

VILLAIN 201

Chapter 201 Frey Starlight vs Seris Moonlight

There were no pauses between battles. Barely ten minutes had passed since the last match—and now another was already upon them.

A fight that looked evenly matched—at least on paper.

The audience buzzed with chatter.

This one... had stirred up a lot of noise.

After all, both combatants were already well-known.

Many had heard about the incident between Seris and Frey in the past—

And naturally... Frey didn't have many supporters.

Still, he had shown incredible strength on the island, even securing third place—defeating several third-year students along the way.

Underestimating him would be a mistake.

The betting grounds lit up with conflicting wagers.

Lord Frey Starlight—the infamous troublemaker?

Or...

The only female finalist—Seris Moonlight?

The bets were closed, and the results went public:

Frey Starlight: 45% – Seris Moonlight: 55%.

This time, the odds favored Seris.

There was a lot riding on this match—

The hopes of these young warriors... and the money of a crowd eager to profit from the chaos.

Elsewhere, many eyes had been waiting for this moment—for Frey to appear.

Prince Aegon Valerion... Sansa... even Phoenix...

All of them had been waiting to see him—the one who had once shattered before their very eyes, yet still chose to show up and fight in this grand event.

And now... the time had come.

Frey Starlight and Seris Moonlight stepped into the arena.

All eyes turned, particularly to the girl who had captured the hearts of so many young men.

Clad in armor that elegantly outlined her form, with a face that could melt even the coldest hearts...

Seris Moonlight wasn't hailed as the fairest of them all for nothing.

As for her opponent... Frey Starlight—

He looked like a dark lord in that obsidian armor, white hair cascading around a face carved with shadow.

His grim expression alone had unsettled many.

There was a stark contrast between the two.

They stood, locked in a silent stare.

Once upon a time, Frey's body would tremble whenever he saw her.

Now, he didn't even blink.

Seris Moonlight was the first to speak.

With hesitation, she voiced the words she'd kept locked inside:

"I look forward to this battle... with you, Frey Starlight. Not as enemies... but as competitors standing on equal ground."

Frey raised an eyebrow the moment he heard those words.

Their conversation was inaudible to anyone else.

"What nonsense are you babbling?"

"I just... wanted to say that I don't see you as an enemy, Frey."

For a moment, Frey Starlight wondered just how much this girl—the heroine standing before him—had grown.

"I want to fight this battle free from the emotions that have driven me all these years... to finally put an end to this tangled relationship between us. Once and for all."

Simply put, she wanted to sever all ties with Frey... to return to square one, and maybe—just maybe—build a friendly relationship, at least as classmates.

But Frey's face darkened, his expression turning colder by the second.

"Classmates? emotions? I couldn't care less about that bullshit."

Seris frowned, sensing the killing intent radiating from Frey's body.

"You'd better come at me with the intent to destroy me. Hate me. Try to kill me in this fight—that would be better for you. Because I'm going to do the same."

To Frey, anyone standing in his path toward the Victoriad was an enemy to be erased.

He had no interest in emotional theatrics.

All he wanted... was victory, and to move forward.

From the stands, Ghost—who deliberately chose to watch this match—could feel the overwhelming bloodlust exuding from Frey.

Even Director Ivar, standing between them, was surprised by its intensity.

To emit such a threatening aura... it was clear Frey had already taken many lives.

But that, too, was part of battle.

Ivar briefly explained the rules, then raised his hand—

The signal to begin.

And the moment he did—

Frey drew his sword, gripping it tightly in his right hand.

His face darkened as he charged forward with savage intent.

"Ascension."

The Lord of Starlight activated his unique skill, his eyes flashing with a violet glow as he surged to the peak of his power.

He stormed Seris with ruthless force, aiming to slice her neck in the opening strike.

Seris responded by conjuring multiple ice barriers to block him—but Frey's blade tore through them all with a surge of dark aura.

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Black Meteor."

Within a streak of black light, Frey pressed the assault—again and again—each strike nearly severing one of Seris's limbs.

Against such ferocity... against that suffocating killing intent... Seris could barely defend herself.

She kept retreating, step by step, until she reached the edge of the arena—yet Frey didn't stop.

He thrust his sword at the exact spot her head had been a second ago.

Seris escaped just in time, dashing across the ring as Frey dragged his blade, demolishing the stone wall in pursuit.

And within moments, he had her trapped within a barrage of shadow-infused slashes.

Seris struck back when she could—but Frey dealt with her attacks effortlessly, without even trying.

Bit by bit, his blade carved into her—until blood began to flow freely from multiple wounds across her body.

The audience watched in silence as the brutal clash unfolded.

Seeing Frey Starlight unleash such savagery upon Seris... they didn't know how to react.

But elsewhere, some had been caught off guard by something entirely different...

Watching Frey Starlight fight with such power... and witnessing how efficiently he wielded his aura—

Phoenix Sunlight couldn't contain himself. His eyes widened to their limits.

Iris noticed his reaction and glanced back, curious about what was going through the young man's mind.

Phoenix felt... hollow.

"His aura pathways... healed?"

Impossible.

It was impossible—yet his eyes weren't deceiving him.

That young man before him had achieved the unthinkable. He'd crawled back from a place beyond recovery... and now stood tall before them all.

Without warning, a strange thrill washed over Phoenix.

Like father... like son.

They truly were the family of miracles.

The reactions of Frey's allies—Sansa and Ghost—weren't all that different.

But one person looked nothing like them. His expression darkened as he watched Frey fight.

"What... is going on here?"

How many more?

Aegon crushed the armrest of his chair, covering his face with one hand.

Just how many riddles would Frey Starlight throw his way?

Aegon Valerion no longer felt like he was watching a human being...

But something far stranger—something he couldn't understand.

"What kind of cursed obstacle are you to me, Frey Starlight?"

If he could achieve the impossible this easily... how was Aegon supposed to face him going forward?

A man untouched by logic? Immune to reason?

Lost in a storm of thoughts...

As the crowd sat frozen in stunned silence...

Frey Starlight continued his unrelenting assault on Seris Moonlight.

Having finally gotten into the rhythm of battle, Seris responded with all her might—

She conjured hundreds of massive ice blades, attempting to pierce her opponent, who zipped around her at impossible speeds.

His glowing violet eyes left streaks of light in the air with every move—making him look like a phantom.

Dark arrows slashed at her constantly from blind angles.

Perfectly timed—each time she left the smallest opening, he struck.

It didn't seem like he merely wanted to win.

It looked like he truly intended to kill her.

Seris focused hard and released her blood essence, forming a nest of thorny crimson vines.

If she wanted to win, she had to go all out.

And she did.

The vines crept like serpents, spreading across the battlefield, turning the arena into a frozen jungle.

She aimed to trap Frey, block off every escape route.

But Frey... wasn't even on the ground.

He soared high above her, as if he had predicted the attack entirely.

Seris instantly raised her hand, redirecting her magic upward—

But Frey gripped his sword tightly, wrapped in a cocoon of darkness.

He unleashed every ounce of aura he had gathered.

Descending in a black whirlwind, Frey collided with the icy vines in a violent crash—tearing through them one after another.

Like a dark spinning wheel, he rotated midair, slicing through everything that tried to touch him—closing the distance between him and Seris in the process.

With that final strike, he completely shattered Seris's defenses—and the relentless attacks didn't stop.

Slash after slash—he tore through her vines and shattered the ice around her.

Surrounded by a blazing aura of darkness, he kept cutting.

Slowly but surely, darkness began to overwhelm the frost.

And after a terrifying barrage of unending strikes...

The edge of Frey's sword—wreathed in darkness—appeared just inches from Seris's chest.

She couldn't block it. Not from that position.

The attack was aimed straight at her heart.

But before Frey could finish it...

Seris's defensive armor activated—releasing a shockwave that knocked her unconscious, her body collapsing at Frey's feet.

He looked down at her—at her body, now covered in countless wounds.

She looked like a shattered beauty.

Caught in the rush of battle, Frey raised his sword—

It looked like he was truly going to strike her down.

But then—

Ivar appeared out of nowhere and grabbed his wrist.

"That's enough. Frey Starlight, the match is over."

Frey stared at the director standing before him.

He could feel the immense pressure pressing down on him—and so, he slowly stepped back, lowering his sword.

Once Ivar confirmed his compliance, he let go and turned to the crowd.

"Match Four... the winner is Frey Starlight."

At that declaration, a chilling silence swept across the arena.

What kind of spectacle had they just witnessed?

Chapter 202 More Mysteries Unveiled (1)

Frey Starlight had won.

There was no applause—only scattered whispers echoing throughout the stands.

Whispers covering all sorts of things, but one topic dominated them all: how hostile Frey had been.

No matter how you looked at him—at that brutality—

Everyone had heard the rumors... the stories of how filthy a person he was.

But now... they had witnessed another side of him—the terrifying side. The side that nearly killed Seris Moonlight.

No matter how you looked at him, wasn't this exactly the image that would come to mind when someone mentioned a villain from a fantasy tale?

Frey looked the part perfectly.

Far from the noisy crowds—some stunned, others angry after losing their bets—

In the VIP area, Ada let out a sigh of relief at her brother's victory. On the other hand, Carmen remained completely calm.

