

## **VILLAIN 168**

Chapter 168: When the Nightmare Begins

-Frey starlight POV-

After another hour of moving...

Facing more Ganados along the way, and running into a few students...

I finally reached point E6.

Ding!

Point E6 reached.

Arrival Rank: 23

Points: 5

I looked at the number before me with mild curiosity... Twenty-two people had arrived before me.

Yet I hadn't seen a single trace of them.

It made sense — I'd spent some time dealing with those third-year bastards.

Sure, they were targeting me...

But finding me in this massive island was no easy task.

Not to mention the access points were assigned randomly.

Even though I reached my destination, the watch didn't direct me to a new location right away.

I assumed there was a cooldown period before the next point was updated.

Three hours had passed so far...

So the time limit must be longer than that before the next shift occurs.

Suddenly, I heard footsteps nearby.

My hand instinctively went to the hilt of my sword.

But what appeared before me was something completely unexpected.

"Aaaaah, finally..."

A clumsy girl collapsed in front of me, grumbling like someone about to cry.

That green hair was hard to forget. Her childlike features and petite frame were unmistakable.

Emilia Atarax — from Class A.

The Saintess candidate slowly lifted her head when she realized someone was standing before her.

And in just a few seconds, her vibrant green eyes met my dead black ones.

"Kyaahh!"

With a startled scream, Emilia scooted away from me on the ground.

"What are you doing?"

"F-Frey... ah... I'm sorry, I didn't mean to—"

She scrambled to her feet in a panic, only to trip again and faceplant into the grass.

"Oof—"

"Wow... Compared to the chaos I've seen so far, this is actually kind of..."

"S-Sorry..."

I stepped toward her and extended my hand.

And surprisingly, she grabbed it without hesitation.

"Look at you... Aren't you afraid of me?"

Emilia rose to her feet, still holding my hand.

"Should I be?"

"I don't know... That's usually how people react. And your head's worth two points, you know. I might attack you."

"Hmm... I don't think you will. You gave me your food that day, remember~?"

I didn't really know how to respond.

"Is that how you judge people? I give you some chicken and suddenly we're best friends?"

"Yep! That's enough for me. Here — consider this a token of my gratitude."

Emilia released her power.

A pure green aura touched my body. The wound on my right hand vanished without a trace...

And the exhaustion from my previous battle faded as well.

"Holy power..."

Emilia clasped her hands together and began praying softly.

"For the Lord of Light..."

Bathed in a gentle glow, the Saintess candidate looked beautiful — a sight that didn't belong on this island. Especially with her praying to the so-called Lord of Light...

Here we go again with that nonsense.

Still, I appreciated the healing.

"Thanks."

But right after I thanked her and she finished her prayer, Emilia blurted out—

"Wanna team up?!"

Seeing her eyes literally sparkle, I instinctively stepped back.

"What? A team?"

"Yeah! I'm a healer and you're an amazing fighter — we'd make a great pair!"

Was this girl trying to latch onto me as a ride through the exam?

I laughed just thinking about it, leaving Emilia visibly confused.

This foolish girl...

She didn't know that staying near me would only bring disaster.

"I appreciate the healing, really. But sorry — I work alone."

"But—!"

"You should try someone else. I'm sure plenty of people would love to have a sweet healer like you ~"

"Ah... I see."

Emilia frowned and lowered her head.

And the moment she looked up again... she was alone.

"Where did he go?!"

Ignoring the startled Emilia, I left the area.

Ding!

Next Destination: Point H4

Reward: 5 points, with bonus points based on arrival rank.

The next target had already appeared.

Three hours since the exam began.

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The Island Exam...

The clock hands were ticking without pause, and that colossal land had already been invaded by eager students.

With the appearance of those weak Nightmare creatures, the students gained an unspoken confidence in themselves — a belief that they could conquer this exam with ease.

The sky was overcast, warning of an impending rain.

Giant trees concealed everything from view.

The true nature of this land... had yet to be revealed.

On the eastern side, a group of students were moving swiftly, racing each other.

"Easy..."

"Too easy!"

At this pace, they'd rack up points — maybe even qualify!

The thought of making a name for themselves, of standing out... Many were intoxicated by such ideas.

