

VILLAIN 179

Chapter 179 Pride of a Warrior

—Frey Starlight's Pov—

"This can't be real."

I couldn't believe what my eyes were seeing...

No, what my ears were hearing—

The terrifying wail of that eight-limbed monstrosity.

The Lady of Eight Legs had entered a frenzy, trampling everything around her in a fit of madness.

Her size was colossal—almost mountain-like. I could see her even from a great distance...

And even from here, that cursed aura reached me.

"No... that's not the real one."

It's impossible for the Empire to have subdued the real Lady of Eight Legs.

She is one of the Three Nightmare Lords, alongside cosmos and the Abyss Watcher.

In other words—she belongs to the SS+ class.

But what I was seeing now... was much weaker.

Once I calmed down and properly assessed the situation, I began to notice the differences.

The real Lady's size is supposed to be far greater than this.

Based on those facts, this must be one of her offspring.

She looked like she had just been born recently...

For the Empire to venture deep into the Southern Nightmare Lands and return with this—

Right from under her mother's nose...

The Emperor and his family are completely insane.

Still... this false Lady was massive in her own right. Just her landing on the island had already wiped out dozens of participants.

If they weren't careful, they'd die. Her venom alone was instantly lethal.

I glanced at my wristwatch before stepping away.

"I'm not crazy enough to take that thing on."

They didn't even assign it a point value—

Which meant: it couldn't be killed by us. The Lady of Eight Legs had absurd regeneration, regenerating instantly no matter how many times she was cut down.

So the purpose of unleashing this thing...

Was likely to teach us how to run—how to deal with entities far beyond our strength.

Whatever the reason...

It didn't matter to me.

"Survive until the end.

Pass the exam."

That's all it came down to.

...

...

Frey Starlight was far enough away—he didn't suffer from the wrath of the Lady of Eight Legs.

But for those nearby...

Everything changed.

Among them—Snow Lionheart and Daemon Valerion were buried beneath the ground after the Lady's last rampage.

One of her legs struck close by, and it flipped the land above their heads—though she hadn't even hit them directly.

You could say the whole world held its breath after that scene.

The battle between Daemon and Snow had been so incredible, it made the citizens of the Empire leap to their feet in excitement.

Then came the shock—

Seeing Snow wield multiple elements as if it were nothing... left everyone stunned.

Even the most gifted individuals were only ever born with two elements at most.

His use of all six triggered a violent reaction from the Church, especially from Bishop Plattier, who trembled as he watched Snow fight.

"A blessed one... with such talent and presence..."

The rest of his clergy agreed—

This must be a blessing from their god.

The one they revered and worshiped:

The Lord of light .

They were fully convinced that all divine gifts bestowed upon mankind came from the great Light Sovereign.

So Snow's overwhelming talent was the ultimate proof—the perfect example.

Even Yurasha—the silent saintess—was visibly stunned by Snow's presence.

Even the blind could see it now—

This was the one they had been waiting for.

Their prophesied hero.

But their hopes...

Were about to be swallowed by despair.

After the Lady of Eight Legs' devastating attack, both Snow and Daemon were swallowed by the earth—gone without a trace.

Who knew...

Maybe their hero was buried before he could even rise.

Tension had reached its peak.

A monstrous Nightmare creature had invaded the trial—

And their favorite heroes were now missing.

The spectators' emotions were in absolute chaos.

—Snow Lionheart POV—

A splitting headache... unbearable pain...

My face was drenched in blood, grime, and dust—to the point where I'd accidentally swallowed some of it.

It was a struggle just to open my eyes.

I was still gripping my sword... but my body felt wrecked—like a giant had stomped on it.

The last thing I remembered was fighting Daemon... then that thing attacking us.

You could say we'd been buried deep underground.

But I was still alive.

"How long are you planning to stay unconscious, you bastard?"

My senses slowly started coming back.

I heard Daemon's voice nearby.

When my blurred vision finally cleared, I saw something strange.