"Why are you so nervous? If you ask me, his win was guaranteed from the start."

Carmen knew a little about Frey's abilities. That's why—from the very beginning—she knew he would win.

"It's not something I can control... My heart feels like it's going to leap out of my chest every time I watch him fight..."

"What are you, his mother or something?"

Carmen scoffed, fiddling with her watch as she smiled.

"Heheh."

Knowing the outcome beforehand... the old woman had placed a hefty bet on Frey's victory.

And now, she was thoroughly pleased with the results.

"What are you doing?"

Ada asked with a frown, noticing Carmen's unusual behavior—but the old woman smoothly covered it up.

"Nothing... just checking the match schedule."

"For some reason, you seem really suspicious right now... You're not betting the family's money on some stupid game, are you?"

Carmen gulped instinctively.

"O-of course not..."

Ada narrowed her eyes at her... but ultimately let it go. Meanwhile, the old woman sighed.

The age gap between her and the girl sitting before her was massive—but for some reason, Carmen felt like the child in that moment.

Ada was sharp—too sharp. Carmen could barely do anything when the new Lord of House Starlight was hovering nearby.

Elsewhere, another elder—Iris Sunlight—watched Frey as he left the arena.

"That boy..."

"Caught your attention?" Phoenix asked with a smile, seeing the blank look on Iris's face as he stared at Frey.

"He has skill—or rather... experience. The way he moves... it's like someone who's fought and survived many high-level death battles."

Most of Frey's movements came from hard-earned experience.

His decisions... his reactions during combat... he moved like a seasoned warrior.

But that was... unrealistic for someone his age.

To gain that kind of experience, he would've had to face countless powerful opponents who far surpassed him.

Iris's analysis was disturbingly accurate.

"Remind me—what's his talent grade again?"

"It's A," Phoenix answered.

The Lord of Sunlight frowned the moment he heard that.

"A, huh..."

For a second, he had mistaken it for overwhelming talent. A talent he had seen before—many years ago—in someone of the same bloodline.

"What a shame..."

In the end, Frey Starlight would be buried under the ceiling of his own limited talent.

"Truly... a shame."

The first-year matches had ended—and the upper-year rounds would begin soon.

Still, one could feel it in the air—a strange dip in excitement after the quarterfinals for the younger group concluded.

It was as if the main event had already ended.

Frost Moonlight didn't look pleased with what he saw—especially Frey.

His loss to that boy still gnawed at him.

And worse—he had made a pact with House Starlight. One that forbade him from approaching or mentioning Frey in exchange for their silence... regarding his father's betrayal.

Baylor Moonlight.

The shame of that defeat... it seemed it would haunt him for a very long time—with no chance for revenge.

The young Lord of House Moonlight... had finally started to open his eyes.

He was beginning to realize... just how weak he truly was.

Life had crushed him.

And now... he was trying to stand up again—from zero.

But to properly carry the weight of that family again...

As for his mother—she seemed more like an empty vessel after everything that had happened.

Not many paid attention to Frey Starlight.

Sure, he appeared strong for a moment... but his limited talent always kept him as a secondary target in their eyes.

At best, he was decent—nothing more than that.

Maekar Valerion recalled a certain someone as he watched Frey fight before him.

"What do you think of him?"

The Emperor asked the masked man standing behind him.

"If his talent is truly just A, then it's safe to say Frey Starlight has already reached the peak of his potential—unlike the others. His persistence is commendable... but that's all."

A faint red gleam flickered from behind the mask's eyes.

He didn't seem particularly interested in the matches happening below.

"I agree completely."

"It's not like you to care about the younger generation. Did you see something I missed?"

Oliver Khan asked, watching Maekar ponder in silence.

"No... it's just... for a moment, he looked like him."

"..."

Oliver said nothing. He already knew who Maekar was referring to.

But he paid little attention to the king's thoughts.

There were few things that truly interested the masked warrior.

His eyes occasionally scanned the crowd... searching for her.

And each time, he saw her—sitting alone, watching quietly from afar.

With melancholic black eyes... and gleaming golden hair. Beautiful—yet broken.

The princess watched from her seat, and even if just for a few moments...

Seeing Frey fight—and knowing he was okay—brought her a faint comfort.

With that, the upper-year matches were set to begin, following the announcement of the first-year winners:

Snow Lionheart vs. Ghost Umbra

Daemon Valerion vs. Frey Starlight

The real battles were about to begin.

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— Frey Starlight's Pov —

I walked slowly through the tunnel that led out of the arena.

I had finished my first match in the Victoriad.

After defeating Seris... only monsters remained.

Daemon Valerion.

I tightened my right hand around the hilt of my sword.

'It's going to be a tough fight...'

Step by step, I moved forward.

But then I stopped—sensing someone standing at the end of the tunnel.

"Show yourself."

And in response... she appeared before me.

She hadn't been trying to hide her presence in the first place—and her face was already familiar.

"Uriel Platini."

"Hello there~ Junior Frey."

I stepped closer to the girl, already uncomfortable with the way she spoke to me—as if I were younger.

Sure, she was twenty-two...

But I had lived longer than her overall.

In truth... you could say she was the junior here.

"What brings you here?"

As far as I knew, she had a match of her own today. But the fifth-year duels were scheduled later.

"I came for you, Frey."

"...What?"

"I was dying of boredom waiting for my turn. So I figured—why not help each other out? It's a request from your senior, after all."

With a blank expression, I wondered what on earth she was talking about.

"And what exactly am I supposed to do?"

Uriel smiled.

"That's easy~ I'll treat your injuries from your last fight and return you to peak condition. You haven't fully recovered yet, right? Not since the island trial."

This woman... I'd heard she was responsible for treating me while I was unconscious. But hearing her speak about my condition with such disturbing accuracy—

She was right. I still couldn't control my body a hundred percent. One day of rehabilitation wasn't enough.

But still...

"That's a big help, Senior. But I have to ask—what do you want in return?"

There's no way she would offer me that kind of treatment for free...

And sure enough, the answer came.

"It's simple—let me examine your body without any restrictions."

...What?

"Are we seriously having this conversation right now?"

Why did that sound so suspicious when she said it?

"Yes. I didn't get to fully inspect you last time because I was summoned by the Church. Can you imagine how disappointed I was?"

"Are those really the words of a Saint candidate? Shouldn't your curiosity be directed at your prophesied hero instead?"

"This has nothing to do with that."

Uriel stared directly at me.

And I didn't know what to say.

For some reason, she refrained from mentioning anything about fixing my aura pathways—and for that, I was genuinely grateful.

On the other hand, Uriel Platini was one of the main heroines. At the very least, I knew she didn't harbor any malicious intent.

So, albeit reluctantly—

"Fine. Do as you please."

She'd return me to peak condition. How could I turn that down?

"Perfect! Come to my room right away then!"

"Now?"

"Yup!"

I followed behind Uriel Platini, who practically skipped ahead cheerfully. I honestly wondered how I ended up letting this girl treat me like someone younger.

Chapter 203 More Mysteries Unveiled (2)

We walked for a while—not long, but not short either—and I had to endure an endless stream of small talk, even though I wasn't in the mood for it.

Eventually, we reached her room.

It looked almost identical to mine.

Uriel immediately pointed to the couch.

"Lie down on your back there. Oh, and take your clothes off too~"

I froze for a second before looking at her.

"...Take off my clothes?"

"Yes."

"...Do I really have to?"

This didn't sound like it was in either of our best interests.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Just think of me as a doctor. This is my job. Besides, I already saw you completely naked when I treated you last time, so I don't see the issue now."

"...Fair enough."

I quietly removed my armor, exposing my bare skin to her.

"Oh? That was fast. You accepted it way too easily."

"No point overthinking it."

Let's just get this over with.

I lay down on my back, staring up at the ceiling.

"Go ahead... all yours."

Do what you want with this body—it's still better than all the beatings it's taken lately.

"Hmm... alright."

She seemed... hesitant.

Shy, even?

Seriously? That's the expression you're making now, after everything you just said?

Was she the type who only acted strong on the outside?

After all, as a Saint candidate, she'd likely never had any sort of close interaction with a man—let alone being alone in a room with one who was half-naked.

Trying to be as considerate as I could, I closed my eyes and let her work.

And sure enough, I soon felt something touch my chest—a strange holy power seeping inside me.

Little by little... her hesitation vanished.

"I'll begin now."

That sacred energy lived up to its reputation.

My body felt lighter and lighter as Uriel worked with focused precision.

But then... as she became fully absorbed in her work, her expression began to shift into one of confusion.

The more she examined me, the more puzzled she looked.

"Your aura pathways... they're perfect."

After inspecting every inch of my body... Uriel showed a reaction I hadn't expected.

"This is unbelievable..."

"What is?"

She looked like she'd uncovered something.

"To be honest... I don't understand anymore."

After reviewing her thoughts carefully, she came to a conclusion.

"Your body hasn't recovered from the damage it took—not really. Actually, that's the wrong way to put it..."

There was no way I could have fully recovered from all those injuries in such a short time...

"To explain it properly... it didn't heal—it was replaced!"

"What are you even talking about?"

My head was starting to ache from her words.

"Your body—it doesn't leave scars. It recovers perfectly from fatal injuries..."

