

VILLAIN 174

Chapter 174 Clash of the Elite (3)

4 days had passed since the Island Trial began.

The rain hadn't stopped for a moment, and the faces of the surviving students had started to change, little by little.

They could no longer function on aura circulation alone.

With no clean water, no proper meals, and barely any sleep... many Temple students were starting to break down.

Thankfully, scattered across the island, red-marked zones began to appear—temporary missions with strict time limits.

These missions didn't grant points, but instead provided supplies to those who managed to complete them—dimensional rings stocked with up to three days' worth of rations.

Naturally, those zones became a top priority for many.

At one such mission zone, a group of students rushed toward a lone instructor standing calmly with both hands behind his back. Upon reaching him, he issued the challenge:

"Land a single hit on the instructor—and you pass."

Of course, the missions weren't meant to be easy.

Hitting an S-rank instructor was no small feat.

One by one, the upperclassmen tried, but none of them even touched the instructor's shadow, let alone his body.

The other mission sites were equally difficult. The Temple had no intention of handing out supplies without a test of worth.

And the instructors? They didn't go easy—on anyone.

Eventually, a heavy silence fell. You could see the hopelessness etched into the students' faces.

Four days. Just four days had brought them to this broken state.

"Let me try."

The voice rang out after everyone else had given up.

A strange boy stepped forward, black hair and crimson-red eyes.

The instructor welcomed all challengers without discrimination.

He was a middle-aged man with a rugged face and thick beard—his movements razor-sharp.

The boy slowly drew his sword, locking eyes with the instructor as he advanced.

Then, without warning, he lunged.

His sword swung with a rhythm that felt oddly familiar—aiming straight for the instructor's neck.

The instructor, unimpressed, tilted his body lazily to dodge. For a brief moment, he couldn't hide the disappointment in his eyes...

Until, at the last second, the sword's path shifted—and ignited in flames.

The strike aimed straight for the instructor's head, forcing him to leap back, just barely dodging it.

The boy was already in pursuit.

His sword moved like an extension of his limbs—a terrifyingly fluid style. Even the instructor's expression shifted into subtle admiration.

"Name yourself, boy."

The instructor asked as he continued evading.

"Dawn Polaris. Elite Class, First Year."

The instructor nodded while dodging expertly. It was worth noting—he never counterattacked.

Eventually, even Dawn's overwhelming swordsmanship—the best in his entire year—failed to touch the instructor.

The man began to lose interest.

But then Dawn made an odd move. He threw his sword at the instructor—an amateur's mistake, it seemed.

"Abandoning your weapon?"

A foolish move.

The instructor dodged easily—only to feel a stony hand rise from the ground behind him, grabbing the airborne sword.

"So that's what you were planning."

It was a clever trick. But S-rank eyes could read through something like that.

The instructor braced to dodge the incoming strike from the stone hand—but it didn't swing. Instead, it tossed the sword high into the air, directly above him.

By the time he realized it, Dawn was already in midair.

With acrobatic precision, he flipped through the air—then kicked the sword out of its hilt.

The blade shot downward like a meteor.

The instructor dodged—barely. The sword nicked his cheek before slamming into the ground with incredible force.

Stunned, the instructor reached for his cheek. A thin line of blood greeted his fingers.

He couldn't believe it.

Dawn landed gracefully in front of him, then pointed toward the dimensional ring.

"You've got something that belongs to me."

The instructor smiled and nodded in approval.

"Good job... take it."

Dawn grabbed the ring and wore it without hesitation.

On the other side, the instructor chuckled with a menacing grin.

"I suggest you run, kid... the hungry dogs are already circling."

Dawn immediately unsheathed his sword, turning toward the students behind him.

"He won..."

"The ring... give me the ring..."

"Stealing it from a first-year is much easier than facing the instructor."

The hungry students had their eyes set on Dawn.

He twirled his sword, fully aware of the situation.

"Looks like the job's not done yet..."

Dozens of students launched themselves at him.

But Dawn didn't falter.

His extraordinary talent—Weapon Master—was overwhelmingly effective.

When it came to swordsmanship, even Snow wasn't on his level. Unless his opponent had something truly unique up their sleeve... they wouldn't pose much of a threat.

Beneath the pouring rain...

Dawn wiped out a wave of students ranging from the first to the third years.

He let out a sigh and walked away.

"At least now you won't go hungry..."

Dawn marched off with a weary expression.

He had another gift... a talent that always helped him survive, no matter the odds.

