

## **VILLAIN 138**

### Chapter 138 A Struggle to the End

-Frey Starlight's Pov-

"A Demonic Contract."

I wasn't mistaken... Those distinct markings covering the upper half of Baylor's body...

So, he really did forge a contract.

The pressure around him had intensified significantly, and most of his wounds had healed.

On the other hand, visible cracks had begun to form on Rem's face, as if she were nothing more than a fragile piece of ice on the verge of shattering.

"Hey, hey, Ice Shard. You were the strongest summon under the Ice Queen herself... Are you already finished?"

"Shut your mouth."

For the first time, Rem stood up. The massive hole in her abdomen had already closed.

"How much longer do you plan to disgrace this family? The Moonlight Family has fought against demons and Ultras for countless years, yet you had the audacity to taint your blood with theirs... You, the one who was supposed to be this family's lord!"

Faced with Rem's fury, Baylor simply sighed.

"Is there any point in telling me this now? Ice Shard... Your Lady created you without eyes, so you're incapable of seeing the truth."

He opened his palm, and an orb of energy began to take form, growing slowly as it absorbed both icy aura and demonic power alike.

"You failed to understand reality... The reality that this empire never stood a chance against the Ultras, let alone the entities lurking behind them."

Drawing from the aura that had gathered within the Ancient Library for three hundred years, Rem began preparing to strike.

"And so what? Are we supposed to surrender? Follow your path and submit to a vile entity that devours life itself?"

Baylor smirked as he pushed the celestial sphere toward Rem.

"That's exactly right."

The devastating energy sphere crashed into the dozens of barriers Rem had conjured.

One after another, they shattered, yet they barely managed to deflect Baylor's condensed attack.

"I have no interest in dying alongside an ignorant empire... nor in fighting a war whose outcome was decided from the very beginning."

Baylor continued laughing as he launched a fresh assault with each passing word.

"Even your so-called Lady... The Founder, Semiramis, knew the truth."

"Don't you dare utter her name with that filthy mouth of yours!"

From between the cracks in her defenses, Rem launched a surprise attack—a destructive aura beam—yet Baylor deflected it with a single hand, effortlessly.

"It's the truth. After all, you and this entire library..."

"You're nothing more than a refuge... A sanctuary meant to preserve whatever could be saved when the day comes that the demons consume everything in this world."

"What...?"

Baylor suddenly appeared before Rem, swinging his fist.

"Even a blind tool like you should be able to grasp it, right?"

His punch halted just before striking her, as Rem froze the very space around them to block the attack.

Yet Baylor didn't care. He simply continued his relentless assault.

"This place we're fighting in right now... A space this vast was the only chance your Lady left for you all to survive. A library? Don't make me laugh."

His movements, his footwork—everything about the way Baylor fought belonged to a seasoned warrior, not just a Wave Controller who relied on ranged combat.

With the aid of his demonic contract, Baylor had become a near-perfect combatant.

That was the conclusion Rem reached through her heightened senses.

Their battle had obliterated all those elegant bookshelves that once defined this place.

Now, we stood amidst ruins, beneath a false sky.

As I observed everything through my Hawk Eyes, I glanced at the women beside me.

Ada was anxiously watching the fight unfold... I had no idea what she was thinking. Perhaps something entirely unrelated to this situation.

But I wasn't concerned with her right now.

What I needed... was the woman standing before us.

"Carmen..."

I called out weakly. Even speaking was a struggle at this point.

Carmen was completely dazed, a look of deep concern etched onto her face. She didn't seem to hear me.

"Carmen!"

"Huh?"

This time, she heard me loud and clear after I shouted.

She had forgotten my presence behind her, too fixated on what was happening before us.

When she turned to glance at me, I caught a flicker of pity in her eyes.

Blood, wounds, white hair, and a pale complexion...

To her, I must've looked like a zombie.

But I couldn't care less what she thought.

"Prepare to return to battle... We're moving soon."

Carmen hesitated. My command must have sounded strange, which was why she didn't respond right away.

"Return? You expect me to fight alongside that puppet against him?"

I nodded.

"I'm not asking you to fight beside her. But I will need you there soon."

Carmen had been following my orders for some time now, so I gave the command without a second thought. But judging by her reaction, she still didn't understand what I intended.

"Frey... I don't think this is a good idea."

This time, it was Ada who spoke.

"I doubt Carmen can make any real difference at this point."

Those words wounded Carmen's pride, but she didn't refute them.