That's not possible. No matter how much a body heals, there's always a limit—even with a healer's help.

In other words, some injuries simply can't fully recover.

And I had sustained many of those.

Yet... I was healed.

"Dead cells... damaged organs... somehow, they're being replaced entirely. Your body is regenerating itself."

The destroyed aura pathways hadn't been repaired—they had been completely remade.

That's what Uriel was trying to tell me.

"Do you even realize what you're saying right now?"

That's impossible.

A human body has limits.

Uriel shook her head, thinking deeply.

"I've heard that people like Saint Eurasha and the Three High Priests can recover from nearly any injury unless they're already dead..."

"But that's with holy power."

Uriel stared at me seriously.

"But you don't have any. Which means... everything that's happening inside your body is happening naturally."

It didn't seem like Uriel was wrong. Her words sounded crazy at first, sure—but they explained a lot.

How I'd survived until now. How I was able to fight in situations that no ordinary human could ever withstand.

Suddenly... everything made sense, which only made it more confusing.

What exactly happened to this body... inside the Shadow Sect?

What did those statues do to me?

My head throbbed just thinking about it.

Uriel looked like she wanted answers—but...

"Don't stare at me like that. I know even less about my body than you do."

She probably knew more about me than I did at this point.

Uriel sank into deep thought.

"So even you don't know much... Then the answer must lie in your time spent in the Eastern Nightmare Lands..."

Clever.

A regeneration that came neither from holy power nor demonic contracts...

"I need to study this more!"

"Got it, now move your face away."

This girl was way too excited.

And I had a bad feeling about that.

"Frey! From now on, come see me every day at this exact time!"

"What? Why would I—"

"I'm being serious! I'll treat you after every fight—I'll make even your eyebags disappear! So please—let me keep studying your body!"

"No. Why would I agree to that?"

"Why?! Come on! Think of it as a service to humanity!"

"Stop throwing that nonsense in my face."

"Please!"

What was I supposed to do with this girl?

It wasn't like I could outright refuse her. If she went around spreading what she'd discovered about me—even if it sounded insane—who knew what might happen?

I had no choice but to accept. The girl started hopping around gleefully, and I honestly questioned how simple she really was.

And just like that... I ended up with my own personal healer for the entirety of the Victoriad.

The quarterfinal matches lasted for three straight days. Then, after a three-day break, the semifinals would begin on the seventh day.

And so, during those following days—

I visited Uriel's room every day, stripped down, and let her mess with my body.

The Victoriad soon became the source of bizarre rumors regarding the nature of Frey Starlight and Uriel Platini's relationship—especially after people began seeing that young man enter the Saint candidate's room... every single day.

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The upper-year quarterfinals wrapped up quickly.

Sure, they showcased several powerful students—like Uriel Platini, Ellen White, and Rob Valerion, the son of the Empire's greatest mage—

But overall... they were boring.

Most of the matches ended far too fast.

Even now, the crowd couldn't forget the image of Ellen White forcing her opponent to beat himself to death.

There was a limit to how much you could humiliate someone in battle.

With that stage concluded, the Victoriad was now entering its serious phase.

— Day Seven —

First-Year Semifinals:

Snow Lionheart vs. Ghost Umbra

"So it's today..."

What should have been the final match of the Victoriad had somehow turned into an early semifinal clash.

But it was a good opportunity—to see just how far Snow's strength had evolved now that he wielded Vermithor.

His fight against Dawn hadn't shown much.

But Ghost was on a different level.

This one... would be a real battle.

"Hoh, the Hero's fighting today..."

I would've appreciated watching it alone, honestly—but somehow, I ended up seeing the match in Uriel's room under the excuse that she needed to "prepare me better" for my upcoming battle with Daemon.

We sat together in front of the screen.

And there—before us—

Snow and Ghost stepped into the arena to roaring cheers from the audience.

"Who do you think will win?"

Uriel asked playfully, while I answered seriously:

"Snow."

"Ah, fair enough. He is the Hero, after all..."

But I wasn't saying that because of the 'Chosen Hero' title nonsense.

I knew exactly what Snow Lionheart was capable of. Even without that added power from Vermithor...

He would still beat Ghost.

That young man wasn't called the Final Obstacle for nothing.

I wanted to see it—that power.

And just like me... Ghost stared silently at Snow.

We both said the same words in our heads as we locked eyes with Snow Lionheart:

"I want to know... just how far this person's power reaches."

How far ahead of us was he?

He had been chosen as a Hero... placed on the same level as the First Emperor.

Ghost wanted to know the strength of the light that Snow shone—

And how much it would enlarge the size of his own shadow.

And deep down...

Was he wrong all this time for choosing me instead?

The answer... would become painfully clear in this fight.

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Everyone was waiting for the match to begin—

Snow Lionheart vs. Ghost Umbra.

Chapter 204: When Light Shatters Shadow (1)

First-Year Semifinal Match:

Snow Lionheart vs. Ghost Umbra.

The silent assassin who had never shown his full strength before—

Against the chosen Hero.

Ghost slowly opened his palm, staring at it. Thick gloves covered his skin.

Beneath them lay scorched, hardened flesh—toughened over years of gripping daggers.

The finest product of the Shadow Court.

The son of its greatest assassin.

"An assassin always fights from the shadows."

An assassin never reveals his trump cards.

That was the creed he had lived by.

And among the roaring crowd, he knew—

Those eyes were on him.

Mist Umbra stood hidden in the shadows, silently watching his son.

Since Ghost's birth, his father's words had been engraved deep within his soul.

Fighting with all your strength in front of the world—

Revealing everything—

Was a grave sin to the Shadow Court.

Yet...

"I want to know..."

Ghost muttered.

He remembered the first time he held a dagger, how he had trained relentlessly, how many had died while he survived.

He knew full well the consequences of what he was about to do.

But he didn't hesitate.

Slowly, he drew his daggers, locking eyes with his opponent.

"I want to know the distance between us... How far ahead he really is."

How blinding was his light?

Had the man standing before him truly surpassed him—after a lifetime spent forging himself in darkness?

Ghost, who had seen more blood than sunlight ...

The man who had always yearned for a glimpse of the light—

Was that light... Snow Lionheart?

"How strong is this man when he gives everything he has?"

Snow Lionheart heard Ghost Umbra's quiet voice.

"I don't know what you're trying to find in this fight,"

Snow said, slowly drawing his sword,

"but I can't guarantee you'll see everything. If you want answers... you'll have to force them out of me."

"You will."

I'll force you to show your full strength in this battle.

Even if it means exposing myself to the world.

Ivar had long since signaled the start of the match.

The crowd roared, shaking the arena.

But Snow and Ghost heard nothing.

Their entire focus was locked on each other.

The nobles, the veteran warriors—all of them understood what was unfolding.

"A battle of the highest caliber..."

The oppressive tension—

The way their senses erased everything but their opponent—

In their eyes, both fighters had already crossed a threshold few could reach.

And then—

The long-awaited beginning finally arrived.

Ghost merged his daggers together, pouring a monstrous amount of shadow aura into them.

All eyes turned toward him as the power built.

Even Frey Starlight, watching from afar, couldn't help but be surprised.

"He's using it right away?"

Before the stunned audience—and especially under Mist Umbra's sharp gaze—

Ghost unleashed his full strength.

"Reaper's Form."

The shadows coiled and twisted around him, forming a cloak of pure darkness.

His daggers vanished—

Replaced by a colossal scythe, blazing with dark aura.

Snow immediately shifted into full focus, surrounding himself with a radiant aura of star .

His opponent's strength had far exceeded his expectations.

Ghost, cloaked in shadows with only his black hair and piercing eyes visible—

Drove his foot into the ground with force.

"Bring it all out!!"

BOOOOOOM!!

Ghost appeared before Snow in an instant—like a phantom tearing through reality.

Even with his heightened senses—

Snow barely managed to catch a glimpse of him.

With a single swing of that scythe, Snow Lionheart was sent flying—crashing violently into the wall, shattering it.

Ghost spun the scythe with terrifying speed, leaving only afterimages in its wake.

The weapon's size continued to grow as he swung, unleashing wave after wave of dark aura and shadow.

Each brutal strike rained down upon Snow's head.

But from within the encroaching darkness, Snow retaliated—

Unleashing a dazzling surge of starlight aura that illuminated the suffocating void.

The Empire's Hero answered Ghost's attacks head-on, locking himself into a fierce power struggle with the silent assassin.

Snow's eyes gleamed fiercely as he conjured dozens of ice spears behind Ghost's back, taking advantage of his opponent's focus being locked on the frontal assault.

It was the same tactic that had helped him gain the upper hand against Daemon Valerion in the past.

Without hesitation, Snow launched the massive spears, expecting Ghost to dodge them.

But Ghost didn't move.

Snow's eyes narrowed in confusion.

Ghost didn't have the kind of body that could withstand such strikes—

So why wasn't he moving?

But the silent assassin had no need to.

The moment the icy aura spears touched Ghost's dark cloak—

They vanished.

As if they had been swallowed by another world entirely.

Shock rippled through Snow—and everyone watching.

"What just happened?"

The question was on everyone's lips.

"Tricks like that won't work on me."

Ghost pressed forward.

He gripped the scythe with one hand—and conjured a second scythe in the other.

