grew thick as their speeds increased.

Kiel's head then turned to his right unconsciously, and he leaped ahead of the Silent Executioner to go right in front of him. As my chains were about to attack, Kiel used earth magic to manipulate the ground, creating a quick wall in front.

My cursed chains hit it directly, creating a harsh clash sound. Instinctively, they moved to the side, rushing from all directions. But the Silent Executioner saw it coming and pulled Kiel's string, forcing him to create another wall around them, even covering the top.

Moments later, the sky darkened as fire rained down. Instinctively, I pulled some of my chains back, forming a barrier above me with tight layers of them, but the ones surrounding Kiel and the Silent Executioner couldn't tighten fast enough and began to weaken.

The fire slowly ate away at the chains' thickness, and out of nowhere, Levi rushed in between the flames using God-Speed. His sword glowed with shadows, leaving behind faint, shimmering cuts in the air as he moved. He sliced through the chains, flawlessly dodging even the raining fire.

Ronan made the sky rain with fire using his elemental magic while Levi used his speed and shadow manipulation to break the weaker chains.

The Silent Executioner used Kiel as a shield while commanding Ronan and Levi to attack and guard in perfect synchronization. Every second mattered. I was up against something beyond human, something with experience carved into its every move.

I didn't want to admit it, but I was losing in strategy. What else could I do?



As I struggled to think, Ronan and Levi rushed forward. Levi blocked and deflected my chains while Ronan shot fire from his hands like a flamethrower, burning and weakening them for Levi to cut through.

Slowly, they were closing in, their attacks perfectly coordinated.

I didn't have control over these cursed chains. They moved on their own, reacting to my instincts. But that wasn't enough.

Ronan's voice echoed through my ears, sharp and arrogant.

"Burn, break, incinerate—turn all to ash! Infernal Sovereign!"

Flames roared to life, twisting into monstrous forms, their heat warping the air itself. The fire coiled around his arm before exploding outward, a wave of destruction aiming to consume everything in its path.

At the same time, Levi's voice came, cold and playful.

"Step between light and shadow, sever all bonds—Void Stride!"

His body blurred, vanishing and reappearing in fractured movements. Shadows stretched unnaturally, his sword humming with dark energy as he shot toward me like a ghost of death.

But the chains... they understood.

A single thread lashed out, splitting into dozens, weaving through the fire like it had memorized its pattern. The moment the flames should have struck, the chains coiled tightly, suffocating the oxygen around them, snuffing the fire out before it could breathe.

Another chain shot upward, its movement so precise that it met Levi's blade mid-strike. The impact should have severed it, but instead, the chain twisted, bending his sword's angle just slightly—just enough for him to miss. His expression flickered, just for a moment.

These cursed chains weren't just reacting. They were predicting and adapting.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. The cursed chains... they were changing. I thought they had already reached their limit, that they were nothing more than desperate extensions of my survival instincts. But now... now they moved differently. Not just reacting—no, they were thinking. Calculating.

A shiver crawled up my spine. This wasn't just instinct anymore. This was something else. Something far more terrifying.

And yet... as the weight of that realization settled in, I felt it. A clarity cutting through the fear. If this was what I had become—if this was the power I now held—then I would use it. They weren't just moving by my survival instincts... or maybe rather my murderous instincts...

These chains—my chains—were alive with it.

My mind was in chaos of doubt and resolve. There were choices—limited, but present. I could keep defending, waiting for an opening, but that meant prolonging the fight, wearing myself down against three monsters and a ghost pulling their strings. I could go all in, throw everything into overwhelming them, but that would leave me defenseless if I failed. Or... I could—

No... That's my only option now. I have to do it.

It's time for him to return.

The earth walls surrounding the Silent Executioner crumbled, and Kiel, finally freed, joined the other two. Three monsters aiming at my throat. Their combined presence made the air suffocating.

They spoke in unison.

Ronan stretched his hand outward, flames swirling like a sun about to go supernova. His voice was arrogant, amused.

"Ignis Ultionis, Raze the Sky and Earth; Let the Inferno Consume All in its Path."

A black inferno erupted, its shape morphing into a fanged maw, screaming as it lunged forward, intending to swallow me whole.

Levi blurred, his presence flickering between reality and shadows.

"Godspeed awakening, Befall Shadow Eclipse—No Light Shall Reach You."

The entire battlefield darkened as countless shadow blades materialized midair, twisting unnaturally, forming a spiraling death trap. He was already gone from sight, the only hint of his movement the faint distortion of space where he passed.