She knew the reality of the situation better than anyone. Aside from Baylor and Rem, she was the strongest here. If she thought stepping in now would be meaningless, she had good reason.

Her fists clenched, her body glowing faintly.

"My fight with Eleanor drained me so much that I can't launch any large-scale attacks anymore—especially now that Baylor has gotten even stronger."

Her gaze shifted toward the chaotic battlefield as she gestured toward him.

"He was already stronger than me before. And now, with the demonic contract, he might have reached SS+ rank. If I interfere now, I'll only be a burden."

"That's not true."

"...What?"

She stared at me, searching for the flaw in her reasoning.

I pushed myself to my feet, though every movement felt like agony. Time was running out.

Taking a slow, steady breath, I forced the words out.

"Listen carefully—because even speaking is a struggle right now."

Carmen knew I didn't speak without reason. She had seen enough of me to understand that much.

Without hesitation, she raised a barrier around us, blocking Baylor from hearing what was about to be said.

I appreciated that trust. I couldn't ask for more.

"First, yes—Baylor's power has increased because of the contract. But not to the overwhelming degree you think, Carmen."

"What do you mean?"

"The demonic contract, in Baylor's case, will not make him stronger unless it comes from a demon far more powerful than him. The only ones who possess such contracts are the Lords, along with a select

few. In fact, I have seen these markings on his body before because I have faced someone else with the same contract."

Carmen and Ada tensed. Understandable. This was the first time I'd spoken about my encounter with Feyrith.

"The demon contracted with Baylor—the only one nearby—is Rank 19, Astaroth. He's SS+ tier, which means he's only one rank above Baylor. The only real benefits Baylor gets from this contract are enhanced physical abilities and that annoying regeneration. The only reason he turned the tide against Rem was because of that surprise attack and the wound he inflicted earlier... Otherwise, she would still be holding her ground."

You can deceive everyone else, Baylor. But not me. Not these eyes.

"That bastard is a master of mind games. He'll try to make you believe a lot of things that aren't true. Stay sharp, Carmen."

After a brief hesitation, she nodded. But whether it was her, Ada, or even Ghost standing behind them...

They all looked stunned.

No doubt they were all thinking: How does he know all this?

I didn't have the time—or the patience—to explain.

"The point is, Baylor hasn't necessarily gotten stronger. Which means you can still hurt him with your strongest attacks, Carmen."

I lifted my left hand.

"Come here."

Suddenly, violet markings ignited across my skin, pulsating violently. A heavy, suffocating aura filled the space around us.

My body was worthless now. I couldn't even kill a low-ranked Awakened.

But the power within me... that was a different story.

The ocean of SSS-rank aura inside me remained untouched, even after I had used Ignition earlier.

I was still far from mastering it.

"I'll send you back into the fight."

I couldn't fight myself—but I could give Carmen the power she needed to return.

Though, this was going to hurt like hell.

"Frey... just how much power do you even have?"

"Enough."

I pressed my hand against her back and inhaled deeply.

"You don't need to fight him directly. Just one strike."

"A surprise attack."

I'll play you at your own game, Baylor.

The aura surged from my body into Carmen.

She smiled widely, feeling that warmth once again.

"It seems the aura inside you is far stronger than I expected... I don't understand anything anymore, Frey. You've shattered every standard there is. Heh, but are you sure about this?"

I was listening, but I didn't respond. Transferring aura in my current state was already overwhelming.

"There are too many eyes here."

Given the barrier Carmen had set up, she was likely referring to Ada and Ghost.

I turned toward the silent assassin.

"Why haven't you left?"

I had no concerns about Ada, and the same could be said for Ghost. But I was a bit curious about him.

After all, he could leave the library anytime he wanted.

"You continue to surprise me, Frey Starlight."

Ghost lowered his head with a faint smile as the shadows around him expanded.

"I can leave whenever I wish since that doll is preoccupied over there. We're in a separate domain now, so all I need to do is spread my shadow here, away from the domain's core, and I'll be able to create a rift to escape... But I won't."

"Oh? And why not?"

With a serious expression, Ghost answered,

"I want to see how this battle unfolds. If you fail, I plan to take you by force and get you out of here."

His words caught me off guard.

Even in this situation, he had no intention of abandoning me?

With a wry smile, I realized that, without meaning to, I had altered the course of the story once again.

This is bad... It seems he has chosen me instead of Snow.

No matter.

I continued channeling aura into Carmen.

"Let's deal with Baylor first."

After that, everything else would be simple.