The silent assassin doubled his speed, pushing Snow into a corner.

"Bring it all out!!"

Darkness overwhelmed the light.

"Void Step!"

Snow disappeared, attempting to escape the tightening noose Ghost had set around him.

He reappeared on the far side of the arena—

But his face darkened instantly.

Ghost was already there—right behind him.

The assassin clamped both scythes around Snow's neck.

Snow spun violently like a tornado, forcefully knocking the scythes away.

Flames erupted around his sword, combining with his starlight aura as he roared and counterattacked.

The two clashed at close range, savagely battering each other.

Ghost's colossal scythe cut into Snow repeatedly—

While Snow's strikes couldn't reach the assassin at all—

His black cloak absorbed everything thrown at it.

From this close, Snow finally understood.

That wasn't a simple cloak—

It was shadow, wrapped around Ghost's body.

A living shield that absorbed any damage.

Gritting his teeth, Snow poured even more aura into his blade.

He had to break through.

He had to pierce through the darkness that bound him so tightly.

"More!!"

Ghost roared too.

Merging both scythes into a double-bladed weapon, he spun it like a pitch-black fan.

The massive weapon clashed against Snow's sword.

Snow, now fully ignited with aura, unleashed everything he had.

He conjured lightning, struck with fire, and reinforced his body with starlight aura—

Occasionally, he unleashed sonic waves to disorient Ghost's senses.

But it still wasn't enough.

"Is that all you've got???"

BOOOOOOOMMM!!

Snow Lionheart was pushed back, overwhelmed by Ghost's relentless assault.

Ghost expanded his shadow, weaving tendrils of dark aura around Snow, trying to bind him.

All the while, he hammered down blow after blow without pause.

The clash of sword and scythe sent out shockwaves so fierce that the audience had to cover their ears.

They could barely keep up with the battle—it was moving at blinding speed.

Ghost in particular—

Moved at a pace that defied belief.

"Is this really... how an assassin fights?"

Chapter 205: When Light Shatters Shadow (2)

Wielding his scythe with deadly precision, Ghost locked his gaze solely on his opponent.

His thoughts were etched into every swing:

"I didn't sacrifice everything... just for this."

He had given it all.

He had revealed all his cards to the world—

For one reason only:

To witness the true brilliance of that light.

But what was the point?

"What's the point if my darkness outshines your light?!"

The shockwaves kept coming—

"Fight!!"

Ghost roared with everything he had.

"Bring it all out!!!"

With every clash—every collision—

Everyone could clearly hear it—

The sound of Snow's scream.

Ghost's eyes widened as he saw it.

The size of the aura Snow unleashed was growing at a terrifying rate.

Slash!!!

Snow's sword tore through the darkness violently—

Unleashing dozens—no, hundreds—of bolts of lightning and fire—

Followed by ice and howling storms—

It looked like a natural disaster had descended.

And Ghost stood against it, enduring with everything he had.

"More!!"

This couldn't be all.

"More!!!"

Their screams rose in unison.

Snow and Ghost—white and black—

Hundreds of collisions each second.

Snow Lionheart, his eyes glowing fiercely—

His aura—

Didn't stop.

It only grew stronger—faster.

Little by little, Ghost began to fall back.

Against the unstoppable catastrophe that Snow was hurling at him.

Amidst the explosions of countless elements—

Even the Empire's Titans watching from afar were stunned.

Was this even possible?

Snow's strength didn't stop increasing.

He launched attacks of every element imaginable—

Something no one had ever seen before.

Not even Kazis Valerion—the First Emperor—had ever displayed such a feat.

And even more shocking ..

Was Ghost's ability to withstand it all, screaming at the top of his lungs—

"More! Bring out everything you have!!!"

Boom, boom, boom, boom!!!

Amid the torrents of aura, the sweat, the filth, and the blood—

Both warriors entered a drunken frenzy.

Those who watched the battle—

Didn't want it to ever end.

BOOOOOOM!!

They tore into each other violently.

Blow for blow.

A black shadow clashed against a white star.

The arena itself groaned under the pressure—

The barriers barely containing the shockwaves.

It was like a fireworks show—

A brutal one—

That only stopped for a moment when the ground was stained crimson—

And a severed hand, still gripping a scythe, fell to the ground.

Snow appeared behind Ghost.

Meanwhile, the assassin fell silently to one knee—

Clutching his left shoulder, trying to stem the bleeding.

On one knee, the assassin bowed his head...

His face showing no pain.

No anger.

Nothing.

He stared silently at his severed hand.

Snow Lionheart, injured in multiple places, raised his sword—

Pointing it directly at his opponent.

"This is... the end."

Snow's face was blank—drunk on the thrill of the battle he had just fought.

But Ghost stood up again.

"The end?"

The shadow beneath him began to expand....

Relentlessly.

"How arrogant you are... Snow Lionheart."

The chosen Hero's eyes widened as he sensed it—

The intensity of the killing intent Ghost now released—

Surpassing even the murderous pressure Frey Starlight had shown in the past.

"You think it's over... just because you cut off one hand?"

Ghost poured out every last drop of his strength.

"If you cut off one hand...

I'll fight with the other."

The shadow grew wider and wider—

Until it swallowed the entire arena.

Drenched in darkness, Snow could only stare at his opponent in awe.

"If you cut off both my arms...

I'll hold the weapon between my teeth."

Tendrils of shadow began to coil around Snow—

But he slashed through them immediately.

Even so, there was no escape—

The shadow had swallowed the entire arena.

"If you break my teeth...

I'll fight with my bones."

This was the creed of the Shadow Court's greatest assassin.

"So no—this isn't over yet, Hero."

Ghost raised his hand toward Snow.

"Blackout."

In a bizarre twist, a vortex appeared—

Ripping the sword straight from Snow's hand, leaving him stunned.

Before he could react, the shadows coiled violently around his body.

Ghost—

Staring coldly at his opponent—

Displayed a terrifying resolve.

"This... is my darkness."

This was—

Everything he had.

Thousands of wounds.

Unending, brutal training.

A childhood spent on battlefields.

He had sacrificed everything to reach this level.

And now—the assassin wanted his answer.

And from within the swirling dark ...

It almost looked like Ghost had won.

But the growing light radiating from Snow's body said otherwise.

With Vermithor pulsing inside him—

The sword that granted him an endless supply of power ..

Snow raised his hand high.

"Let me return your words to you, Ghost..."

Slowly, he gathered his aura—

Forming an ethereal sword from pure energy.

A weapon forged from pure, concentrated aura.

A blade similar in form to Ghost's scythe.

"Just like you don't need that arm ...

I don't need that sword."

The gate had opened.

A star shining blindingly within the dark void.

Snow unleashed everything.

Gripping the imaginary sword tightly in his hand—

Channeling an insane amount of aura into it—

Snow swung vertically—

Erasing everything in his path.

"Fourth Sword—Worldbreaker."

SWOOOOOOSH!

From deep within the darkness ...

A blinding light erupted.

Ghost's shadow was split in two.

A colossal strike swept through everything before it, Completely overwhelming Ghost,

And smashing violently into the arena's barrier.

The brilliance of that strike ...

Blinded everyone who witnessed it.

The entire audience sat frozen,

Awestruck by what they had just seen.

Above the shattered remains of the arena ...

They heard footsteps ...

The steady steps of Snow Lionheart,

Walking calmly as he retrieved his fallen sword from the ground.

Ahead of him ...

Collapsed against the broken stone wall ...

Ghost lay there, surrounded by his own blood.

The final blow had activated his armor's emergency protection ..

Signaling his defeat.

Yet somehow ...

The assassin resisted the shock that should've knocked him unconscious.

Collapsed there ...

His body could no longer continue fighting.

Blood dripping down his face ...

Ghost stared silently at the young man standing before him.

"Huff... huff..."

His breathing was ragged.

As for Snow Lionheart ...

Wounded across his body ...

He was already beginning to recover, thanks to the Vermithor coursing through him.

He looked genuinely grateful to his opponent.

"I hope you found your answer, Ghost Umbra."

Ghost let out a strange, broken laugh at those words.

"What... huff... are you talking about?"

"You did it.

You forced me to bring out everything I had."

Hearing that, Ghost laughed even harder—

A hollow, almost mocking sound.

"You lying bastard..."

Snow said nothing—

Choosing instead to respect his fallen opponent, refusing to answer.

But Ghost wasn't finished.

"Even now... even to the very end...

You didn't show it all."

"You're simply..."

"Too strong."

Snow turned and walked away—

Leaving Ghost lying behind him.

First-Year Semifinal:

Snow Lionheart vs. Ghost Umbra

Winner: Snow Lionheart.

In the end ...

The strongest had prevailed.

Chapter 206: Beyond Limits (1)

Snow Lionheart had won.

His final strike ...

The one that severed Ghost ... Marked the end of the battle, allowing the audience to finally breathe again.

Thunderous applause erupted as the spectators clung to their screens, mesmerized by the incredible duel they had just witnessed.

The Church, in particular, was overjoyed at the level of strength their Hero had displayed.

Even the SS rank elites—and Emperor Maekar himself—

Watched in silence.

There were no words left to say.

Everyone understood—

What they had just witnessed would be etched into their memories for a long, long time.

