

VILLAIN 104

Chapter 104 Hellish Training

-Frey Starlight's Pov-

"Ugh... my head."

I woke up to a dull, throbbing pain, as if someone was drilling into my skull with something sharp. Waves of discomfort rippled through my body, each one a lingering echo of the beating I had taken.

I was lying on a simple bed in a small, dimly lit room, my upper body wrapped in bandages. Across from me sat a familiar woman, watching me with quiet intensity.

"Carmen..."

"You're finally awake."

I pushed myself up, peeling the bandages off my head.

"How long was I out?"

"A few hours. It's already night."

"And Frost?"

"I handled it. That was quite the bold statement you made back there. He came at you intending to kill. What the hell were you thinking?"

I forced a wry smile.

"I couldn't help myself. That was the only way I could fight back in that state."

Carmen gave a small nod, acknowledging my reasoning.

"As reckless as it was, you weren't wrong. You lost physically, but you won the psychological battle. If you were closer to his level and managed to shake him like that, you could've had a real chance to kill him."

"Haha, thanks, but I'm nowhere near his level anytime soon."

"Well... your talent is only A rank, after all."

Her words made me freeze for a split second before I quickly masked my reaction.

She doesn't know my talent has advanced to S rank. Let's keep it that way for now.

"Where's Ada?"

Carmen lit a cigarette before answering.

"She went to deal with the mess you made."

"I see... I caused her trouble."

She took a deep drag, exhaling a cloud of smoke that tickled my nose. The smell irritated me immediately.

"You do realize you're sitting next to an injured person, right? Shouldn't you at least refrain from smoking here?"

"What are you saying, kid? Are we in a hospital? Besides, you look fine to me, so don't act like some delicate little girl."

"I can't argue with you."

I placed my feet on the cold floor, attempting to stand, but Carmen stopped me.

"Wait. Ignore what I just said—you're in no condition to be moving yet."

I gave her a skeptical look before gesturing toward myself.

"But I'm fine."

"No, you're not. You were supposed to be out for a full day, then resting for several more. The fact that you're even awake after that beating is a miracle."

"Hm."

In response, I began unwrapping the bandages from my upper body.

Carmen's eyes widened in shock. My skin was smooth—completely unblemished, free of any bruises or wounds.

All that remained was a defined six-pack and a body that showed no trace of the brutal fight I had endured.

"Told you... I'm fine."

"You've already healed..."

She couldn't believe it. My recovery speed was unnatural—inhuman.

But I already knew this. My body wasn't normal.

Since the Shadow Sect incident, I had suffered hundreds—no, thousands—of injuries.

And if the wound wasn't fatal, I would always recover fully in less than a day.

It was an ability I didn't fully understand, something beyond my current comprehension.

Carmen, unable to suppress her curiosity, reached out and ran her fingers along my torso, tracing where wounds should have been. Her prodding was slightly annoying, but I didn't have the heart to stop her.

"Your body is a walking mystery."

"As long as it gets the job done, I'm not complaining."

I stood up and slipped on a black, long-sleeved shirt.

As I dressed, my eyes caught sight of her hand—the one holding the cigarette. It was wrapped in bandages.

"What happened to your hand?"

I asked without thinking. Hurting Carmen wasn't easy.

"Oh, this? I injured it earlier when I tried to block that kid's spear with my bare hand. I underestimated him a little."

I stared at her blankly. Was she brave... or just plain reckless?

"You seriously tried to stop a legendary spear like Rimshard with just your hand?"

"I wanted to test its sharpness."

I pulled up a chair and sat across from her as she recounted her fight with Frost.

He had gone all out against her. He was an S- rank, while Carmen was an S+.

Even so, by wielding Rimshard, he had managed to wound her—though he was still nowhere near defeating her.

Once you surpass A rank, the power gap between each level becomes massive. The difference between S and S- alone is enormous. Frost never had a real chance.

In the end, the fight was stopped by outside intervention—after Carmen completely crushed him.

But I had to admit... for him to reach that level at his age—no matter how much I disliked him—his talent was terrifying.

Winning the Victoriad three times was proof enough.

"What's your plan now? Training tomorrow?"

I sighed and nodded.

"Yeah... though I'll probably just get beaten up again."

"That's not exactly effective training."

She had a point. My body could endure training through sheer beatings, but my progress would be painfully slow.

At this rate, reaching C- rank—let alone my target, C rank—would take far too long.

I needed a better approach.

Fortunately, Carmen provided one herself.

"With your absurd healing ability... why not train with me?"

"...Are you serious?"

"Yeah. Though it might completely break you. I can't be your official instructor under the Moonlight Family's program. But I can train you at night."

I took a moment to consider.

"Morning beatings, recovery, then nighttime training..."

Carmen smirked.