Kiel extended his arm, a nervous smirk barely hiding the arrogance in his eyes.

"Unholy Shackles, Bind and Drain the Soul. Bestow me the greatest curse to engulf my enemy!"

The air cracked. The ground beneath my feet shattered. Countless ethereal hands of decay sprouted from the floor, reaching for me, their touch corroding even my chains.

The attack was unlike before. Their synergy had sharpened into something lethal. They weren't just fighting—they were erasing anything in their path.

And it worked.

For the first time, my chains struggled. The infernal heat melted their edges, shadows cut through their defenses like paper, and cursed hands disrupted their structure. They couldn't deflect, couldn't counter fast enough. My instincts fought viciously, twisting the chains in ways beyond comprehension, but even they could barely keep up.

The Silent Executioner watched in silence, his cold, distant eyes observing from behind the thinning veil of destruction. His thoughts echoed in the abyss of his mind.

It's over.

The Queen of Curses has fallen.

He glanced back at the page of fate that never lied.

It had previously declared: "Reawakening Conquest Beings."

But now?

The ink bled. The letters warped. And then—

"???"

The Silent Executioner's eyes narrowed. That was impossible. The page didn't display uncertainty. It recorded truth. The direct, inescapable path of fate.

Yet now, fate hesitated.

His gaze darted back to the battle. And for the first time, a feeling foreign to him slithered into his core—

Fear.

Not because the chains were failing.

Not because the Queen of Curses was cornered.

But because of what she was doing amidst the chaos.

My trembling hand rested against Kaiser's chest, my eyes shut tight as I willed myself to be more than fear. More than doubt. My breath came in shaky bursts, but my resolve

remained unyielding. The cursed energy—the same that turned those chains into nightmares—now surged into him, not to destroy, but to rebuild.

His wounds began to close, the jagged flesh knitting itself together, slowly at first, then more rapidly. His missing arm reformed—bone, muscle, and flesh returning in a seamless, agonizing display.

A cold chill ran down her spine, the Silent Executioner's presence stirring like a storm on the horizon.

She's the one.

She's the one changing fate.

Her pulse quickened, and yet, the darkness she embraced only grew colder, her cursed magic swirling with determination. The world held its breath as the impossible unfolded before her.

That shouldn't be possible. His Lord had spoken of fate as law. No human, no existence, could alter its course. No force in the world could rewrite its script.

And yet, as he turned to Levi, Ronan, and Kiel—three calamities moments away from executing her—the book still displayed, "???"

They were seconds from striking her down.

Levi's shadows wove into a spear, aiming straight for her throat. Ronan's fire transformed into a serpent, ready to coil and burn her alive. Kiel's cursed hands converged, reaching to tear her soul from her body.

Celia pressed her hand harder against Kaiser's chest, pouring her heart into her instinct-driven cursed healing.

Then—

Kaiser's eyes snapped open.

The world stopped.

The Silent Executioner felt something shift, an invisible tremor shaking reality itself. His gaze fell to the book in his hands, eyes narrowing as the weight of the moment pressed down on him. He exhaled slowly, as if to steady the rising unease that crawled up his spine.

It was wrong.

The ink, once hesitant, now flowed with a purpose—unwavering and final. There was no doubt in its stroke, no second-guessing.

It had written its final decree.

"Your corpse will rot here."

The words echoed through the stillness, their chilling finality hanging in the air like a death sentence.

His heart stopped beating almost.

The Silent Executioner trembled, the page slipping from his grasp, his fingers twitching with a sense of fear he hadn't known in centuries. The future he once knew, the future he shaped with ease, was no longer his to read.

He wasn't the one who decided.

It was her.

The future had already shifted, and he... he was the one who was going to die.

## **Chapter 28 - The Broken Chains**

### **Kaiser's Perspective:**

Oh yes, I just love having an arm back. Feels much more natural, I must say so myself. As for my situation?

Not so loving.

Once again, the countdown between life and death had started. Enemies surrounded me from all sides, each far beyond my capabilities. My mind ran through countless questions, but all of them led back to the creature standing at a distance, watching everything unfold.

The one Celia called the Silent Executioner.

"Kaiser! You're back!!" Celia's voice rang out, her tone laced with relief, warmth—something I hadn't heard in a long time. She walked over to me with a smile, while several cursed chains floated around her, acting as an unseen force of defense.

Those chains lashed out in an instant, intercepting Kiel and Ronan, pushing them back before they could get too close. But the moment I saw her drop her guard and step toward me, I moved without thinking.