From the Church's side, Saint Eurasha nodded in satisfaction at the performance their Hero had delivered.

"Take a good look... All of you can feel it, can't you?"

The raw power—

The staggering talent—

"He may look like a mere insect now in your eyes..."

Right now, they could defeat him easily.

"But compared to his potential...

You're nothing more than minnows swimming around a great white shark."

The Hero—

He would be the one to lead the Empire.

And that Hero—was Snow Lionheart.

The applause continued for a long time,

While highlights from the battle were replayed across the screens.

Meanwhile, Luc Valerion and his team of mages were already working to restore the arena.

The young mage couldn't help but feel a headache brewing—

Wondering just how far that boy's strength would eventually reach.

"This generation... is terrifying."

Ghost Umbra was taken away for treatment as well—after the brutal damage he had suffered.

Fortunately, Snow's final strike had been clean , Allowing the healers to successfully reattach Ghost's severed hand.

But on the other side ...

Ghost himself felt hollow.

He had broken the core teachings of the Shadow Court—

And he didn't know what reaction awaited him from the organization that even the Emperor left alone.

Still—

He was satisfied.

At least he had fought with everything he had,

For what he believed in—

And lost.

Thus, the first semifinal match of the Victoriad came to an end.

After several minutes, which passed by faster than anyone realized—

The screens shifted, announcing the next battle.

Victoriad Semifinals

Second Match:

Frey Starlight vs. Daemon Valerion

The match would begin in 30 minutes.

Inside Uriel's room—

The young Saint candidate sat alongside Frey.

Both of them stared blankly at the screen.

"The Hero... he's really strong,"

Uriel said softly.

Frey didn't respond.

He didn't show any expression at all—

As if lost deep inside his own thoughts.

"Yeah... he's very strong."

Uriel Platini didn't know much about this new Hero.

She had only heard rumors from others,

And seen him with her own eyes a handful of times.

Most likely, she would be the one to accompany Snow—

Wherever his journey would soon take him.

The young Saint candidate quietly wondered—

What meaning truly lay behind the destiny she had been assigned since birth.

"At least he's on our side... If this is his full strength now, I can't even imagine where he'll reach in the future."

Her words made Frey Starlight let out a dry, humorless laugh.

"That's not his full strength... He was holding back."

"What?"

Frey's demeanor was strange—

Like someone who had finally found a wall too tall for even his dreams.

"He didn't fight with everything he had.

His opponent didn't push him far enough."

Ghost Umbra was strong—

Terrifyingly so, especially for an assassin fighting openly like that.

But it still wasn't enough.

"How do you know that? We only watched one screen—how can you be so sure?"

Frey shook his head slowly.

"I just know. I know everything about that man."

"We're two sides of the same coin."

Uriel blinked, confused by his words.

"You know everything about him...? Are you some kind of stalker or something?"

Her teasing comment didn't land—

The heavy atmosphere around Frey left no room for jokes.

Frey had already confirmed it in his heart—

The level Snow had reached—

Was something that might even surpass the limits of his own imagination.

He knew it because ...

Snow was his mirror.

The perfect version.

When Frey looked at him ...

He saw everything he had once dreamed of becoming.

Suddenly, Frey's eyes widened—

As something finally clicked in his mind.

A reflection of himself.

"Look at him... a mirror image of me."

Look at yourself in the mirror—understand the reflection.

Frey felt his mind go blank as he processed something so obvious that he had somehow overlooked until now.

Things started to become clear.

From the very beginning—

The system had known.

It had always known that his greatest obstacle ..

Would be that person.

A faint smile crossed Frey's face as he stood up from his seat.

"Of course... it had to be him."

Who else could it be?

The final boss of this hellish game he had been playing for two long years.

But before he could face that—

He had another monster to defeat.

"Come on. Let me strengthen you one last time."

Uriel Platini placed her hands over him—

Channeling the holy power into his body.

She had supported him right up until the very end .. To the point that Frey couldn't help but wonder why she was doing so much for him.

"You know," Frey said lightly, "if you keep helping me like this, people might start talking."

"Hah? Don't worry yourself," Uriel replied casually, "Saint candidates aren't allowed to marry anyway. Plus... I'm not interested in younger men."

"Maybe I'm the type who likes older women."

"W-What?!"

Uriel stared at Frey, flustered—

While he just chuckled, heading out after receiving her blessing one last time.

"It was a joke..."

"..."

Frey Starlight headed for the arena—

The place where he would bring an end to all of this struggle.

And even though she tried to brush off his joke—

Uriel felt it.

Felt how he tried to hide his emotions ...

How tense he really was.

"Just... what does this fight mean to him?"

The young Saint wondered seriously.

...

...

...

The World Arena.

The battle was about to begin.

Ada chewed her nails nervously, staring down at the vast arena below.

"His opponent... Daemon Valerion."

The overwhelming prodigy of the Imperial Family.

It was clear the odds were stacked against Frey.

"It's going to be a tough fight..."

Carmen remarked calmly behind her.

In truth—

Many disagreed with her.

Most of the Empire—if not all of it—believed the final would be between Daemon and Snow ...

A continuation of their clash back on the island.

Frey was just a stepping stone.

The numbers didn't lie.

The underworld's betting houses—

Had already closed the odds and announced the final results.

Daemon Valerion: 96% — Frey Starlight: 4%

An overwhelming margin in Daemon's favor.

And it could be said ...

The few who had bet on Frey hadn't done so out of love for him ..

But rather out of hatred for the Imperial Family.

Or pure disdain for Daemon himself.

Either way ...

Everyone expected a one-sided slaughter.

Behind Ada, Carmen smiled quietly as the two warriors entered the arena.

She tapped on her smartwatch—

Locking in her final choice.

"Frey Starlight..."

"Will win."

...

They stood there.

One—

In black armor emblazoned with the Starlight crest.

The other—

In black-and-gold armor bearing the sigil of House Valerion.

Many familiar—and unfamiliar—faces watched on in anticipation.

But Frey ...

Saw only his opponent.

Daemon Valerion—with his burning golden eyes and explosive aura—

Glaring at him coldly.

Frey felt it sharply.

The disdain.

"It seems like you have something to say."

Daemon crossed both arms ..

"I'm just wondering..."

"Why I even have to fight you."

"You clearly have no chance of defeating me."

Daemon glanced sideways ..

Toward another young man.

Toward Snow Lionheart.

That was the opponent he had longed to fight.

As for Frey ..

"There's no need for you to step onto a stage that doesn't suit you, Frey Starlight.

Just withdraw."

Frey, his face as emotionless as ever, tightened his right hand around his sword and replied calmly:

"You're pretty confident that I can't defeat you..."

Even though I'm certain you don't know a thing about me."

A dark aura swirled around Frey, accompanied by a chilling killing intent.

"If you judge a book by its cover...

Don't be surprised when you burn ."

But Daemon brushed aside Frey's pressure effortlessly ..

Releasing an even greater force from his body.

"You misunderstand," Daemon said coolly.

"Maybe I don't know much about you.

But what I do know is that you're no warrior."

"You're just someone waving a sword for some meaningless goal.

The power driving you ..

It's nothing but fleeting emotion, ready to disappear at any moment."

Daemon clenched his fist.

"And against someone like that...

I cannot lose."

At that moment, Ivar Valerion appeared between them ..

Frey cut off any further words.

"Enough talking.

If you want to defeat me ...

Come and try."

Raising his sword toward his opponent ...

Frey prepared himself for battle.

Ivar said nothing.

He had already explained the rules to them beforehand.

All he had to say now ...

"Begin!"

Chapter 207 Beyond Limits (2)

BOOM!

The moment the signal was given—

Daemon vanished, lightning snakes coiling around his body.

His speed was unreal for someone built like a tank.

In an instant, he appeared at Frey's side, driving a rocket-like punch straight toward his face.

Frey barely managed to block it with his sword—

But the sheer momentum launched him across the arena, smashing into the barrier.

Daemon didn't give him a moment to recover.

He immediately clasped his hands together ,Gathering a terrifying amount of lightning aura.

"Let me show you the difference..."

The difference between a true warrior—

And someone like you.

"Lightning Artillery."

From between his hands, a monstrous beam of lightning shot out—

Slamming violently into where Frey had landed.

Frey barely dodged in time, his speed saving him from the blast.

But Daemon relentlessly tracked him—

Keeping the lightning barrage aimed at him wherever he fled.

In a situation like that ...

Instead of running...

Frey charged straight toward his opponent.

Dark aura ignited around his sword, forming a shadowy blaze.

He surged forward like a black arrow.

Daemon immediately switched tactics—

As if he had been waiting for this.

Twin dragon heads of lightning formed around his fists.

"Come!"

Frey's sword slashed with force—

Daemon's fists crashed forward like explosions—

The two collided violently, exchanging blow after blow at breakneck speed.

Frey attacked and defended at once—

While Daemon focused solely on offense.

His reinforced body absorbed most of Frey's strikes.

"Your attacks tickle, Frey Starlight!"

Each time, Daemon deflected Frey's sword—

His fists harder than steel.

With every punch that landed—

Daemon gradually gained the upper hand.

He could see it clearly—

And so he pressed harder—

Gathering lightning in his fists to form his strongest weapon yet.

