

THE VILLAIN'S POV

Chapter 12 12: The Senate Council (3)

"Frey Starlight, why do you want to go to the Eastern Nightmare Lands of all places? If it's training you seek, our family is more than capable. So why choose such a dangerous place?"

Tsk... You old hypocrite.

Was he trying to act considerate? I knew he wanted me dead, so he might as well just admit it.

"The place I'm aiming for was once known as China. I've heard of powerful combat techniques there... and the Nightmare Lands provide an ideal environment for training."

I was starting to hate myself for all the nonsense I was spouting. I probably looked like a fool right now.

The spectators couldn't hold back their laughter—I heard chuckles from all around.

It made sense. I was a mere F-rank Awakener, a nobody, claiming I wanted to train in a land swarming with creatures beyond S-rank. It was ridiculous.

"Frey, what the hell are you—"

"Ada, be quiet. Your part is over."

I met Ada's gaze with cold eyes, making her flinch involuntarily.

I didn't care about the laughter. All I needed was for those rusted tin cans sitting up top to agree.

"Let me get this straight... You want to go to the Eastern Nightmare Lands—to what you called China—and you want our help to make that happen?"

"That's right. I can't cross the Oklas Mountains and the distance beyond on my own. I need the council to transport me to my destination—after that, I'll handle the rest myself."

I was certain at least one person in the family could get me there effortlessly... This was the Starlight family, after all.

"Is that your only request?"

"Actually... no."

"Before I leave for the Nightmare Lands, I want to claim two of the skills the family has collected."

Leonides raised an eyebrow as the laughter abruptly ceased.

"On what grounds do you demand these skills?"

What a stupid question.

"Simple."

I raised one finger.

"First, I am entitled to the skill granted upon reaching adulthood, just like any other member of the main family."

I raised a second finger.

"Second, based on an agreement between me and Ada, my sister will transfer her right—as the heir—to choose a skill, to me."

"And that makes it two skills."

I clasped my hands behind my back and smiled at the council before me. But at that moment—

"How ridiculous."

Another man rose from his seat and leaped off the platform.

He accelerated as he descended, landing with a thud on the hall's floor.

When I got a better look at him, I saw a man in his fifties—an older version of Emond.

It wasn't surprising. His white hair and black eyes matched perfectly.

"Uncle Jiyon," Ada muttered beside me, confirming my suspicion.

But the real question was—what did he want?

"Jiyon," Leonides called out.

But Jiion ignored him, taking a few steps toward me.

"Forgive me, Leonides, but I refuse to participate in this childish farce any longer."

A farce?

My mind raced—I hadn't expected this, nor did I know what this man wanted.

"Nephew."

"Did you know... I've always been bothered by the fact that you're still alive?"

"And it seems you, too, have realized it. That's why you're here, spouting nonsense about going to the Nightmare Lands."

"Even I can't roam freely there despite being an S-rank. Yet here you are, an insignificant F-rank, declaring your desire to go. So, I see—you want to die."

Jiion unsheathed a long sword from his waist.

"Jiyon!"

"Don't stop me, Leonides !."

"I understand that you wish to die. But to take two of our family's valuable skills with you?"

"Why waste time? Instead of letting some random monster kill you... let me do it here and now."

"No!"

Ada tried to step in, but she was swiftly suppressed.

"Stay out of this."

I instinctively took a few steps back as well.

Where the hell did this bastard come from?

His strides didn't slow. I could see concentrated energy shimmering around his blade.

White flames, condensed into a salt-like substance—it was the Stardust technique.

If he unleashed that aura on me, I wouldn't just die; I'd be erased.

"Are you kidding me?"

I glanced up at the elders—Leonidas still stood there, hands clasped behind his back.

I turned toward the audience—everyone averted their eyes.

No one was going to step in.

He was really going to kill me.

Wait...

Was this the plan all along?

Was Frey Starlight destined to die here from the start?

A cold sweat ran down my back.

I was wrong... I was arrogant...

I thought I knew everything because I was the author.

Jiyon stood before me, sword raised.

"Goodbye, disgrace of the family—Frey Starlight."

I was going to die.

I hadn't even lasted a month inside my own story.

Pathetic.

Jiyon's attack was too fast for me to track. I could only wait for the moment my body was obliterated.

But nothing happened.

Or rather—something did happen.

I didn't know when, but in an instant, a woman appeared before me.

Everything occurred in a single moment.

The strike I couldn't even see was stopped—by Carmen, who caught the blade of Stardust with her bare hand.

Without hesitation, she twisted elegantly, delivering a devastating kick that sent Jiyon flying, burying him into the hall's wall.

It all happened so fast that I stood there, speechless.

Jiyon's sword remained in Carmen's grip. I saw the veins in her slender hand bulge as she clenched her fist, shattering the blade completely.

"Look at yourself, Leonides... playing tricks on a mere weak child."

Carmen took two steps forward and stretched her body.

"You all know I don't care about this family's politics. I don't care who's on top or who's at the bottom, as long as I get a good fight."

"Isn't this pathetic? A whale-sized fish trying to swim with a tiny worm. Don't you agree, Jyion?"

Jiyon crawled out of the crater in the wall, veins bulging on his forehead.

"Carmen..."

"Listen well... If this kid wants to die, let him do it on his own terms. Everyone here has the right to decide their fate—no more, no less."

"One moment, he was about to be this family's lord, and now you want to kill him? Don't make me laugh."

"If anyone wants to take another step forward, they'll have to face me. That includes you too, old man."

Carmen unleashed an oppressive S+ rank aura, freezing everyone in fear.

Silver gauntlets materialized out of nowhere, covering her arms—she was ready for war.

Meanwhile, Jiyon stepped forward again, manifesting a sword of pure energy. His aura was strong, but far weaker than Carmen's.

But then—the balance shifted once again.

The Immortal Lion, Leonides, descended into the hall.

Jiyon smirked in satisfaction.

And for the first time—Carmen's expression darkened.

"Come forth."

"You got it, you old whore... Blllaarghh!"

Suddenly, Jiyon vomited a bucketful of blood, the result of Leonidas' treacherous attack.

"Huh?" Carmen hadn't expected that.

Jiyon collapsed to the ground, his head crushed mercilessly under Leonidas' foot, his expression remaining empty until the very end.

Finally, the Immortal Lion lifted Jiiyon's lifeless body and turned to face the entire audience.

"My apologies. It seems Jiyon still couldn't restrain himself, displaying behavior unbefitting of the council... Forgive him."

With that, Leonides tossed aside the body of the man who was supposed to be his peer, then stepped toward me.

But Carmen quickly blocked his path.

"No need. He will get what he wants... He can go to the Nightmare Lands, or any other land, and die as he pleases."

Carmen narrowed her eyes at the old man before her.

"I'll never understand what you're after, Leonides."

She sighed, then turned toward me—only to flinch the moment she met my gaze.

I stood there like a statue, my stare never wavering from Leonidas and the people around him.

'You bastards...'

My nails dug deep into the flesh of my palm.

'You better pray... Pray that I succeed and return to my world.'

'Because if I don't... I'll be the one burying your damned asses.'

Carmen chuckled.

"Do those really look like the eyes of a man seeking death?"