In one swift motion, I closed the distance and pulled her into my arms, my instincts kicking in as a blur of movement registered at the edge of my vision.

I saw someone moving in God-Speed in the corner of my eyes.

It was Levi.

His blade, coated in a shadowy aura, streaked toward Celia with lethal precision. I was already shifting my weight back, prepared to intercept with pure hand-to-hand technique—blocking a Sword Saint's strike without a weapon wasn't exactly ideal, but I had no other choice.

Yet, before his attack could land, Celia's cursed chains whipped through the air, colliding against Levi's blade mid-swing, stopping him dead in his tracks.

...Wait.

What??

You're telling me Celia can just stand here and these things will fight for her? Since when? I was unconscious for, what, an hour? And she suddenly has self-operating magic?

Where was this when I was blatantly getting teamed at?!

I looked down at Celia, who was still nestled against me, her arms wrapped securely around my waist. Right. I pulled her in because I thought she'd be caught in the attack—but now she was holding onto me just as tightly.

Her voice trembled. "I-I'm so happy... You're back, Kaiser..."

Tears welled in her eyes, her grip tightening. A deep part of me softened at the sight. It wasn't hard to piece together what she must've thought—seeing me unconscious, an arm missing, barely breathing after that last fight. She must've thought I wasn't going to make it.

The realization hit me in a way I didn't expect.

Gently, I placed a hand on her head, running my fingers lightly through her hair in reassurance. "I'm back, Celia. And I'm doing good." My voice was steady, calm. "Are you okay—"

"Please don't sacrifice yourself again..." she cut me off, her voice breaking slightly as she sobbed.

...Yeah. That sounded like something I would do, wouldn't it?

There was no doubt now—she had tapped into something new. Magic, and not just any magic. Cursed magic. The homing chains, the cursed healing magic she used on me—it all pointed to that fact. Which only raised more questions.

But first, priorities.

I exhaled lightly, shifting my hand to her shoulder. "Celia, I know. Pull yourself together. We can talk about that later. First, tell me what's going on."

She sniffled, wiping her tears with the back of her sleeve before stepping back slightly, focusing her attention on the battlefield again.

And then she explained everything.

How, after I lost consciousness, Ronan had fully merged with the King of Flames demon, transforming him into something beyond human. How Levi, the 'Sword Saint of God-Speed,' had been fighting to protect both her and Kiel. And how Kiel—yes, Kiel of all people—was apparently on our side now. As if the world wasn't already throwing enough absurdities at me.

And then, the true problem. The Silent Executioner.

An unknown entity, appearing from the shadows, disrupting the fight between Levi and Ronan, and taking control of all three of them. Celia described him as cold, merciless, capable of foresight.

A being that manipulated others like puppets on strings.

"That's... hard to believe," I muttered, rubbing my temples. "But I know you wouldn't lie."

"Thank you, Kaiser! Stay with me—I'll protect you." Her voice carried a protective determination, which was... adorable, honestly.

I couldn't help but chuckle at the thought. "Celia, you still haven't told me what these powers and chains are."

She hesitated. "It's... a long story. I'll tell you later."

I narrowed my eyes at her, giving her a quick wink. "Fine. But I'm holding you to that."

Now, back to the main problem at hand.

Levi, Ronan, and Kiel were already testing the limits of Celia's cursed chains, attacking in perfect synchronization.



Levi blurred between gaps, his speed turning him into a phantom that slashed at every blind spot. Ronan, now infused with the King of Flames, roared as torrents of hellfire engulfed his body, his fists coated in molten destruction as he hammered against the barriers.

And Kiel, controlled or not, was unleashing devastating cursed magic, his black tendrils slamming into the chains with relentless force.

Yet, the cursed barriers deflected their magic, nullified their physical strikes, and adapted to each attack, moving on their own.

Our current defense relied entirely on Celia's instincts. A gamble.

I analyzed our situation further. Kiel had an A-Rank understanding of cursed magic, something not to be taken lightly. Ronan, in his current state, was pushing past A+ territory, and Levi? S-Rank. Without question. I never liked that guy, and somehow, he just had to be here to make my life harder.

And then there was the Silent Executioner.

A mind-controlling tactician who, if he had been born a century earlier, might have actually been terrifying. But unfortunately for him, he was born in the wrong era. The era where I exist.

Unlucky him.

Because I know how to break his spell.

"Hey Celia! Can you use elemental magic?" I said, turning my head to her as I saw Kiel about to cast another cursed magic spell.