"Black Lightning."

With a single, blinding strike—

He hit Frey's side directly—

Causing him to cough up blood.

Frey was dragged across the ground ...

And Daemon followed mercilessly ...

Driving devastating punches into his face, his gut—anywhere he could reach.

Daemon had no interest in dragging out this fight.

It meant nothing to him.

After a brutal series of blows—

After tearing into his opponent—

Daemon's fists were stained red with Frey's blood.

BZZZZT

BZZZZT

Crackles of lightning burst around him as he finally pulled back—

Leaving Frey embedded in the shattered wall.

The audience watched ...

Then erupted into cheers for Daemon.

A display of overwhelming power,

Just as they had expected.

Fulfilling every expectation.

Ada's face darkened.

Iris Sunlight shook his head slowly.

"What a shame..."

Frey Starlight ..

The boy who had reached heights his peers could only dream of ...

Yet with such limited potential ..

Now standing against Daemon Valerion,

Blessed from the moment of his birth.

Fate had been brutally cruel to that young man.

In Iris's eyes ..

The match was already over.

And everyone agreed with him.

Even Daemon knew he had already won.

But the match—

Wasn't finished yet.

From amidst the rubble—

Frey rose, his head drenched in blood.

The audience stared in disbelief as the battered boy stood once more.

"You're still able to fight?"

Daemon asked with a frown.

Meanwhile—

Frey chuckled, blood streaming into his eyes, blurring his vision.

"Yeah... I guess I should thank you."

His thoughts had been spiraling recently—

After witnessing Snow's overwhelming strength,

Frey had been trapped in a whirlpool of negative emotions ...

Drifting aimlessly, lost in despair.

"Thanks to you... I've finally come back to my senses.

After all that beating you gave me..."

"What bullshit are you spouting?"

Daemon couldn't understand what he was talking about.

But Frey didn't care.

He didn't need to explain anything to his enemies.

He only needed to crush them.

"Let's continue!"

With a violent stomp of his foot—

Frey surged forward, shrouded in a whirlwind of dark aura.

Daemon answered immediately—

Gathering dark lightning aura once more.

BOOOOM!!!

Again—

They clashed at terrifying speeds.

The black arcs of energy Frey launched—

Colliding with the lightning rockets fired from Daemon's crushing fists.

This time—

Frey fought with greater efficiency.

Greater power.

His sword reached his opponent—

Leaving wounds across Daemon's body.

Daemon now found himself needing not just to attack—

But to defend.

Still—

With his perfect physique ..

And his ability to fight from every position ..

Daemon remained overwhelming.

Once again ...

His blows smashed Frey's body even further.

Locked in a storm of slashes and punches—

Frey staggered violently.

"You can't defeat me!"

In a single decisive moment—

Daemon broke through Frey's guard,

Sending him flying.

He immediately followed up—

Leaping high into the air, gathering crackling lightning around himself.

"Thunderclap Strike!"

Daemon came crashing down upon Frey like a meteor ...

Burying him deep into the ground amidst a vortex of lightning.

Amid the rising dust and devastation—

Daemon pulled back, taking a deep breath.

He had completely crushed him this time.

That was how it should have ended.

But ...

Frey emerged again—

Swinging his right arm, the one still holding his sword—

Covered in dirt and blood—

Grinning like a madman.

"Why the hell are you smiling ?"

Daemon asked, thrown off by the sight.

"If you won't come to me..."

Frey charged forward again.

"Then I'll come to you!"

"You bastard!!"

Once more—

They collided violently.

This time ...

Black dragon heads gathered around Daemon's fists ..

As he struck with devastating force.

Meanwhile ..

Frey unleashed the full extent of his Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow technique.

That footwork ..

Allowed him to fight Daemon head-on.

Daemon clenched his teeth,

Releasing a battle roar that surpassed even the rage of furious beasts.

His fists rained down at impossible speeds. .

Like a rocket launcher with infinite ammunition.

Storms of black lightning engulfed the arena ..

Tearing through it ..

Breaking it apart ..

And mercilessly battering Frey's body.

Daemon cared for nothing now—

Except crushing his opponent.

All or nothing.

In pure strength ..

He was far superior.

He should crush him.

He should obliterate him.

Frey shouldn't have been able to endure even a second against him.

"Dragon Gate."

Daemon Valerion's ultimate strength.

He grabbed Frey's face and smashed him brutally into the ground,

Dragging him all the way to the edge of the barrier.

With Frey's head pinned in his grip—

The sky darkened above them,

As Daemon summoned a raging storm of lightning—

Which crashed down, enveloping both their bodies.

"Let's see you get up after this..."

BOOOOOOM!!!

The blast erased everything around them—

Leaving Daemon standing there,

Still holding Frey's face aloft.

Daemon panted heavily—

Convinced it was over.

But then—

The burning pain from his abdomen jolted him back to reality.

Frey's sword—

Had pierced him.

Not deeply ..

Daemon had tensed his muscles just in time to stop the blade from driving further in.

But it was there.

Immediately, he threw Frey aside.

Frey Starlight ..

Rose again.

Wounded.

Burned.

His body caked in dirt and blood.

Yet—

Even to the bitter end—

He had prevented any fatal blows from landing.

He had taken everything else gladly.

Daemon stared at his opponent through labored breaths.

Frey—

Began walking toward him again.

Chapter 208 A True Warrior

Veins bulged on Daemon's forehead.

He didn't understand.

He couldn't understand—

How?

How could his opponent rise every time he knocked him down?

How could he counterattack even from such a state?

It defied all logic.

But no matter what it cost—

"I'll crush you here and now!"

Gathering every last drop of aura left in his body—

Daemon launched himself toward Frey,

Engulfed in a black lightning storm,

Trapped within a violent gale.

Frey—

Unleashed a monstrous amount of dark aura in return ..

Charging to meet him without hesitation.

And once again ...

They smashed into each other violently.

Amidst an endless spiral of explosions—

The audience watched, faces blank.

Even the Titans didn't know how to react.

Huff

Huff

A massive intake of air ..

Then release—

From that beast on the battlefield.

Daemon was panting hard.

But—

He was the only one gasping.

Daemon stared in disbelief at the young man exchanging blows with him.

Frey ...

Didn't even look tired.

Injured, yes.

Burned, yes.

Covered in filth, yes.

But that face—

It stared at him as if saying:

"Come."

"I'll keep going for an eternity if I must."

Daemon—

Felt his mind tearing apart.

His fists were dripping with Frey's blood.

Was this even real?

"What the hell are you, Frey Starlight?!"

BOOM

BOOM

BOOOOM!!

The third exchange ..

Maybe the fourth—

Daemon stood there,

Breathless,

Arms hanging heavily at his sides—

Barely able to stay on his feet,

While Frey lay crumpled before him.

He had knocked him down again.

Inside that proud warrior's mind—

He wished.

No,

He begged.

That this time ..

That man wouldn't rise again.

But of course—

Frey stood back up.

Standing there once more before him—

Daemon felt his sanity slipping.

"This isn't a battle anymore..."

Commented Oliver Khan,

The crimson eyes behind his mask gleaming coldly.

"Daemon Valerion has already defeated him four times."

He had fought Frey four times—

Knocked him down four times.

But this wasn't a battle anymore.

This—

Was a war.

"A war... that Frey will win."

Maekar turned sharply—

Surprised by the masked man's declaration.

He wasn't used to hearing such statements from him.

Could it be ..

That even he had been moved—

By that boy still standing in the arena?

Inside the arena ..

With an earth-shattering roar ..

Black lightning surged wildly around the furious Daemon Valerion.

He too had suffered serious injuries after four brutal clashes—

But rage burned hotter than any wound.

"I'll kill you!!"

The amount of aura Daemon gathered—

Was far greater than anything he had unleashed before.

But Frey ..

Simply laughed.

"You can't."

With that same bloodied smile—

Frey pointed at Daemon.

"You've already hit your limit."

And just as he said those words—

Daemon's nose exploded with a violent gush of blood, Drenching his face in red.

Daemon clutched his face immediately,

Feeling a surge of pain coursing through him.

Frey stepped toward him again.

"Black Lightning Aura... it's the strongest variant of lightning."

"But it consumes an insane amount of stamina ,And aura alike."

"Tell me, Daemon..."

"How long have you been fighting while using it?"

Daemon Valerion was strong—

Yes—

But he had barely reached the middle of B rank.

His aura and stamina had limits—

Unlike Frey.

Frey ..

Who was also burning with pain.

Daemon's attacks were no joke.

But ..

What did that matter to him?

Compared to the countless brutal blows his body had already endured—

Were Daemon's strikes really the worst he had taken?

Of course not.

"You cannot defeat me, Daemon Valerion."

"You're not on my level."

"You're not even qualified..."

"To exist in the same world as me."

Frey gathered the darkness around him.

Even though pain meant nothing to him—

His wounds were real.

It was time to end this.

As for Daemon ..

Hearing those words ..

Words that cut deeper than any physical wound ..

The proud lion roared back—

No longer caring about anything.

He continued to gather Black Lightning Aura,

Even as blood poured from his nose,

Even as it streamed from his eyes.

Even as he vomited it.

For the first time since the battle began ..

Frey's eyes widened slightly—

Surprised at his opponent's desperate struggle.

