

THE VILLAIN'S POV

#Chapter 13 13: The Nightmare Lands (1) - Read THE VILLAIN'S POV Chapter 13 13: The Nightmare Lands (1)

-Frey starlight POV-

"Frey, are you okay?"

I saw a hand reaching toward my shoulder, but it recoiled the moment our eyes met.

"I'm fine, Ada... I just need some time alone."

"Alright, I'll go prepare what we agreed on... I'll be back soon."

I simply nodded, not bothering to say anything.

At the moment, I was sitting on a couch that had been oddly placed in the middle of a vast hall.

I had been asked to wait here a while ago, and that was exactly what I was doing.

I could feel dozens of eyes watching me from afar, so I didn't dare to do anything foolish.

Fortunately, my wait didn't last long.

The sound of high heels clicking against the floor echoed as my escort returned.

"Get up, Frey. Let's get this over with quickly."

I nodded and stood up, following Carmen.

"Everything has been arranged. Go inside and choose two skills, but neither can exceed Rank D. Sorry, but that's the best you're going to get."

"That's fine."

I didn't care much about the skill rank—I was more concerned with the skill itself. After all, I could develop any skill over time.

"Damn it, why do I have to babysit?"

Carmen had been grumbling like this from time to time ever since she was assigned to escort me.

"Sorry."

"Don't apologize. It was my choice, so I have no right to complain..."

"Anyway, your situation is pretty bad, little Frey."

"I know." I sighed. My standing in this family was worse than I had anticipated. If I hadn't somehow won Carmen over, I'd probably be dead by now.

"Trust me, it's even worse than you think. The moment you choose your skills, one of the elders will immediately transfer you to the Nightmare Lands."

"You won't have time to do anything... You'll find yourself alone in the Nightmare Lands. Isn't that laughable? I mean, you were supposed to become a lord today..."

"Yeah, it's pathetic." I forced a laugh. The feeling of being despised and having a target on my back was new to me.

Somehow, I had ended up on a path that would lead straight to my death... Even the old Frey would have survived until at least the start of the Temple Arc.

I couldn't believe my choices were worse than the old Frey's.

But it didn't matter... I needed every possible reason to hate this world.

That hatred was the only fuel keeping me going.

Carmen ran a hand through her hair, an empty expression on her face.

"But little Frey, maybe you deserve this, don't you think? I don't know much about your family's affairs, but you've done so many foolish things that even I've heard about them. Maybe the heavens finally decided to punish you."

I chuckled at her words.

"I've already been punished..."

From the moment I was brought into this world.

"Alright, we're here."

I looked ahead to see a massive door with a giant eye in the center. The eye was locked onto us, glowing red.

A mechanical voice echoed from nowhere.

"Identity confirmed. Welcome back, Miss Carmen."

Miss?

I noticed Carmen's satisfied expression... This old woman was in her eighties, yet she still enjoyed being treated like a young lady.

Anyway, the door opened before me, and I stepped forward.

"Remember, Frey—two skills, and neither can exceed Rank D. I'll wait for you here."

"Understood."

I entered alone as the door closed behind me.

So... here we go.

I found myself inside something resembling a library. I was only allowed access to the first and second floors, where the weakest skills were located.

Walking calmly, I scanned the various shelves.

Skills and techniques were stored in either books or scrolls. One only needed to learn the correct formula to master a skill, so I had to choose wisely.

I already had a few ideas in mind—every skill I aimed for was meant to counter the protagonist's abilities.

I wandered for several hours, narrowing down my choices little by little.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, I made my decision.

Contrary to my expectations, there were quite a few good skills among the Rank D ones, making my selection difficult.

I looked at the two scrolls in my hands:

[Phantom Steps] - Rank D

A skill that increases the user's speed by 10% and makes their footsteps silent—even while running.

[Hawk's Eye] - Rank D

Enhances the user's vision accuracy and allows them to see long distances.

Alright, these should be good enough.

I walked toward the door, and the same eye scanned me once again, this time inspecting the skills in my hands. In the end, the door opened, allowing me to exit.

Outside, I found Carmen lounging on the same couch as before. Was she bored?

She stood up as soon as she sensed my presence, clear boredom written all over her face.

"So? What took you so long? What did you choose?"

She grabbed the skill scrolls from my hands, gave them a quick glance, and her expression immediately soured.

"Phantom Steps... A skill suited for assassins, but not very useful in direct combat. And Hawk's Eye... A skill fit for snipers."

"Frey, remind me of your class again?"

I answered nonchalantly.

"I'm a swordsman."

Her expression worsened after hearing that.

"Damn it. If you told me you picked at random, I would have believed you. But you took all that time to choose skills that don't even suit you? Why did you waste my time in the first place?"

I shrugged.

"Sorry, but these are the ones I want."

"Fine, do whatever you want."

She handed the skills back to me, and we headed to another location.

She might think they're useless, but in reality... after the modifications I planned to make, these skills would become natural counters to one of the protagonist's abilities.

Eventually, we reached a separate room, and Carmen stepped aside.

"Let's finish this quickly. Inject your power into the scrolls, then read what's written on them. That'll be enough."

