

## VILLAIN 164

Chapter 164 Surrounded by Foes

— Frey Starlight's Pov —

"It's been a while... Frey."

"It really has..."

I shook Snow's hand. The moment our palms touched, I could feel the hardened calluses that had formed from months of relentless sword training.

The protagonist I had crafted so carefully was growing stronger—perhaps faster than the plot itself.

To be honest, I wasn't exactly thrilled about that... but I had no choice but to face reality.

The elite students had gathered after what had just happened. Not everyone was present, but I saw plenty of familiar faces.

Most of Class B had shown up, while only a few from Class A were here.

The most notable among them were Snow and Ghost.

Clana Starlight—my cousin—was also present. Things between us were... tense. She flinched every time our eyes met.

I did my best to ignore it. I knew perfectly well why she was acting that way.

I didn't see Seris or the prince around. Selina was absent too.

Not much was said—most of the talk centered on the upcoming event:

The Island Trial.

"This time, the test will be comprehensive. It won't be just one-on-one duels—we'll be up against the upperclassmen."

Clana Starlight pointed out the facts.

"What about forming a team? You know... among us first-years. That way, we'll stand a better chance against the seniors."

Her words were clearly directed at Sansa and Snow.

The former, an unofficial princess of Class B, had a silent grip on her peers—thanks to both her influence and her connections. As for Snow, he was undeniably the strongest among the first-years. With Aegon absent, his presence carried the most weight.

Snow was firm as he shook his head.

"Sorry... but I'm against that idea."

Clana may have expected some pushback, but not an outright rejection. So, she pressed on.

"Why? The upperclassmen have a massive advantage over us. Won't we just be wiped out if we fight alone?"

Her argument had some merit—but not entirely.

"You're wrong on two fronts... Clana Starlight."

This time, it was Sansa who replied instead of Snow.

"Your suggestion is logical—I won't deny that. But it's useless when it comes to the Elite Classes."

The sharper students already understood what she meant.

Danzo nodded in agreement.

"I completely agree. It might make sense for the average students—those who need to band together to stand a chance against their seniors—but we're the elite."

He clenched his fists with fire in his eyes.

"I want to see how far I can go against them... the second and third-years."

Most of those present shared his sentiment.

Snow said nothing more—but his silence made one thing clear: he was already planning to challenge the senior elite.

Sansa nodded, then added:

"That was your first mistake. The second? This is the Victoriad. It's designed to let individuals shine. Forming a team would be meaningless, since we'll all be competing for points in the end."

Whoever lands the final blow earns the points—so you could already imagine the kind of conflicts that would cause.

And just like that, the team formation idea was shut down before it could take off. Clana had nothing more to say.

As a side note... I noticed the hint of disappointment on Adriana's face—she had clearly been in favor of the plan. Watching the visible changes in her expression was oddly entertaining.

In the end, everyone dispersed, and the stance of the first-year elite was clear:

"Everyone fights for themselves."

We didn't bother waiting to hear the opinions of the prince or the others who hadn't shown up. Their stance had been obvious from the start—they were against it.

I slowly retreated alongside Danzo.

As someone familiar with the personalities of the elite class, I knew that this decision wouldn't hold true for everyone present.

Only time would tell how accurate my assumptions were.

Once we'd gotten far enough, I stopped and lowered my gaze.

"It's time to show yourself... Ghost."

Danzo looked confused at first, then jumped back in shock as the darkness beneath me deepened and Ghost emerged slowly from within it.

"Damn it! What the hell?!"

He hadn't realized Ghost was so close—his reaction was genuine.

"...Didn't think I'd be noticed."

Ghost spoke in his usual calm tone, completely ignoring Danzo's shouting.

"Ah... I didn't sense you, but I figured you'd show up like this."

I corrected the misunderstanding immediately. The last thing we needed was for the future greatest assassin to start doubting his own skills.

"Ghost, you bastard! Can't you show up like a normal person for once?!"

It didn't seem like Danzo was going to let this go anytime soon.

His blazing eyes locked with Ghost's dead, emotionless stare.

It was a strange contrast.

"...Why would I do that?"

A vein popped on Danzo's forehead at the calm reply.

"So I don't freak out when you crawl out of Frey's shadow, Stupid asshole!"

"I can't let idiots like you notice me when I approach. That would defeat the entire point."

I wasn't surprised by Ghost's hostile tone—what shocked me more was how he said it without the slightest shift in his expression.

"Eat my fist, you creep!"

Danzo was about to throw a punch, but I restrained him just in time, grabbing him from behind.

"Calm down, Danzo... he's right."