Surprised at how Daemon, too,

Was willing to destroy his own body just to continue fighting.

"I won't lose!!!"

Instantly—

Frey's expression hardened.

He activated Ascension.

His opponent ..

Would strike with everything he had left.

And Frey ..

Decided to do the same.

One gathered crushing Black Lightning—

The other—

Summoned an absurd amount of Dark Aura around his blade.

Both warriors—

Were swallowed by storms of explosive energy.

"Dragon Gate..."

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow..."

They glared at each other—

Standing within a whirlwind of aura and blood.

Then—

They unleashed it all.

"Spirit of Lightning!!"

"Infinite Darkness!!"

Daemon summoned a black dragon of lightning—

While Frey—

Unleashed a wave of darkness that swallowed the world whole.

The entire world ..

Watched as they collided.

Sword against fist.

Lightning devoured darkness—

Darkness engulfed lightning—

An explosion erupted, deafening and blinding,

Drowning everything in smoke and chaos.

The impact consumed the arena in dust and destruction.

The lightning seared the darkness.

The darkness devoured the lightning.

Everyone held their breath—

Pressed against their screens—

Waiting.

Who had won?

Who was still standing?

Who had survived?!

From within the smoke—

Two figures emerged.

Both covered in blood and filth.

Daemon—

With a deep gash across his chest.

And Frey—

His entire body battered and broken.

Both—

Still standing.

But ..

Frey moved first.

Despite that broken body—

He charged at Daemon from out of nowhere.

Daemon tried to respond.

But his body refused to move.

The shock tearing through him had paralyzed him where he stood.

Daemon Valerion cursed under his breath.

"Damn it!!!!"

With the last drops of aura left in him ..

The wounded lion formed ten blades of cutting wind.

Those blades ..

Were fired chaotically toward Frey.

The attack was weak.

But even in his battered state—

It was barely enough to put Frey under pressure.

He dodged four of them ..

Blocked five others ..

But surviving completely ..

While still guaranteeing victory ..

Was impossible.

Ascension made Frey's mind work faster than any normal human's.

That tenth blade—

Was flying straight toward him.

A blade that showed no mercy.

A blade ..

That sliced his hand clean off—

With a horrifying spray of blood.

Frey's right hand ..

Severed.

But Daemon ..

Could only stare blankly at his opponent.

Because in that final instant ..

Right before losing his hand ..

Frey had thrown his sword into his left hand.

As if he had willingly sacrificed his right arm without hesitation.

Frey—

Was still coming.

His sword—

Gathered only the faintest aura ..

But it was enough.

He was coming.

His figure grew larger and larger in Daemon's eyes.

And then—

Frey slashed with everything he had.

Everything—

He poured into that one attack—

Aimed straight for Daemon's neck.

"Killing Blow!!"

The protective mechanism of Daemon's armor activated instantly—

A burst of defensive force shot out ..

Throwing the proud warrior backward.

Daemon collapsed ..

Staring blankly at the bloody youth before him.

And in that final moment—

His last, fading thoughts spilled unconsciously into words.

"Frey Starlight... you are..."

"A true warrior."

Daemon fell.

And standing before him...

Barely able to stay upright ..

Was Frey.

Everyone watched in stunned silence.

Frey staggered, clutching the stump where his arm had been severed.

The giant screens above the arena finally displayed the result:

Winner: Frey Starlight.

He had won.

But he didn't look happy.

He simply bent down—

Picked up his severed hand ..

And stumbled toward the arena wall, using it for support.

Focusing what little aura he had left—

He tried to reattach his arm.

Frey stared wearily at the vast stadium before him.

"One match..."

Only one match left.

One last battle.

"One more match... and it will all be over."

Between the shocked crowd—

And the broken young man—

The semifinals of the Victoriad finally came to an end.

Victoriad Semifinals, Match Two:

Frey Starlight vs Daemon Valerion

Winner: Frey Starlight.

Final Match:

Snow Lionheart vs Frey Starlight.

The countdown ..

To the end ..

Had begun.

Chapter 209 Before the Final Battle

"Haaah..."

Taking a deep breath, Frey tried to steady his consciousness ... Struggling to stay awake after the brutal, blood-soaked battle he had just fought.

Leaning heavily against the shattered wall,

Desperately trying to reattach his severed arm ... He barely managed to keep himself from collapsing.

Given his condition ..

A surprised Uriel Platini approached him,

Staring in disbelief at the sorry state he had driven himself into.

"I didn't think you were this insane, Frey Starlight."

With a dazed, weakened gaze ...

Frey barely recognized her.

"What... are you doing here?"

Uriel took his severed right hand and began working to reattach it herself.

"Why are you pushing yourself this far?"

Is this tournament really worth all of this?"

"Leave, Uriel... Everyone's watching."

Frey muttered, forcing a bitter smile.

Uriel—

The Saintess candidate— Simply smiled back.

She hadn't expected him to be worried about her even in a state like this.

"Look at you..."

"Calling me by name as if we're the same age."

"I'm not leaving. My duty from the beginning ... was, and still is, to save people."

Frey ..

Fell silent.

He felt a strange warmth ..

The sacred power of Uriel healing his broken body.

That warmth ...

Was something strange to him.

His body ..

Had only ever been met with blows,

Beaten by swords or bare fists alike.

The only warmth he had ever known ..

Was the burning heat of his own spilling blood.

But to rest like this ..

In Uriel Platini's arms ..

Frey wondered if he was somehow betraying his path.

A heavy guilt weighed inside him.

His overwhelming desire to return to his own world ...

Had unconsciously twisted into an obsession.

Every time he wavered from his goal—

He punished himself mercilessly.

His thoughts always drifted to negativity ..

Worrying about the strength of his next opponent,

Worrying if he was wasting precious time by even sleeping when the Final Boss still awaited him.

But...

The body has its limits.

Frey lost consciousness ..

Right there, in the arms of the Saintess candidate.

...

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Above the arena ..

Chaos erupted as the crowd finally processed what had happened.

Some cursed Frey viciously ..

Blaming him for their lost fortunes.

Others called his victory a miracle.

Some even claimed he had cheated somehow.

But that wasn't realistic.

Daemon Valerion had dominated him in every measurable way.

Yet Frey ..

Had stood again and again .. Fueled by nothing but sheer willpower.

But was that even possible?

Could one truly push this far ..On mere emotion alone?

At the Starlight family's viewing stand ..

Ada stared down at the arena, Her mind clouded with confusion.

"Why... does he push himself this far?"

Every time Frey was wounded ..

Every time he was beaten..

Ada felt something inside her tearing apart.

He was her only remaining family.

And perhaps because of that ..She understood, even if just a little, How desperate Frey was to win.

She saw it clearly ..

In those seemingly lifeless eyes he bore.

But why?

What did Victoriad mean to him?

What was Frey hiding?

Ada realized bitterly just how little she truly knew.

And how helpless she was to offer anything.

From the very beginning ..

Frey Starlight had chosen his path—And walked it alone.

To Ada ..

It felt as though another family member was slipping away from her again.

A firm hand gripped her shoulder from behind.

It was Carmen.

"Hold yourself together, Ada."

The old woman ..

Who had experienced this kind of pain many times before knew exactly what she was saying.

"For now, just believe in him."

"And one day, sooner or later ... you'll get your chance to help him."

Life was a filthy thing.

It threw you around, battered you senseless.

But it also ..

Gave you chances.

Until that chance arrived ..

"All you can do is wait."

Frey Starlight had to fight his own battle.

It was his fight and his alone.

He had chosen it and he would finish it.

The semifinals were over.

Only one match remained.

Frey Starlight vs Snow Lionheart

The final battle ..

Would erupt exactly three days from now.

Iris Sunlight watched from above ..

A blank expression on his face—As Frey Starlight lay unconscious in the arms of the Saintess candidate.

And that scene ..

Began drawing the eyes of everyone present.

Tension was clearly rising ..

Especially from the side of the Church.

Though he appeared composed ,The faint glint in Bishop Michael Platini's eyes was anything but reassuring.

But Iris Sunlight paid no attention to any of that.

His entire focus ...

Was locked onto Frey.

His piercing gaze seemed to dig into the boy's very soul.

"Tell me..."

The old man from the Sunlight family gestured toward Phoenix, standing behind him.

"When was the last time his talent was measured?"

Phoenix blinked ..

Surprised by the unexpected question.

As a new instructor at the Temple,

He had already reviewed the files of most students.

Thus, he answered naturally.

"The last time was when he entered the Temple.

Before that, it was during his time with the Starlight family. His talent was confirmed as an A, without question."

Talent could not be changed.

It was an unalterable truth.

Only in extremely rare cases ..

Such as with the Ultras who had sold their souls— could it be tampered with.

Otherwise, human talent was something you were born with.

Something completely out of your control.

"It wouldn't hurt to test it a third time."

"You can arrange it, can't you?"

Phoenix frowned slightly ..

Baffled by the old Sunlight's insistence.

"Are you suggesting the reports were falsified?"

"It's a possibility."

"Unfortunately, that's not possible."

"Maybe they could tamper with results inside the Starlight household, but not here, inside the Temple."

"I've personally verified it myself."

Phoenix had harbored his own doubts ever since the island trial ..