That instinct... that sixth sense he was born with...

It had been warning him constantly—

"Something is coming..."

At this point in the exam... he was the only one who could feel it.

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The elites were performing astonishingly well.

An exceptional swordsman was monopolizing every challenge and mission.

A fierce spearman from the first year had been on a nonstop rampage since day one.

A Wave Controller wielded ice so fiercely, it was said she altered the island's very environment.

The trio leading the scoreboard...

"Just... what's going on with the first-years?"

They were monsters in every sense of the word.

As days passed, the conflict only intensified.

— One week since the Island Trial began —

The number of participants had dropped to less than half...

Only the most brutal remained.

BOOM!

A powerful explosion shook the massive island.

Above a mountainous region, Daemon Valerion ascended with terrifying speed—followed closely by several students and Nightmare Beasts alike.

They were winged creatures with massive crow heads and thick black feathers.

Ding!

Nightmare Beast: Crawler

Class: C

Points: 3

Daemon slammed into the wall as violent winds spiraled around him, forming a raging cyclone.

The storm winds swept away everyone following him, hurling them off the mountain as he continued his climb unhindered.

Upon reaching the summit, Daemon leapt forward, lightning crackling between his arms, fusing with razor-sharp wind blades.

He then opened his palm toward the massive Crawlers, as if inviting a lady to dance.

From that hand... arcs of lightning sliced through the air, striking the flying creatures' heads with surgical precision, turning them into decapitated birds.

Under the grim island sky...

Tainted blood fell and mixed with the rain.

Ding!

You have reached your destination.

Rank: 1

Points: +5 base | +20 bonus

Bounty on your head: 230 points

Daemon didn't flinch and charged forward once again.

He had been on the move for days, searching for him... searching for Snow.

The latter hadn't rested either, not since day one.

Slash!

Snow's blade cleaved through Ganados one after another as he stormed through their ranks.

Waves of blue fire erupted endlessly—his presence was overwhelming.

His watch had directed him to target point B5...

And he was on his way now.

Points on your head: 220

Snow had been hunted relentlessly due to the massive bounty on him...

But he had slaughtered every single pursuer.

His golden eyes still gleamed as brightly as they had on his first day on the island.

Suddenly... Snow leapt high, dodging a stone spear that exploded where he had just stood.

With a quick glance, he spotted a girl with blazing red hair charging toward the same point.

"..."

It was Jessica Thivenin—the strongest among the second-years.

"Void Step..."

Whoosh!

In a single move, Snow appeared in front of Jessica like a phantom.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Conjuring a storm of blue fire around his blade, Snow slashed downward at Jessica, who blocked the attack with a crescent-shaped curved sword.

She staggered a step back—but moved her fingers in a strange pattern. In the blink of an eye, an invisible force struck Snow, hurling him backward.

"This... gravity?"

"Correct."

Jessica smiled as she kept pressing Snow back.

"For now... I'll be taking this point from you."

Snow said nothing.

Because the gravitational pressure restraining him... had vanished—leaving Jessica stunned.

"What?!"

"Why the surprise?"

Snow pointed his hand toward Jessica, and the gravity reversed—slamming down on her, catching her completely off guard.

"You're not the only one who can manipulate gravity..."

But he wasn't done yet.

"Void Step."

He instantly appeared in front of his opponent again.

This time... he unleashed Starforce, his strongest weapon.

Jessica responded immediately, raising her guard—but...

Snow moved with such speed that afterimages trailed behind him.

His sword carved brilliant arcs through the air as he exploded into her defenses.

And like shattering glass...

Cracks began forming, one after another.

Jessica felt dread creeping into her bones.

All she could do... was defend.

And after dozens—

Hundreds of exchanges—

Jessica collapsed to the ground, her sword flying from her hand.

Snow drove his blade into the ground beside her face as she gasped for air, her body soaked in sweat and rain.

"Thanks for the duel."

With his golden eyes, he looked down at her from above.

Jessica didn't know what to say.

He was completely unscathed... even his breathing was calm, like he'd just been out for a stroll.

She hadn't simply lost... she hadn't even stood a chance.

Snow didn't eliminate her—since she hadn't tried to kill him during the battle. So he simply turned away and continued toward the next checkpoint.

That white-haired monster...

Wasn't holding back anymore. The fact that he no longer wore his ring was proof enough.

It was as if he were declaring his presence to the world—uncaring of what might come for him in return.