

VILLAIN 166

Chapter 166 The First Step into the Island Trial

- Frey Starlight's Pov -

I felt the sting of cold steel graze my exposed neck.

The knights surrounding me weren't amateurs—those blades could cleave through steel, let alone flesh.

Yet the damned prince was still in my grasp.

Aegon couldn't spew more provocations—his throat had taken enough damage.

He struggled faintly, but breaking free from this grip was impossible. Balerion slumbered in my left hand, and that alone made it perhaps the strongest left hand in the entire cursed world.

With a single command, Balerion could erupt and reduce Aegon's head to ashes.

The prince had gone silent, but the twisted smile on his face still lingered. Even in this position, he was daring me to do it.

I wanted to end him. I really wanted to.

But death would claim me the moment I did.

The Round Table Knights would carve me into pieces the instant their prince fell.

I'd miscalculated.

Expressionless, my eyes sharp with fury, I released my grip and let him collapse, gasping for air.

"Heh... Frey, oh Frey... who would've thought you could snap like that..."

He rose to his feet slowly, speaking in his usual playful tone, as he casually motioned for his knights to stand down.

I shouldn't have let myself slip like that. I'd confirmed his suspicions. Handed him my weakness—served it on a silver platter.

My fist clenched, fighting hard to suppress my emotions.

"Are you sure about this, Aegon?"

At his command, the knights reluctantly took a step back. They were still poised, ready to strike the moment I moved.

"Sure about what? You'll have to be more specific. I have far too many fires burning."

His voice was light, teasing—like I was just one of dozens, maybe hundreds of things on his agenda.

Perhaps not even in his top ten.

But I didn't care. I'd avoided him for as long as I could. But that was over now. If he planned to stand between me and the Victoryad, then he would become an obstacle far greater than Snow himself.

"Are you certain you want me as your enemy?"

Aegon's smile widened.

"You're asking if I'm certain? Do I look like someone who hesitates? Everything I do becomes the right move, eventually. That's just how it is. That's who I am."

"Arrogant as ever."

"You're free to call it what you like."

"Don't come to regret it."

Aegon reclaimed his seat as if nothing had happened, like our confrontation was no more than casual banter.

"You're still a piece I can't quite grasp, Frey. For something intangible like the Victoriad to matter so much to you... even though you don't even possess it. I still don't understand what it is you're trying to prove..."

He leaned in slightly, his voice low and deliberate.

"But I am curious to see the look on your face when you lose it all."

I clenched my fist tighter.

"You're free to try and take it."

"Pfttt..."

Aegon chuckled.

"You really think you'll survive if I come after you seriously?"

I didn't respond. I turned and walked away, slowly—afraid that if I stayed a second longer, I might actually kill him.

But before I left, I gave him an answer.

I wouldn't just survive.

"I'd win."

Ignoring the suffocating aura of the Round Table Knights, I walked out—ending my ill-fated encounter with Prince Aegon Valerion.

The Victoriad...

Had just reached its highest level of difficulty.

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Time passed.

Only one week remained before the Island Trial began.

The clock was ticking fast. I isolated myself completely, ignoring the academy and its lectures.

They were of no use to me now.

I had to prepare for what lay ahead.

To face monsters like Snow and Ghost...

To stand against Daemon Valerion.

To confront the faction within the temple that wanted me dead...

And now, Prince Aegon—who had gained overwhelming influence within the sanctuary.

I was utterly alone.

And to survive what was coming, to achieve the impossible—

I would have to use everything I had.

No hesitation. No mercy.

Casting a glance at the open laptop on the desk... those words etched themselves deep into my mind.

Final Mission: Win the Victoriad.

Reward: The user will be granted one question, and the System Architect will be compelled to answer.

Failure Penalty: The system will be sealed for an entire year.

Failure was not an option.

Throughout the days I spent in isolation, my mind simulated every possible outcome—again and again, to the point of madness.

Amidst all that... I noticed those words that still hadn't disappeared.

Frey Starlight (Dual Soul)

They were still there.

The memories carved into this body should have already vanished by now...

So what's going on with this Dual Soul?

Too many questions...

I felt like my head was going to explode.

And whenever it reached that point, I would grab my sword and continue training.

That was my only sanctuary.

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The countdown had begun.

While Frey immersed himself in relentless training, time moved faster than ever.

Strategies were drawn. Swords were sharpened. Spears were prepped.

Everyone was preparing for the Victoriad in their own way.

Snow, gripping his sword tightly as always, shattered every training dummy in front of him. A person like him couldn't afford to lose to anyone.

Within the halls of the Abyss, Daemon Valerion's body sparked with lines of lightning, his fists leaving imprints on everything around him... a beast waiting to be unleashed.

Ghost sat alone in the dark, sharpening his daggers...

a girl with white hair, searching for meaning and a new path in life.

Elite fighters... each of them had something to prove. Whether to themselves, or to the world.

Even those who weren't students...

In a sealed room hidden from all eyes...

A certain group devised their plan to eliminate him. On a table riddled with knives and dagger marks, lit only by a single candle... his image could be clearly seen.

A picture of Frey.

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As always, Prince Aegon sat on his throne-like seat, while two older students knelt before him.

The first was a well-trained young man with tied black hair. The second was Missandei—the girl who once brought Frey to the prince.

Both of them echoed the same report.

Aegon nodded in satisfaction.

The Victoriad.

These unknown factions had all confirmed their target with one voice:

"Frey Starlight will die during the upcoming Island Trial."