"What do you mean, Kaiser?" Celia said, confused.

Obviously, she didn't know any magic. Everything up until now had been pure instinct. My only choice was to adapt to her instincts and determine a way to win this.

"It's the magic that controls elements. I guess you don't know how it works," I said.

"Don't worry, Celia. Just focus on staying in the middle of the chains," I added, reassuring her she was safe.

"Okay, Kaiser..." she said while sighing, trying to release tension.

Soon, Kiel was done casting, and tendrils of vines swarmed at us, roaring high into the sky to whip the barrier. But her chains gathered together, deflecting the attack before spiraling around it and breaking it apart with pure raw force.

It was seriously breaking earth-layered cursed attacks that easily?! Gosh, I wish I could use magic. But that was the click—the idea I needed to win this battle.

I saw Ronan preparing to use another hellfire spell, judging from the chanting, and I knew I had to adapt fast and get weapons.

"Celia! Focus on me and think I'm some sort of a threat!" I said to Celia.

She turned her head in pure confusion. "What are you saying, Kaiser!?"

Soon, a chain rushed in my direction due to her confusion, and as it was about to grab me, I caught it with one hand, spinning around before slamming it onto the ground to stop it.

"Oh my god, Kaiser! I didn't mean—no, how did it attack you?!" Celia said, pure shock and terror in her voice. Guilt seeped through, as if she truly thought she had hurt me.

"Don't worry, Celia, it was part of my plan. Focus back on them for me, please?" I said, reassuring her.

"Okay, I will, Kaiser. I'm so sorry for that." She then focused back on them.

Soon, I took the chain in both of my hands and pulled it apart, breaking it in half with my raw strength. I could hear Ronan's chant about to end. Without hesitation, I ran out of her chained area, making myself completely vulnerable.

"KAISER!?" Celia screamed, her heart racing as I left the presence of her protection.

The chains rattled in my grip as I rushed toward Ronan. His incantation was almost complete, the air thick with heat as fire spiraled into the shape of a phoenix. The beast's molten eyes locked onto me, and with a single cry, it burst forth, flames expanding outward like a tidal wave of hellfire.

I tightened my hold on Celia's chains, feeling the raw weight of metal against my skin. The flames drew closer, touching at the edges of the battlefield, threatening to consume everything in their path. But instead of dodging, I did the one thing no sane person would do—I ran straight through it.

As the fire surged, I twisted the chains in my grip, wrapping them around my left arm in tight coils, layering them into a makeshift gauntlet. The metal glowed orange from the heat, burning into my skin, but I didn't waver. Pain was temporary. Victory was absolute.

I lifted my right hand, forcing the second chain through the inferno, letting the searing flames mold the metal. Fire met steel, and under my grip, it began to take shape—warping, twisting, reforging into something deadly.

A sword.

The moment it hardened, I clenched the hilt, testing the weight. It wasn't perfect, but it would do. Ronan's phoenix screeched in fury, fire gathering at its beak for another blast, but I was already prepared.

The beast unleashed a final, all-consuming wave of fire. The battlefield turned white-hot. There was no escaping it.

I didn't try.

Instead, I braced myself, lifting my left arm—the arm wrapped in chains—forming a barrier of steel between me and the flames. The heat pressed against me, burning through the gaps in the metal, scorching my skin underneath. The pain was unbearable, but I didn't break. I could endure.

Game is game.

For every pain, there's victory.

Or so I thought.

Because just as I was about to push through the flames, a sudden wall of chains surged in front of me, forming an impenetrable barrier against the fire. The wave crashed against them, dispersing harmlessly into dying embers.

I exhaled sharply, my smirk faltering. That wasn't my doing.

"DON'T HURT HIM!"

Celia's voice cut through the battlefield, raw, filled with desperation. I turned, and my stomach twisted at the sight.

She had focused every single one of her chains on protecting me.

Which meant she had left herself vulnerable.

Kiel took advantage first, his cursed magic slithering around her defenses, weakening her control over the chains. But that wasn't the real problem.

Levi was behind her.

My blood ran cold.

He moved in an instant, a blur of godspeed. Celia barely reacted in time—her instincts saving her at the last second—but not fast enough. The edge of his sword cut deep into her shoulder.

"Ah... ow..."

Celia stumbled forward, her hand flying to the wound, blood staining her fingertips.

My grip on the sword tightened, my knuckles turning white.

Levi didn't stop. He blitzed forward again. The chains—her chains—were still guarding me, not her.

"CELIA—!"

