

The World 64

Chapter 64: The Battle At The Black Market, Part 1 (4)

Norman proved to be a formidable opponent, showcasing both strength and skill as a fighter. Even with all five of us attacking simultaneously, he managed to keep up, utilizing his skill, Portal Creation, to strike us with his sword even when we were seemingly out of range. Fortunately, I had figured out a way to counter his technique.

"If you sense a sudden shift in the space around you, dodge or block!"

Every time he activated his skill, the atmosphere quivered, and there was a swift but noticeable shift. It lasted only a fraction of a second, but it provided enough time for us to evade his attacks.

"You can dodge all you want, but it's futile!" Norman declared, his eyes wide with murderous intent, a menacing grin stretching across his face. It was the look of a seasoned killer. I had encountered many murderers in the past and dealt with them, but this was the first time witnessing such a chilling expression.

Indeed, dodging alone wouldn't be enough if we couldn't land effective blows against him. Norman skillfully redirected the impacts of our attacks, leveraging his skill to manipulate the direction of force. In addition to his swordsmanship, he demonstrated exceptional footwork.

There also lingered the constant threat of reinforcements arriving. In that case, our only viable option would be to escape this perilous situation.

Escaping would pose another daunting challenge, especially with someone like Norman, who likely wouldn't allow anyone daring to cross him to escape without facing repercussions.

Suddenly, I sensed a shift in the atmosphere, a chilling presence enveloping everything around me. The air turned cold, not just in my immediate vicinity, but throughout the entire area. Reacting on instinct, I ducked, narrowly avoiding a sword that slashed inches above my head, a few strands of my hair severed in the process.

"What the...? Did he tear open a rift in space to slice through us? But that slash is too substantial for a mere dagger," Miss Arianne exclaimed, her voice tinged with disbelief.

"He must've augmented his dagger, similar to how he multiplied his hands. Stay sharp, everyone. His skill conceals much more power than meets the eye," I cautioned my allies, stealing a quick glance to ensure their readiness.

My attention halted when I saw one of our allies sprawled on the ground, blood pooling around her.

"Neither must have dodged too late...!" exclaimed Miss Arianne.

"It's a damn shame she's the only one who got a taste of my blade," Norman sneered, licking the blood off his dagger.

We immediately put some distance between us and Norman. We couldn't be certain if his skill had any range limitations, but keeping a distance seemed safer than being within striking range of someone as dangerous as Norman.

"It looks like... this mission failed because of my recklessness."

Mr. Herks clicked his tongue, "You're damn right, you brat. Why the hell did you just charge at him like that?"

"If you had stayed in your position, none of this would have happened," Mr. Seria exclaimed angrily.

I absorbed their anger silently, not bothering to cast them a second glance. Their opinions meant nothing to me. My focus remained fixed on the opponent right in front of me.

"Tsk. Not even bothering to give us a second look. This chick really thinks she's a hotshot."

I took a deep breath, uncertain if defeating Norman was within our grasp. Strangely, my mind remained calm; there was an eerie absence of nervousness. The unfolding events felt surreal, but that was it. I had grown in the crucible of wars, desensitized to the stench of blood that I once abhorred. I'd taken more lives than the years I'd lived.

Even facing someone as dangerous as Norman failed to stir any emotions within me.

"Don't turn on each other," urged Miss Arianne. "Shredica's actions were reckless, but if we bicker now, it'll be just as reckless. Let's deal with the immediate threat before deciding the appropriate consequences for Shredica's recklessness."

"You're still planning to fight?" Norman asked casually. "Just surrender and let me end you swiftly. Everything you attempt will be futile against me."

The four of us moved to encircle Norman, who remained nonchalant in the face of our collective approach.

"I've already made it abundantly clear that none of you stand a chance against me, showcasing my skill. Yet, you persist in this futile struggle? Your deaths are inevitable, and all you're doing is delaying the inevitable."

"So what?" retorted Miss Arianne. "Do you think we'll just stand here and let you kill us?"

"That's the easier path here. It's better than futile resistance," Norman asserted.