Meanwhile, Missandei and the student beside her confirmed to the prince:

"Everything is ready, my prince. The entire Third Year will move against him during the trial—against Frey Starlight."

So many blades... all pointed at a single person.

And the awaited day... had finally come.

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—Frey Starlight's Pov—

"So it's today, huh..."

I rose from my bed.

I hadn't slept in a while, so I was already prepared.

On the desk... was one of my sister's gifts to me.

The temple provided those so-called "armor sets"—they looked more like assassin gear.

It wasn't real armor, just a robe that covered most of the body.

It was equipped with a special mechanism. When hit by a potentially fatal blow, the armor would activate its inner defense system to block it. In exchange, a shockwave would knock the wearer unconscious—resulting in immediate elimination from the exam.

The temple did supply a uniform for everyone, but those from great families or guilds were allowed to receive custom armor from their own people.

And so here we are... I took the robe Ada had prepared for me.

A jet-black armor, elegantly adorned. It was extremely comfortable, light as air, and bore the Starlight insignia in a refined design.

It regulated body temperature in all conditions and provided excellent mobility.

Alongside the sword she had sent, this was the best Ada could offer at the moment.

She was incredibly precise—the sword she delivered was a B-grade, the highest tier permitted, and matched Balerion in length and specs, the one I was used to wielding. I was genuinely grateful for that.

I picked up my laptop and stored it as always.

The Balerion tattoo also functioned as a dimensional ring.

I could cheat and try hiding a few things inside to make the exam easier... but the risk was too great, so I didn't go for it.

The only thing I needed now... was my laptop.

Wearing the armor and glancing at myself in the mirror, I looked like some assassin from the medieval era.

The dark circles under my eyes had grown deeper from all the sleepless nights and overthinking. My white hair, though, remained unchanged.

I grabbed my sword... and left.

"Time to move."

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Temple Grounds.

Everyone was lined up there.

Clad in battle gear, it looked more like we were heading to war than taking an exam.

The white robes of the temple were dominant, standing out especially among the crowd.

Yet, scattered among them were the distinct armors worn by those from higher backgrounds.

I was one of them, which inevitably drew some unwanted attention...

But no one dared maintain eye contact with me. Maybe it was because I looked like a fallen prince from some wicked kingdom.

Far ahead stood two colossal gates.

They glowed with a majestic blue hue, releasing powerful waves of aura.

That was our path to the island.

Before entering, we were handed the smartwatches that had been previously mentioned.

The moment I wore mine, the display lit up.

Apparently, the watch wouldn't function unless directly attached to the user's body.

It projected a 3D map of a massive island.

The island was divided by latitude and longitude lines.

From the side, the horizontal lines were numbered 1 to 10.

From above, the vertical lines were labeled A to J.

As a result, locations on the island would be referred to by their respective grid—like A1 for the top-left corner, and so on.

It was simple and easy to understand.

In addition, the watches displayed basic personal data... my physical condition, and my current score, which sat at zero.

The ranking board, for now, was completely empty.

The First to Third Years lined up to the right, ready to enter first.

The moment we stepped forward, I felt countless eyes on me...

But I ignored them. I had expected this, after all.

On the other side, the remaining years stood to the left.

Before we were sent off, the temple instructors and the headmaster stood before us.

Ivar captured everyone's attention with a single word:

"Students of the Temple... you're about to face the first real challenge of your lives. Remember—survival comes before everything else. Sure, this is your chance to shine and to measure your strength... but don't let it become your end."

"The temple instructors will act independently, observing from a distance in case of emergencies. We're also monitoring the island in its entirety, so the chances of accidents are minimal. Still... never drop your guard. Nothing in this world is absolute."

The Empire had gathered most of its top magicians for this event. A powerful enchantment had been cast, covering the entire island—through it, the events of the trial would be broadcast to the entire world.

The broadcast had a one-day delay, allowing the professionals to edit and filter the footage, showing only the most thrilling scenes.

So for the next month... the Empire's citizens were promised pure excitement.

And we... we were the fuel that made it all possible.

"Good luck, everyone. The Island Trial begins now."

With those words, we were finally allowed to rush toward the massive gate.

One by one, everyone began pouring in.

I moved along with the First Years and entered slowly.

The moment I stepped forward, a wave of powerful aura from the gate struck me—then, my feet sank slightly.

Instead of the stone floor from earlier, I now stood on damp sand.

The sudden shift in environment and climate was disorienting. Just moments ago I had been in the temple... and now, I was standing on a shoreline, with the sea beside me.

To my right... all I could see were towering trees—giants that reminded me of the Eastern Nightmare Lands.

An endless forest. A beach of golden sand.

I wasn't the only one stunned. Hundreds of students from the First to Third Years were equally awestruck.

There was a side rule in place that prohibited combat during the first hour of the trial, so no fights broke out.

The amazement lingered for a while... until a sharp buzzing sound snapped us back to reality.

A unified notification was sent to every smart watch without exception. I immediately checked mine.

The message was crystal clear:

– Frey Starlight –

Proceed to location E6.

Time limit: One hour.

Reward: 5 points for arrival. Additional points for being first.

I glanced at the map.

My current location... was F9.

The distance was far.

It was worth noting that each student had been assigned a different destination.

Still, I quickly realized I wasn't the only one given E6...

Others had the same target.

And then—without warning...

The ground shook.

Aura surged.

Everyone bolted forward, diving into the cursed island.

The earth itself trembled, declaring one undeniable truth:

The Island Trial... had officially begun.