"Too much for you?"

I grinned back.

"No~ It's perfect. I was planning to train on my own anyway. I'll make it a three-part regimen—solo training at dawn, getting beaten up by Frost, then training with you at night."

The Victoriad was approaching, and I had a mountain of difficult missions ahead of me.

If I wanted to succeed, pushing myself this hard was the bare minimum.

My ridiculous words made Carmen burst into laughter. Only lunatics would think the way I did... but luckily, she didn't say anything.

"Well then, let's begin right away."

"Yes, my lady~"

From an isolated room straight into an intense training session with Carmen...

Training with her was completely different.

She was strict, but unlike Frost, she pointed out the flaws in every movement I made.

Bit by bit, she stripped away the unnecessary motions in my attacks. She helped me control my aura better—more efficiently, more practically.

Just an hour was enough to leave me drenched in sweat.

Yet, I relished the heat, the burn in my muscles. It meant I was getting stronger.

Slowly, but surely.

My training with Carmen continued until Ada stormed in, turning the place upside down with her yelling.

The look on her face when she saw me wielding a sword instead of lying in bed was priceless.

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"Don't be like that... I already told you I'm sorry."

"Don't talk to me."

"Ah..."

After a quick bath, I was heading to my bedroom, which was right next to Ada's.

On our way, we passed several members of the Moonlight Family. They threw their usual looks of disdain my way, but I was long past caring. It didn't bother me anymore.

"Don't be too hard on him, girl... Sometimes, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

At Carmen's words, Ada turned to her with a cold expression.

"Carmen, I asked you to take care of him in case something happened—not to have him wielding a sword the moment he woke up."

Carmen merely shrugged.

"I was just granting his wish."

I ignored their conversation, focusing instead on my surroundings.

We were about to step into the Moonlight Family's grand hall.

The place was adorned with all kinds of artifacts and artwork.

I glanced at them absentmindedly.

For all the resentment I held for this place... I couldn't deny its beauty.

One painting after another passed before my eyes—until I suddenly stopped in front of one much larger than the rest.

A portrait of a man.

I couldn't move past it.

"...This..."

Carmen and Ada noticed my pause and followed my gaze. Naturally, they both recognized the man in the painting.

At the same time, they spoke.

"Lord Abraham..."

"Father."

I took a moment to take in his features.

The man looked like me—but older.

He appeared to be in his thirties, with a light beard, long black hair, and sharp features.

The father of this body's original owner.

Both Carmen and Ada grew visibly emotional as they looked at him.

"What is his portrait doing here?"

The question left my lips before I could stop it.

I didn't like seeing this man.

People called him my father, but my real father wasn't here.

Carmen answered, her gaze still fixed on the painting.

"You will find a similar portrait in every home of the great families... Abraham Starlight, wielder of one of the legendary swords, the 'Dark Sister'... the hero of the War of Light... the brightest star within the Starlight family... A hero like him is respected even among the other families."

Each word she spoke sent a dull ache through my head.

I had always ignored his existence, but this man was a mystery even to me.

After all, I had never written a single thing about Frey Starlight's father.

He wasn't supposed to be someone important. Yet somehow, his entire background had changed.

As if someone was meddling with my story from behind the scenes.

Another unexpected character... but this one was already dead.

I didn't want to look at him any longer, so I quickly turned away.

"Let's go."

The one who lingered the longest, her expression the most conflicted, was Ada.

But she didn't say much. She simply followed me.

That night, I collapsed onto my bed, exhausted—while new thoughts flooded my mind.

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At the break of dawn...

I woke at five in the morning, earlier than anyone else.

Grabbing my sword, I headed out to train.

My body still ached from last night's events, but I pushed through the fatigue and forced myself toward the training grounds.

I thought I'd be alone.

I wasn't.

Someone else was already there, pounding away at the training dummies with his bare fists, his knuckles slick with blood.

"...Danzo?"

I called his name, making him pause and turn to me.

"Morning training?"

I nodded.

"What about you?"

Danzo resumed his training, his voice indifferent.

"Same thing."

He was lying.

The blood on his hands told me he had been here for a long time already.

For a moment, I wondered what was driving him.

At this rate, he was going to lose it—even more than me.

If he awakened his true potential too early, he'd become yet another major obstacle for me in the Victoriad.

But I couldn't deny his efforts.

I could feel it. His hunger to grow stronger.

"How about a spar?"

"You sure it's fine to get beaten up by someone other than Frost?"

"Maybe things will go differently this time."

I raised my sword, locking eyes with Danzo.

He grinned, cracking his knuckles.

"By the way... you were pretty damn impressive back there. I liked the way you handled him."

"Thanks."

With that, we both lunged forward, colliding in a friendly match.

Strangely enough, that night, I ended up gaining two new training partners.