I nodded and did as she instructed.

A purple aura surrounded my hands as I transferred my energy into the scrolls.

Instantly, the characters on them began to glow. As I read them aloud, I felt something being engraved into my body.

I repeated the process for both skills until the inscriptions vanished completely.

"Alright, we're done here."

Carmen walked out, and I followed behind her.

As I walked after her, I now possessed three skills—though one of them was completely useless.

Let's test this out.

"Hawk's Eye."

I activated the skill, and instantly, my right pupil shifted into a vertical slit.

My vision changed completely. The accuracy of everything around me increased drastically, and I could zoom in on distant objects.

Amazing.

This was the first time I had properly tested a skill...

"Hey there, boy. Let's save the skill test for later."

As expected from Carmen, she noticed that I had activated the skill.

"Understood."

I deactivated Hawk's Eye and resumed walking beside her.

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"Alright, we're here."

The family's headquarters resembled a massive labyrinth, so moving from one place to another took some time.

At the moment, we were inside a small room filled with an overwhelming amount of aura. I could feel it clearly, pricking my skin.

Inside the room stood a masked man who seemed to have been waiting for us for some time.

Carmen nodded at the man before her, and he returned the gesture.

"Let me introduce you. This is one of the family elders—his name is Khalifa."

"It's fine, Carmen. I'll take it from here."

His voice was hoarse beneath that mask.

"Will you?"

"Yes, I promise. No tricks."

"We'll see about that."

Khalifa stepped toward me. He was covered from head to toe in black, making him look even more mysterious.

"Shall we begin?"

"Begin what?" I asked, confused.

"My ability is simple. I will use the aura in this room, combined with my own power, to open a portal. That portal will take you to the place you seek."

"But first, I need to know exactly where you want to go."

"Oh, I see."

I didn't know the precise location of the Ten Thousand Shadow Steps technique, but I did have the general coordinates of the region.

After sharing what I knew, Khalifa immediately got to work.

"Very well. I'll begin at once."

The energy in the room began swirling around him as he started forming a portal in front of us.

"Normally, I wouldn't need to use the aura here, but the place you want to go to is really far."

Contrary to his intimidating appearance, the elder was surprisingly chatty.

It's worth noting that he was an awakened being of S-Class.

It didn't take long—within just an hour, a silver portal shimmered before us.

Khalifa took a step back, his hand glowing with the same silvery light.

"Extend your hand, Frey."

Hesitant, I glanced at Carmen, but seeing that she didn't object, I did as he asked.

The moment I did, the aura transferred to my right hand.

I jerked my hand back, inspecting it. The silver aura had formed a geometric circle etched with strange symbols.

"No need to worry. This mark will always guide you back to the portal."

"You are now the master of this gate. The circle on your hand is your key—and your guide."

"I see. Thank you."

'So this is my only way back...'

Khalifa nodded.

"My work here is done. When you're ready, step through the portal. Once you do, you'll find yourself in the Eastern Nightmare Lands."

I took a deep breath. This was it... I was likely marching to my death.

Doubt crept in at the last moment, but unfortunately—

There was no turning back now.

"Frey."

A familiar female voice called my name.

I turned to see Ada standing there.

"You're late... Ada. I was just about to leave."

She didn't reply. Instead, she simply walked up to me.

She took my left hand and slid a ring onto my ring finger.

I looked at the silver band on my hand.

"This?"

"It's a Dimensional Ring."

"Oh."

So it was one of those storage items with a pocket dimension inside.

"This ring is the best I could find. Inside, I've prepared enough food and water to last you an entire year."

"I also packed plenty of clothes. There are various weapons, including all the guns you requested—along with ten thousand aura-infused bullets."

"I added some armor and a variety of training potions, including health recovery elixirs, healing serums, and more, and more—"

I looked at Ada as she continued listing the various items inside the ring. A warmth spread through me—she reminded me so much of my mother.

I let out a small chuckle and gently stopped her.

"That's enough, Ada. You've done more than enough... Thank you."

She fell silent for a moment before shaking her head slightly.

"I was just fulfilling my part of the deal."

"Yeah, I know."

I turned to face the silver portal waiting before me.

I tossed the backpack off my shoulder and stored it inside the ring.

My laptop was in that bag—it was good that I carried it everywhere.

Stretching my muscles a bit, I took a deep breath.

I was about to step into the Nightmare Lands.

Carmen leaned against the wall, watching me.

"Frey... To be honest, I don't think you'll survive. But good luck anyway. You'll need it."

"I know... Thanks for everything, Miss Carmen."

I took my first step forward—

But a slender hand grabbed my wrist.

It was Ada.

"Frey... Isn't there another way? Do you really have to go to the Nightmare Lands of all places?"

I gently removed her hand.

"Yes. I have to."

"But—"

"It's okay... Ada, even if I die, no one will care. This is something I must do."

With heavy steps, I walked toward the portal.

Ada watched my back with sorrow in her eyes.

Looking at the frail shoulders of her little brother, she felt a deep bitterness inside.

She reached out for him—

But it was useless.

He was already gone.

Frey Starlight had stepped into the Nightmare Lands.

Alone.