The space was extremely narrow—a massive chunk of rock hovered above us, threatening to crush us under its terrifying weight.

The only thing holding it back...

Was that guy.

Daemon stood over me, holding up the monstrous slab of stone, keeping it from collapsing on us.

And when I looked closer—

There's no way someone like Daemon should be able to withstand something like that.

But he wasn't in his usual state.

I was stunned by what I saw.

Only his hair and the top half of his face were visible...

The rest of his body was wrapped in a terrifying armor unlike anything I'd ever seen.

A jet-black suit with golden, scale-like engravings woven in intricate patterns, as if the armor had been ornately crafted just for this moment.

From above, the armor even covered his mouth and nose, making him look like a raging dragon ready to devour its prey.

The pressure he was releasing wasn't a joke.

But thanks to it, Daemon endured.

"Daemon... you..."

"Don't look at me like that... Huff... Do something—I'm at my limit!"

I didn't know how long we'd been stuck like that...

But Daemon's condition was clearly bad.

Even with the borrowed power of that strange armor, his body had taken a beating from our fight.

"Hold on!"

I took a deep breath, summoning every bit of aura I had left.

"Mass Reduction."

With my right hand, I touched the massive slab above us, manipulating its nature—trying to reduce its weight.

With my other hand, I tossed my sword aside and summoned ice.

"Ice Formation."

Little by little, I kept lightening the stone above us while simultaneously building up pillars of ice beneath it.

Daemon kept it steady, giving me the time I needed.

And only after I took on part of the weight did I realize how utterly insane it was that he had held it up alone...

The mass was no joke.

It took nearly an hour of effort to finally reduce the weight enough for us to push it away and catch our breath.

Surrounded by my ice supports, I stood to my feet with difficulty, while Daemon collapsed to the ground—gasping for air.

That strange armor of his began fading away, visibly retracting.

In a bizarre process, it withdrew into his skin, re-forming as a tattoo—a massive dragon emblazoned across his right arm and part of his back.

"That..."

I pointed to the tattoo.

Daemon, panting heavily, raised a finger to his lips.

"I just saved your damned life... so don't say a word."

"..."

I got the message loud and clear.

If anyone found out he used armor like that, he'd be disqualified on the spot. That thing had to be at least S-rank...

"Why did you save me?"

That question bothered me even more than the armor itself.

Daemon could've saved himself with that power.

I, on the other hand, would've been teleported out—disqualified.

In other words, he didn't save my life...

He kept me in the exam.

Daemon, sweating heavily, barely sitting upright, took a moment before answering.

His body released steam with every breath—he didn't look human anymore.

He looked like a machine pushed to its limit.

"It's not over yet..."

He spoke with difficulty.

"Our fight... it's not finished. I'm not letting you run away now."

If I'd been disqualified halfway through, I might not have made it into the elimination rounds—only the top eight qualify. Even with my current points...

"We'll both make it through.

And then I'll crush you in the next round."

For a moment, I was genuinely impressed...

By how proud he was of himself—even in this condition, he still wanted to prove he was the strongest.

Not through tricks or schemes... but through his own strength.

In his eyes, he was the strongest.

That passion of his...

Earned my respect.

"You can't beat me."

"Tch... Empty words."

I stepped forward, grabbing his arm and helping support his weight.

"What are you doing?"

Daemon clearly didn't like what I was doing—but in his current state, he couldn't stop me either.

"You said you'd beat me, right?"

Then let's get out of here first—your dumb body's already sucked all the air out of this place."

"Tch... This is nothing. I'll make my own path out."

"Sure. I'd love to see that."

I ignored him and began digging a tunnel upward. We needed to get out of here.

Though it seemed simple—it wasn't.

We were in a sealed space.

The air we were breathing wouldn't last much longer unless we found a way out.

Especially with our current physical states...

We might get eliminated in the dumbest way possible—suffocation.

With that thought in mind, I began carving a tunnel upward—

Carrying a gorilla-sized Daemon on my back.