

VILLAIN 172

Chapter 172 Clash of the Elite (1)

Dark clouds gathered once more as the sky roared.

Heavy rain poured over the heads of the temple students.

No sleep. No food. No stopping.

Nightmare creatures lurked everywhere, and competitors waited in silence.

At this point, surrender almost seemed like the better choice.

But no one truly knew what the required number of points was to avoid disqualification.

The people watched in curiosity as the broadcast of the island finally began.

A thrilling showcase of savage combat, bloodshed, survival instincts, and fierce competition.

Earlier, after Daemon Valerion's overwhelming display, Magnus Grell rose from the ground, his expression darkening even more—if that was possible, given the midnight hour.

That battle had taken place in complete darkness.

Their auras were the only source of light.

Magnus was furious—not only had Daemon humiliated him, but Frey Starlight had vanished the moment the dust had settled.

Frey moved fast. He had taken second rank and slipped away without a single trace.

"That bastard... how the hell did he slip right past me like that?!"

He could see through the darkness and move silently, making him near-impossible to track now.

Magnus clenched his fists, seething at the very thought of the arrogant first-years.

"I'll bury them... all of them."

The strongest student of the third year began to move again.

The test wasn't over yet.

Twenty hours since the beginning of the trial.

The sun had risen, but the sky remained grim—rains refusing to cease.

Down below, a girl with violet hair ran frantically.

Her round glasses were completely shattered, her face stained with grime and sweat.

A first-year.

Adriana Heigeforne was being chased by four nightmare creatures.

Beasts with scythe-like arms and far too many legs. Frey Starlight knew them well—but Adriana didn't.

Ding!

Scythe Wraiths

Rank: C-

Points: 3

The alert rang as Adriana screamed, thrusting her spear behind her in panic.

Aura of wind burst from its tip as she struck, stabbing into the bodies of her pursuers—

—but they were difficult to handle.

Tears welled at the corners of her eyes.

She wasn't used to facing anything like this.

A bookworm who only knew comfort, suddenly dropped into a world like this?

It had only been twenty hours...

But for Adriana, it felt like a whole month had passed.

And worst of all—she couldn't even surrender, not with the risk of being ripped apart by the Scythe Wraiths before her armor's protection activated.

She had almost lost all hope.

Whoosh!

Suddenly, the sound of pursuit behind her stopped.

Adriana slowed, breathless, confused—unsure of what had just happened.

She turned back slowly... only to witness a bizarre sight.

The Scythe Wraiths had been impaled from beneath, black thorns erupting from a massive shadow under them.

The dark spikes had pierced their bodies in several places, leaving them dead on the spot.

That ominous black aura wasn't comforting at all...

But the voice that followed was.

"So it was you after all... Adriana."

Adriana spun around instantly.

Walking calmly from between the trees was a familiar girl, dressed in elegant black with golden embroidery—bearing the crest of House Valerion.

"Princess!"

The massive shadow retracted swiftly, shrinking and vanishing beneath Sansa's feet.

Adriana threw herself into Sansa's arms, hugging her tightly as the latter gently patted her back.

"It's okay. You're safe now."

"I'm... I'm sorry, Sansa... I didn't know what to do... they were chasing me... all night..."

Sansa said nothing. She simply comforted Adriana in silence, gazing at her with those dark, unreadable eyes.

But she was still the same princess.

Soon after, Sansa led the trembling Adriana to a safer place—

A large tree, wide enough at its center to resemble a shallow cave.

"Let's stay here for now."

The interior was empty, but it was far better than standing in the rain.

From then on, Adriana couldn't stop talking. She poured her heart out, one word after the other. She trusted the princess deeply. Sansa was her friend... and had saved her more than once.

"I couldn't sleep... I kept hearing this singing—it was beautiful but terrifying... so I ran... and then..."

The details were endless, a bit too much, but Sansa never once looked annoyed.

She just listened with a soft smile.

"I see. That must've been really tough on you."

Adriana nodded and lowered her head.

"You're amazing though... Princess—I mean, Sansa... You're so strong, and you still look fine even with everything going on out there... I wish I could be like you..."

"Like me, huh..."

Sansa murmured, a flicker of something passing through her eyes. Did Adriana know anything about her? To want to be like her?

No... she didn't know a thing.

Not a single thing.

The princess smiled and stood up, glancing outside.

"Would you like to form a team, Adriana? I don't think you'll be able to finish this test alone in your current state."

Adriana's face lit up immediately.

"Can I?!"

Sansa nodded.

"But I should warn you—I don't plan on joining the finals. I won't be moving around much. Staying with me means giving up your shot at qualifying."

Adriana shook her head quickly.

"That's fine. I never expected to qualify in the first place."

"Very well then. I'll be in your care... Adriana."

Sansa smiled radiantly at her—a practiced, perfect smile she'd rehearsed countless times.

In return, Adriana awkwardly nodded, cheeks slightly flushed.

"Yes... yes! I'll be the one under your care—thank you so much!"

The mood between them was warm and gentle—until a violent bolt of lightning struck nearby, briefly illuminating something that made Adriana leap to her feet, gripping her spear.

"Princess! Behind you!"

"Hm?"

Sansa turned around—and saw a figure standing at the tree's entrance.

A girl with blazing red hair, black earrings dangling from her ears, and crimson eyes narrowed in a stern glare directed at Adriana.

Sansa, however, smiled and stepped between them.

"Jessica... so you've arrived."

Jessica frowned, her eyes never leaving Adriana's.

"Princess... who is she?"

"Oh, that's Adriana. She's my classmate and a friend. No need to worry."

"If you say so. But be careful."

Sansa nodded cheerfully and motioned for Adriana to come closer.

Looking more closely, Adriana recognized the girl standing before her—

Jessica Thivenin, the strongest of the second years.

Someone impossible to ignore.

Adriana sat beside them quietly, not daring to speak, especially given the hostility Jessica made no effort to hide.

The entire time, Jessica and the princess discussed various matters—mainly the current state of things on the island from her perspective.

"The first years this time around... they're completely different. I've never seen this many monsters in a single generation."

Jessica sighed before standing to leave.

Her words carried weight—after all, the current top three in the rankings were all first-years.

She reached for her sword just as her smartband chimed.

Ding!

The next location had been announced.

"With your permission... Princess, I'll take my leave now. I'll check in on you whenever I end up near your area—so please, be careful. If I don't come myself, someone else from my class will."

"Jessica... that's already too much. Just focus on your exam."

Sansa spoke with a slight frown.

"As you wish, my Princess. Then I'll see you later."

"Yeah..."

It didn't seem like Jessica was going to follow orders anytime soon, but Sansa didn't say anything. Jessica had been like this ever since she managed to recruit her some time ago.

Whoosh

Jessica vanished, but not before casting a warning glance toward the still-nervous Adriana.

That left the two girls alone.

"Shall we go look for something to eat, Adriana?"

Adriana nodded hesitantly.

She was still visibly shaken...

But she followed the princess anyway, clutching her spear.

Meanwhile, Sansa strolled casually through the forest as if she were back in the rose gardens she loved—not the nightmare-infested wilderness they were in.

Like a lost princess wandering through the darkness.