Another strike landed, this time across her back. She cried out in pain, her body shuddering, but still—still—she refused to move her defenses away from me.

What was she thinking?!

Levi wasn't finished. His sword gleamed under the firelight, aiming for her neck. A killing blow.

No.

I moved before I could think, before pain, before logic. I ran right through the dying remnants of the flames, my body screaming in agony as my burned skin cracked from the movement. But I didn't care.

I pulled the remaining chains in my left hand, snapping them forward in a wide arc. The weight of the metal dragged through the air, striking Levi's path, slowing him just enough.

And then—

Steel clashed against steel.

I barely intercepted his blade in time, my newly forged sword grinding against his shadowy strike. Sparks flew between us, our weapons locked, the sheer force of his attack rattling my bones.

I glared at him. Cold. Unforgiving. The temperature of the battlefield didn't matter anymore. The pain didn't matter anymore.

How dare he hurt her?

How dare he, right in front of me?

Celia's hands trembled as she clutched her wounded shoulder, but her focus never wavered from me. Even with pain dulling her expression, her concern for me overshadowed her own suffering.

"Kaiser, are you okay?" she asked, her voice laced with worry.

I barely let her finish before my anger took over. "ARE YOU INSANE?!" My voice was sharp, louder than I intended. "Why did you focus on me?! You should've kept yourself safe!"

She flinched, taking a step back. The shock in her eyes twisted something inside me. I wasn't angry at her—no, I was furious at myself. Furious that she got hurt trying to protect me.

Furious that her kindness always put her in danger.

But then, before I could say anything else, Celia did something I didn't expect. She stepped forward.

"I just couldn't see you in pain because of me, Kaiser." Her voice was small but unwavering, filled with vulnerability. "I know I shouldn't have, but... seeing you hurt, it—it felt worse than getting hurt myself."

My anger wavered, replaced by something I didn't quite understand. Her words hit deep, sinking into the parts of me that I kept locked away. The parts that had long forgotten what it felt like to be cared for.

I exhaled slowly. "Celia..." My voice was quieter now, softer. "You don't have to do that for me. You shouldn't do that for me."

Her eyes met mine, unwavering. "But I want to."

I sighed, running a hand through my hair. "Then at least let me make sure you don't get hurt because of it. You can protect me all you want, but only if you promise to protect yourself first."

Celia hesitated, then gave a small nod. "Okay, Kaiser."

She said it, but I could tell she didn't fully believe it. She was too stubborn, too selfless. It made my chest ache in a way I wasn't used to.

I reached out, gently brushing a stray lock of hair from her face. "Good. Now focus on healing yourself, alright? I need you at full strength."

She hesitated again, but the warmth in my voice must have reassured her. She sighed and placed a hand over her wound, whispering a spell as the cursed healing magic began to mend her injuries.

I watched the faint glow trace over her skin, slowly sealing the damage Levi had inflicted.

Levi.

My fingers clenched into a fist as I turned away from Celia. In the distance, a blur of movement flickered—inhumanly fast, untouchable.

It was time I faced the Sword Saint himself.

I took a step forward, my grip tightening around my makeshift sword. The chains hummed with the heat of Ronan's flames, molded by the pressure of battle into something deadly.

Levi had hurt her.

He wasn't getting away with it.

Levi's presence is like a blur—one second, he's there, the next, he's gone, striking from an angle I couldn't have predicted. His God-Speed makes it seem like he's everywhere, attacking with a precision that would bring any normal man to his knees.

He's fast, too fast. But I'm not normal.

I move—no, I flow—in response. My chain gauntlet clinks as it coils tighter around my forearm, the chains flickering with the faintest flame, not enough to give away my hand yet. I dodge, my body reacting before my mind even has time to process the danger, just barely avoiding the swipe of Levi's sword.

He attacks again, but this time, I'm ready. My gauntlet moves in a blur, snapping out to catch the edge of his sword. The force of the strike reverberates through my arm, but I hold steady. I feel the pressure building. It's working.

I know how this goes. A few more exchanges, and I'll have him.

Levi's not foolish. I can feel him adjusting, watching me closely, waiting for an opening. I can hear him mutter something under his breath as his hand weaves a chant, "Rise, Earth—shatter his defense!" The ground beneath us trembles, and rocks shoot upward like missiles, forcing me to jump back.

I move just in time, but the impact from the debris knocks me off balance in the air for a split second. It's just long enough for Levi to close the gap, his sword striking at me. I

deflect the blow with my chain gauntlet, but the force pushes me back. Damn, he's good.