"Why do you assume that? Do you truly believe we'll let you win without a fight? I'm not so feeble that a skill like that can intimidate me. I've faced and conquered many formidable adversaries. You don't even rank as my greatest fear among them."

"That may be so, but..." Norman took a deep breath as we completed our encirclement. Mr. Herks and Mr. Seria, as stealthy as cats, closed in from behind. "Even so, four or even five of you aren't enough to defeat me."

The trio—Mr. Herks, Mr. Seria, and Miss Arianne—sprang into action almost instantaneously. Mr. Herks attacked from the right, slashing, while Mr. Seria approached from the left, aiming to touch Norman with his Weight Manipulation skill.

The plan was to make Norman unable to stand by altering his weight. Meanwhile, Miss Arianne charged at Norman from the front, wielding her metallic stick.

Facing these three Silver Blade members, whose skills were just a notch below veteran Magic Knights, Norman moved almost sluggishly, seemingly bored. Initially, he effortlessly dodged Mr. Herks' attack with a slight movement, not bothering to use his weapon. Seizing the momentum, Norman swiftly pivoted and ruthlessly struck down Mr. Seria.

His blade, a common dagger, deflected Miss Arianne's attack before plunging into Mr. Seria's chest.

As he withdrew his sword from Mr. Seria's chest, Norman skillfully stepped back into Mr. Herks, who fumbled his attack. In that moment, both Mr. Herks and Miss Arianne found themselves in a direct line in front of Norman. Abruptly, Mr.

Herks crumpled to the ground, shock etched across his face. A few seconds later, his head separated from his body as Norman sliced his blade through a portal he created, cleanly severing Mr. Herks' neck. Subsequently, Norman snatched Miss Arianne's stick, kicking her in the stomach. She was sent flying several meters backward, leaving her weapon in Norman's hand.

Amidst the brutal ballet of combat, I stood frozen—a mere spectator to the relentless efficiency unfolding before me. The clash of weapons, the spray of blood, all concluded almost as abruptly as they began, leaving me with no opportunity to intervene.

Norman's eyes glinted with genuine intrigue as he examined the metallic stick, appreciating its craftsmanship. "What a cool weapon. I wonder who engineered this..." His predatory gaze turned towards me. "Now then, what will you do, lady? Will you charge at me like your foolish comrades, or will you surrender and become mine?" His tongue glided across his lips, a sinister glint dancing in his eyes.

A tremor coursed through me. What was happening? Why was I trembling?

"Huh?" Norman exclaimed, caught off guard. "Why the fuck are you grinning?"

Was I? Slowly, I unsheathed my dagger, allowing the blade to catch the dim light of the big moon from above as I examined my reflection. Oh, right. I was undeniably smiling. Yet, it wasn't a smile of joy or fear; this emotion coursing through me was something far more primal. A surge of adrenaline, a dark euphoria that I intimately recognized from countless blood-soaked battles on the front lines.

"...The fuck are you in ecstasy for?"

That must have been it. This is ecstasy. I'm thrilled. I'm a person who revels in violence. I'm akin to someone who delights in the act of killing. Molded by that life, I couldn't change.

These are the only emotions I have.

With a deliberate intensity, I released my bloodlust. Every ounce of it surged forth, directed straight at him. The moment this overwhelming wave of bloodlust enveloped the space between us, I witnessed his expression undergo a profound transformation.

"...What the?"

I steadied myself, feeling the rush of adrenaline coursing through my veins. Born into a world marred by the brutality of war, I wasn't originally from this realm. I was an outsider, a person who didn't belong. This world had known peace for quite some time, unlike the one I came from, where gunshots echoed daily, and the sight of blood was a ghastly routine.

I had no idea why I ended up in this world, but I despised it. More specifically, I detested the peace that permeated it. Despite my aversion to blood, the absence of it for so long made me realize that I didn't truly hate it as much as I thought.

That's why, in the midst of this fight, for the first time in five years, the first time since the war in the Southern East of the world, I felt euphoria again. I had nearly forgotten the feeling. I had to thank Norman for rekindling that sensation.

I lunged toward him and... sliced through his neck.