"Mi... mi..."

A team of three second-year students froze as distant sounds reached their ears.

Despite how easy things had been so far, none of them dared to underestimate what might come next.

"Get ready... it's close," said the one leading them — a young man with black hair, wielding a massive spear.

"Me... me..."

"Very close!"

Weapons were drawn.

From behind the tree in front of them, they heard footsteps... dozens of them.

"Me!... Me!!!"

Out of nowhere—

A terrifying creature burst out, crawling with dozens of arms and legs, rushing toward them with a face resembling a nightmare mask.

A round mouth oozed black fluid, and its eyes were sunken deep.

"FEED ME! FEED ME! FEED ME!"

The creature screamed in human speech, causing them all to flinch instinctively.

The crazed abomination charged at them — and at the same moment...

A sound appears on-screen

Ding!

Nightmare Creature: Baij

Class: B+

Points: 7

"Damn it! Attack it!"

The man in front thrust his spear — but three hands caught the weapon, and seven more coiled around him...

"Haaarrrmm..."

With one bite, the abomination ripped the young man's arm off... blood and screams exploded all at once.

"Shit!"

His teammates attacked instantly, striking the creature's back with their swords — but its hide was too tough, even infused with aura.

The monster kept devouring the boy. His other arm was flung aside... then his leg... and just as the thing was about to bite into his neck, the protective mechanism of his armor finally activated — shielding him and teleporting him away...

But he vanished without his limbs.

The hungry nightmare creature paused in confusion, puzzled by the sudden disappearance of its prey.

"Feed me... feed me..."

With its first meal gone, it simply turned toward the two remaining students.

"FEED ME!"

Having witnessed the horrific scene...

The two ran as fast as they could to escape.

But what good is running... from a creature with ten legs?

"FEED ME!"

"No!!"

The maddened abomination caught them both — and the feast continued.

"What the hell is this thing?!"

"Didn't they say they'd protect us?!"

The screaming went on for a while...

Far from the carnage, sitting on a boulder and surrounded by a few students, Aegon observed his surroundings.

"This exam is quite fascinating..."

The prince spoke to himself aloud, as everyone around listened intently.

"It's true that the armor provides protection... but it only does so once. And only when the blow is fatal..."

In other words — if the strike isn't targeting the heart or another vital organ, the armor won't trigger. Even if all your limbs are torn off.

"The armors are most likely equipped with magic circuits. When they block a fatal blow, the pre-cast spell activates and teleports the wounded student out of the exam."

After all, it was impossible for mages to be stationed everywhere to extract the eliminated.

That would be entirely unrealistic...

"In other words, some might face a fate worse than death here... Haha... Uncle Ivar really is insane."

Reports kept coming in.

And Aegon listened to every one of them.

The Baij creature had appeared in multiple locations — a monster that devours its victims, boasting terrifying speed and frightening durability.

Another beast had a near-human body... but its head was an enormous brain covered in eyes. It was said to move only in darkness and attack the minds of its victims.

The smartwatch named it The Brain of Mensis.

A third creature had surfaced in the southern part of the island — with long legs and even longer arms. Its head was a massive maw with tendrils.

They said it tore off someone's head before the armor could even activate...

The Island exam was finally beginning to show its true nature.

"What about Frey?"

Aegon asked with a smile.

His question was directed at a familiar young woman — Missandei, an elite third-year student.

"He clashed with a squad of third-years... but he defeated all of them."

Aegon nodded.

"As expected."

"No need to worry, my lord. Magnus will be moving soon — he'll target Frey once he's gathered enough points."

"Good enough."

It was possible to reveal the location of any participant on the island — for a set number of points.

But no one had yet reached the required amount to activate that feature...

The girl had mentioned Magnus.

Aegon remembered him well.

After all, he was the strongest in the entire third year.

"This will be an interesting clash..."

Let's see how you deal with him, Frey.

If you fall at this level... I'll be disappointed in you.

Because my grand surprise still awaits you at the end.

The prince laughed as he continued on his path.

It didn't take long for Frey to slip from his thoughts as other matters took priority.

The exam was still underway...

Seven hours since the start of the exam.