But I'm better.

I don't back down. I don't retreat. I've been in worse situations, faced impossible odds, and come out on top. I can do this.

As Levi swings his sword again, I raise my makeshift chain sword—burning with the remnants of flame—and prepare myself. My focus narrows.

Levi's stance shifts again, a flash of magic flowing in his eyes. I see the faintest flicker of air—a sonic wave, maybe? I know his tricks too well. I leap backward just as a blast of air surges toward me, aiming to knock me off my feet. But Levi's already moved, following up with a shadow strike from behind.

Too predictable.

I block the incoming shadow with my chain gauntlet, the impact sending a shockwave through my body, but I hold my ground. There's no panic here, just calculations. Every strike Levi makes, every attack, every movement is part of my plan.

And now, it's time.

I stopped moving.

The world around me slows—as I focus on him solely. His strikes were a blur in front of me, but they no longer matter. My breath evens out, my heart steady. This is it. This is my moment.

Levi doesn't understand. Why was I suddenly standing still instead of moving to dodge?

He's so fast, so reckless, but he's not as precise as I am. I've been studying his every move, every twitch of his muscles, every flick of his wrist. And now, as the battle reaches its peak, I'll show him what happens when you make a mistake.

I don't need to move to defend myself from.

Levi charges again, his sword a blur of deadly motion. But this time, I don't move to avoid. Instead, I raise my gauntlet and sword in a fluid motion, locking both in place. The chains in my gauntlet twist, the metal stretching, and the flame around my makeshift sword ignites once more, the heat intense enough to scorch the very air around me.

I move my hands, preparing to block everything.



Faster than anything humans should.

Every strike from Levi is blocked—deflected—as if time itself bends around me. The chains blur in the air, moving so fast it creates an explosion of force around us. Miniature shockwaves pulse with every clash.

The sound is deafening—metal scraping against metal, the air crackling, energy bursting outward in all directions. The ground beneath us cracks as the force builds, but I remain standing my ground, my focus absolute.

Levi falters for the first time.

He's not used to someone matching his speed. He hesitates, just for a moment, trying to gauge the situation. That's all I need. My chain sword strikes with a savage force, aimed at his side, but he barely manages to parry. He's faster than most, but even he can't keep up with the sheer precision of my strikes now.

But I'm done letting him play.

The next strike hits with a brutal crack, sending Levi stumbling back. I'm not sure what I see in his eyes. Surprise? Fear? It doesn't matter. He knows now.

But then, like a cornered animal, he mutters another chant, his voice cold and deliberate. "Burn, flame of the skies! Consume his will!"

A column of fire erupts in front of him, aimed directly at me. It's fast, it's lethal—but I'm already there.

I moved.

We've exchanged over 4,000 hits. Every strike, every parry, every clash. In just one minute.

My gauntlet and chained sword burn with unrelenting heat, the chains crackling with each strike. Levi's shadowy blade, dark and foreboding, glows a deep red from the sheer force of impact.

We didn't slow down, not even hesitate for a second. There's no room for weakness. Each blow is a promise, a declaration of intent. His strikes are lightning fast, but mine are deliberate, each motion calculated for the kill.

As the fight rages on, the two of us continue to exchange blows—each strike reverberating through the air with violent force. My mind is a steel trap, each motion, each parry, calculated with precision. I'm not reacting. I'm predicting, anticipating. Every move Levi makes is one step ahead in my mind, while he's still caught in the whirlwind of his own speed and magic, striking from angles that seem impossible.

But it doesn't matter.

Because now... now I'm in the perfect spot.

The Silent Executioner controlling Levi thought he had me cornered, thought I was only focused on killing Levi. But that was never the goal. No—my true purpose was always far simpler than that.

The target wasn't Levi. It was the control over him.

With every strike, every movement, I was moving toward my objective—closer, closer to the heart of the control. Levi had no idea, and neither did the Silent Executioner. They thought they had me in a corner, that I would be consumed by the rage of the fight. But it was all a facade.

The moment is approaching.

I see it in Levi's eyes now—the confusion, the dawning realization that something has shifted. He doesn't know yet, but he will soon.

With my next attack, I will end this fight.

Not with the rage of the Decay. Not with the destructive force of everything I am capable of. No, this will be a clean cut. Precise. Silent. Final.

The chains of my gauntlet snap into place, and with a fluid motion, my makeshift sword of flames ignites. This time, when I strike, it will be the last. And I will make sure the Silent Executioner's grip on Levi is shattered.

I will end this fight without decaying.