

VILLAIN 170

Chapter 170 Storms on the Horizon

The Empire—last bastion of the world, protected behind colossal walls...

It had kept at bay the monstrous hands that lurked in the dark beyond.

Far from the Trial Island—deep within the heart of the capital, Belgrad—

Inside one of the massive research facilities near the royal palace...

Stood a short man, his face worn by time, eyes sunken with exhaustion and sleepless nights.

This was the principal laboratory of the empire's greatest mind—Ashol Eduardo.

The famed scholar stood before a vial of dark crimson liquid, the subject of countless experiments and tests.

The more he studied it, the more his expression darkened.

"Sir... is this...?"

Another researcher entered the lab—an old man himself, but one who addressed Ashol with sincere deference.

Ashol scowled as he tossed his gloves aside.

"This is the blood we recovered from the battlefield—where Oliver Khan fought that creature."

During that battle, Oliver had landed a devastating blow on his opponent, Godfrey, unleashing a violent torrent of blood.

Strangely, Godfrey had continued to fight as if the massive wound were nothing more than a scratch.

But now, with that blood in their hands—

"Look at this."

Ashol pointed at the monitor, displaying the vile blood under the microscope.

The researcher watched, stunned, as the particles clashed and writhed like living things.

"This is..."

He stared in bewilderment, while Ashol's voice turned grim.

"This isn't human blood. And it's not demon blood either."

He began pacing slowly, hands clasped behind his back, weariness clinging to him like a shadow.

"It's something in between. Demon blood—typically a deadly poison to humans—has fused seamlessly with blood bearing human characteristics."

In other words, it was as if—

"...a half-human, half-demon."

Ashol exhaled in frustration, while the other scientist could hardly believe what he was hearing.

"A human mother... and a demon father? Or the reverse? That's impossible."

It defied all logic—biologically, spiritually, theoretically. Humans couldn't conceive with demons. The very idea was madness.

Ashol shook his head and exited the lab, his mind weighed down by the implications.

"I don't even want to think about it..."

Behind him, he left the cursed blood sample... and an image of the tyrant, Godfrey, displayed beside it.

For the first time in his life—Ashol Eduardo, the empire's foremost scholar—was afraid of the truth.

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The world was shifting—rapidly, violently—and no one was spared from its storms.

The Holy Island of Sicelia—

Sanctuary of the Followers of the Lightbringer, their self-proclaimed heaven on earth.

Wearing pure white robes, the devout had gathered in massive numbers, chanting praises to their god.

At the island's center stood a towering church—The Twilight Cathedral.

It loomed high at the summit, beside the legendary monument where the Lightbringer's revelation was said to have descended.

Before the cathedral's colossal doors, three men stood, cloaked in majestic aura, watching the masses ascend the stone steps toward them.

"The pilgrims will arrive soon,"

Said Bishop Michael Platini, calm and composed. The two men beside him nodded in acknowledgment.

Joseph Blatter stepped forward, his ceremonial robe flowing as he raised a commanding hand.

"Open the gates!"

Behind him, the massive doors began to creak open—just as the distant chants of the pilgrims reached their ears.

"The Church's next Champion will soon be revealed!"

Blatter proclaimed, his voice booming with aura.

"For the first time in four hundred years, the chosen one shall receive the will of the Lightbringer!"

"And with it—comes the time to bring forth the Sword of the Sovereign—Vermithor—to choose its next master!"

The pilgrims roared in unified praise upon hearing the bishop's announcement.

"And the one who shall bestow this divine gift upon the chosen apostle... will be none other than the only believer who can hear our Lord's voice."

And as the cathedral gates slowly opened...

A divine and awe-inspiring sight awaited within.

A vast, empty hall—majestic in its silence—adorned with intricate glass ornaments that shimmered in a kaleidoscope of colors and light.

At its heart stood a grand structure resembling a shrine.

There, seated in solemn stillness, was a lone woman. Her robe, impossibly white, flowed around her like mist, while golden hair cascaded over her shoulders—part of it neatly braided.

She turned, revealing piercing crimson eyes that glowed like embers in the shadows.

Behind her, a colossal sword lay embedded in the ground, emitting a radiant, blinding light.

Many looked on in awe.

"Saint Eurasha... and the Sacred Sword."

Without a word, the saint reached out and drew the blade—Vermithor—which yielded without resistance.

It was a breathtaking sight. Vermithor had long defied the faithful, refusing to be drawn regardless of how devout the hand.

Yet now, it rose with ease.

Bishop Blatter nodded with deep satisfaction.

"To the Victoriad."

There... the chosen hero would awaken.

...

—Frey Starlight's Pov—

15 hours had passed since the trial began on the forsaken island.

It was now 3:00 a.m.

I was already on the move.

"I have a bad feeling about this..."

I'd been ambushed twice so far—both times by standard third-year students.

The elite hadn't made their move yet, which meant they likely hadn't pinpointed my location.

"No one's gathered enough points to track others yet..."

Meanwhile, my bounty had risen to 30 points.

That made me a prime target.

To make things worse, powerful Nightmare Creatures had started appearing as well.

"La~ la~ la~"

The haunting melody echoing around me left no doubt.

"The Brains of Mensis."

Monstrous nightmares that roamed under moonlight—creatures that assaulted their victims' minds with overwhelming illusions.

Their bodies were ordinary. But their heads... massive, exposed brains lined with dozens of blinking eyes.

Those brains would split open, revealing gaping maws teeming with writhing tendrils.

They were a nightmare to deal with.

"La~ la~ la~"

That song of theirs... a form of psychic hypnosis meant to pull you into madness.

I had no choice but to stay sharply focused, leaping silently from tree to tree, putting as much distance between us as I could.

Ding!

Monster: Brains of Mensis

Rank: A

Reward: 15 Points

"A little late for that."

I scoffed at the Smartwatch delayed notification.

I was headed toward checkpoint G3.

My goal was to collect as many points as possible—early—because something told me things were only going to get worse from here.

Of course, picking a fight with a Mensis Nightmare was absolute lunacy.

A creature like that couldn't be handled through conventional means.

Quietly, I continued slipping past them, avoiding confrontation.

Sadly, not everyone had my caution. Many of the other players had already fallen victim to that grotesque horror.

And the outcome? Truly grim.

If a Mensis Nightmare managed to penetrate your mind... even an emergency extraction and immediate treatment couldn't guarantee recovery.

You wouldn't die. But you'd spend the rest of your life mentally broken.

"What a miserable state of affairs..."

The Temple might lose more students than ever this time.

I ignored the chaos around me and pushed forward.