My words were immediately misunderstood, as Danzo barked even louder.

"What the hell are you saying too, you pansy?!"

Sigh...

"Just listen! He came like this because what he wants to say isn't meant for others to hear!"

Finally, after some thought, Danzo calmed down a bit.

I sighed, realizing how much noise we'd made just now.

"Looks like all your efforts went to waste, Ghost."

He shook his head.

"It's fine. I expected his reaction, so I spread my shadow in advance and blocked the sound."

Between Ghost and me, Danzo didn't know how to respond anymore.

It was kind of entertaining. First, I predicted Ghost. Then Ghost predicted Danzo.

This dynamic was getting weirder by the minute.

Back to the matter at hand.

"So, Ghost... I'm guessing you came because of what happened with the Moonlight family, right?"

The silent assassin nodded. He didn't show it, but I could tell he appreciated how smoothly I guided the conversation.

"My name, along with this clown's, was erased from the official records. I assume that was done to protect us from being targeted or suspected."

It seemed Ghost had done some serious digging.

I understood why he and Danzo were hidden. If their names had stayed on the record, people might've suspected they were involved with the Ultras—especially after the truth was twisted and it was said that Baylor had simply gone missing during the battle.

Ghost continued, his voice calm, but his gaze carried weight.

"But your name's still there, Frey. Let's just say... you're not in a good position."

"What do you mean? Do they think he was behind the attack?"

Danzo asked, clearly struggling to accept that.

What happened in the Paladiso had been complete chaos.

It just so happened that Madam A made her move at the exact time I was locked in battle with Baylor and his family.

The overlapping events had created this mess.

Honestly, if Baylor hadn't been exposed as a traitor, the entire Starlight family—myself included—might've been accused of colluding with the Ultras and launching a joint assault.

Still, I suppose luck hadn't completely turned against me.

"Are there any names I should be particularly wary of?"

I asked seriously, and Ghost responded without hesitation.

"There are many... but most are just normal students or radical staff. The one you should really watch out for... is a professor."

He crossed his arms, recalling the name.

"Kaiser Moonlight. He's an S-Class instructor—and a recent addition to the academy."

Kaiser Moonlight... I tried to remember if I'd seen him during the event.

"He's the one in the black suit who explained the test details... hard to forget him—or that stupid pair of glasses he wears."

Thanks to Danzo's reminder, I pictured him instantly.

So an S Class professor might be targeting me, huh...

Now I was starting to understand why Headmaster Ivar had urged me to leave.

And that was just what Ghost had uncovered... Who knew how many more people were lying in wait for me?

"I just don't get how those higher-ups think... Frey Starlight, what kind of cursed fate were you born with to draw in this many enemies?"

Danzo grumbled, trying to imagine what it was like from my perspective.

"...No comment."

This was what it meant to live as Frey Starlight—enduring relentless pressure until the very end.

"I'll try to look into the rest as soon as I can," Ghost said.

"I'll help," added Danzo.

Maybe they felt involved because they'd helped me before.

And maybe they were doing this without any reason at all.

I appreciated it... but—

"Wait."

I stopped them both.

"I'm grateful for what you've done so far—Ghost... and you too, Danzo. But I'd be thankful if you both stayed away from this matter from here on out."

"What the hell are you saying right now, in your state?!"

Danzo's reaction was expected. Ghost, however, remained silent.

"Since your names are no longer involved... let me handle this my own way. Don't get dragged in any deeper. I'll take care of my own problems. So, there's no need for either of you to do anything more."

"What are you—"

"Stop what you're doing, Ghost. You've already risked enough going this far against someone in the S-Class. This level... isn't for you guys."

"Oh? But is it for you, Frey Starlight?"

This time, it was Ghost who stepped forward and asked.

They weren't on a level where they could go up against an S-Class threat—they were just first-year students at the Temple.

And so was I.

Which made my reasoning feel completely hollow.

I gave a strained smile as the facts dawned on me.

"Find another light to follow, Ghost. I'm not someone who deserves to be the light you fight beneath."

I began to walk away slowly, distancing myself from them.

"After all... I'm already deeper in the darkness than you are."

"Hey, wait!"

Ignoring Danzo's shout, I left the place, leaving them behind.

This was for the best.

Ghost shouldn't choose me—he should choose Snow instead.

Danzo shouldn't get more involved with me... or death would be the only thing awaiting him.

I didn't want to ruin the story any more than I already had. That's why I had to move forward on my own.

Besides, these relationships... they were like a drug.

Getting rid of them was necessary before they dug in any deeper.

"Yes... this is for the best."

With those words, I convinced myself, as I wandered among the Temple students.