But after careful investigation ..He had confirmed that Frey's talent evaluation had been genuine.

"Hmmm..."

"Why do you still look so unconvinced?"

Was the old Sunlight still suspicious even after all that?

"It's my intuition."

Intuition ..

Phoenix's eyes widened slightly ..

Remembering the weight that word carried within the Sunlight family.

Iris didn't use that word lightly.

And when he did—

He was never wrong.

"I'll handle it after the Victoriad is over."

"Hoooh? You'd do that for me, Even knowing it's probably meaningless?"

The idea of changing one's talent was absurd ..

So absurd, they hadn't even considered it seriously.

But even so ..

Phoenix decided to follow.

"I've learned that sometimes it's better to listen to you, No matter how trivial it sounds, Uncle."

"You're a rude brat, you know that?"

They both chuckled lightly—

As the Victoriad continued moving forward.

...

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...

Snow Lionheart had witnessed the last battle.

The name of the opponent hadn't meant much to him.

Upon learning it was Frey ..

He simply left without a word. But he had seen it clearly.

How Frey had struggled ..

How he had fought.

Snow found himself wondering ..

Would he, too, one day fight that fiercely for something?

His hand moved to his chest.

Fingers brushing against his shirt—

Pulling out a pendant hidden beneath it.

A silver pendant.

Shaped like a dove with outstretched wings.

Snow clutched the pendant tightly in his hand.

And continued walking away.

His eyes shining brighter than ever.

Frey unconscious.

Snow in his prime.

And the clock ..

Was ticking rapidly toward the final day.

...

...

...

Meanwhile ..

The Victoriad continued with powerful performances from the senior years' semifinals.

While the first-year matches had stolen the spotlight ...

The battles fought by the seniors— Were no less impressive.

The crowd, Consumed by roaring cheers and wild celebration for the warriors, Hardly noticed the passage of time.

The first night flew by in a flash.

Chapter 210: A Feast for Crows

When night fell, And darkness ruled ... Only blackness remained.

A lone figure ..

Walked silently through the back alleys and darkened corridors.

The silent assassin—

Ghost Umbra.

Eyes closed ..

He followed a specific path. Winding through back streets ...

Twisting through hidden corridors until eventually ..

He descended into the filthy sewers beneath the capital city of Belgrad.

Ghost finally arrived at a wide, open clearing.

A clearing covered in white flowers.

He stared at the scene before him—

Then looked up.

At the pipes above, dripping steadily.

At the crumbling, rotting walls.

A sight that made him wonder ..

How could such flowers grow—

In a place so desolate?

Step by step, Ghost walked forward, Heading toward the center of the white garden.

After a few paces—

Two others silently followed behind him.

Ghost didn't turn to look.

He simply continued forward ..

Until he stood before a man clad entirely in black, standing alone at the garden's center.

The man wore a black mask shaped like a skull.

The two behind him wore the same attire,

Though their masks had different designs.

Ghost smiled bitterly—

Recognizing them immediately.

"I didn't expect them to send The Numbers... for someone like me."

In response to his words ..

The three men removed their masks.

Each bore distinct features ..

The man directly before him, Looked strikingly similar to Ghost himself,

save for a long scar across his face.

"Kneel, Ghost Umbra."

The silent assassin obeyed without resistance ..

Lowering himself onto one knee.

"You accept your fate, then..."

"..."

Silence settled over them.

Each stared at the other.

Especially Ghost and the man standing before him.

"Everything has a price in this life, Ghost Umbra.

You know how things work.

You know the rules that must never be broken."

"Any last words?"

The two men behind him spoke in turn.

Ghost's expression remained utterly unchanged.

"Did... my father say anything?"

Any words?

Anything at all?

"We are nothing but killing tools.

Weapons, forged perfectly for a purpose.

The Leader of the Court is no different."

"He stayed true to himself to the very end, huh?"

The man before Ghost .. His elder cousin ..

Was the first to draw a sword—

A short, deadly blade black as night.

Ghost knew exactly what was coming.

"Before I die i wanted to know..."

"How far the elders had reached."

He asked ..

Not really expecting an answer.

Yet, unexpectedly—

All three replied without hesitation.

"Seventh Court."

"Seventh Court."

Both men behind him spoke together.

Only the man at the front answered differently.

"Eighth Court."

They spoke in terms only assassins could understand.

"You?"

Ghost replied—

His face as vacant as ever.

"Tenth Court."

Those faint words ..

Made even these seasoned killers—

Visibly react.

They couldn't help it.

How could they when they realized the frail-looking young man kneeling before them—

Had reached the very final Court.

Having walked the same hellish path themselves ..

They understood each other without needing further words.

There was nothing but respect—

And mutual acknowledgment between them.

You could even glimpse hesitation in their eyes ..

A flicker of doubt ...

As to whether killing this talent was truly the right choice.

Because Ghost represented their peak.

The very pinnacle of their struggle.

But orders ..

Were orders.

Both men behind drew their blades.

Ghost lowered his head.

He had known from the start—

That escape from the shadow Court was impossible.

Facing the Numbers head-on—was a foolish notion.

And so ..

Waiting for the end,

Ghost muttered softly:

"I have no regrets."

He had trained harder than anyone else.

He had stained his hands with blood ..

Endured every savage training ..

Watched others die while he survived ..

Climbing higher and higher .. Until he reached a level no one else had.

But ..

Even he had limits.

The expectations placed upon him—

Had always been sky-high.

After all ..

He was the son of Mist Umbra.

But as a man who had walked through the darkness, he had seen it ..

he had seen, with painful clarity, the limits of his potential.

That level had not satisfied the silent assassin.

He wanted more.

He wanted an ending worthy of all he had endured throughout his life.

And it was then he understood .. that darkness was nothing without light.

In the end, he had risked everything for his beliefs, fighting against Snow Lionheart.

To die now, after fighting for what he believed in...

that was simply his fate.

"I have no regrets."

He had come so close...

so close to discovering the answer...

But what awaited him in the end was the executioner's blade.

The assassins raised their swords.

Their reflections gleamed across Ghost's face.

And without warning ..The white flowers were dyed red.

Blood gushed forth, staining that isolated place.

Ghost stared, wide-eyed, as two heads rolled past him.

Still unable to grasp what had happened, soaked in the blood of those men...

The leader spoke, after cutting down his companions:

"Ghost Umbra... The Shadow Court has judged your actions. The verdict blood must be spilled."

The leader gripped his sword and raised it high.

"You once asked about your father's words.

Very well .. listen carefully."

"What you did is a debt. A debt that must be repaid .. and the price is human lives."

The man laughed bitterly as he stared at his blade.

"But not your life... It seems your soul is far too valuable.

Instead, three other souls have been offered to settle the debt."

"W-What?!"

The grim assassin drove his sword violently into his own throat.

"Your debt has been paid, Ghost Umbra."

A fountain of blood sprayed across Ghost's face, painting it crimson red.

Three corpses now lay around him.

Ghost sat there in shock for a moment.

His eyes stared into emptiness.

He had expected death.

But he had been naive.

"What I do from now on...

will decide whether others live or die?"

Mist Umbra's message had been cruel this time...

By breaking the Shadow Court rules, Ghost's actions had doomed others to die in his place.

The silent assassin stood up and wiped his face.

He gathered himself .. as he always had.

With his bare hands, he dug and dug.

He dug three graves, and buried those three who had once been like brothers to him ... men who had endured the same suffering he had.

After covering them with earth, the silent assassin stood once more and walked away.

"May you find peace..."

Slowly, Ghost disappeared back into the darkness.

...

...

...

Two days left until the final battle.

As night fell, everyone else slept soundly in their beds, away from the chaos of the world.

But the young man with golden eyes and brilliant white hair drifted far away in his dreams.

Snow Lionheart, summoning memories of a past long buried.

...

On the outskirts of the Empire.

Far away from the noise of the great cities — far from the turbulence of life.

Amidst a lush green plain, a beautiful place that lifted the heart...

There stood an orphanage.

A massive orphanage crowned with a sign depicting a white dove soaring into the sky ...

a symbol of hope and freedom.

Yosefka Orphanage.

Inside the walls of that orphanage, built of black stone...

A boy with golden eyes, white hair, and pale skin often played.

He was an exceptionally beautiful child ...

a sight that lifted the spirits of all who saw him.

He often played with his friends all day long until exhaustion took over and they collapsed into sleep.

From time to time, he would cling to the skirt of the orphanage's deputy director, laughing along with everyone who saw him.

The director himself would occasionally visit to check on them ... a frightening man, silent, with three red scars across his face, and golden reading glasses perched on his nose.

Clad in the robes of a clergyman, he looked terrifying to the children ..

yet he was extremely kind to them.

That was why everyone loved him too.

As time passed, Snow was forced to say farewell to many of his friends as they left to continue their lives elsewhere.

He often said "goodbye."

One day, he was warned not to approach a certain area within the orphanage.

"Snow... always be a good boy,"

the deputy director would often repeat to him.

"Don't be curious. Be content with what you have."

Contentment is a treasure that never fades...

Had he engraved those words a little deeper into his heart,

perhaps what happened could have been avoided.

...

"What are you doing here...?"

Blood.

So much blood.

His golden eyes widened in horror, and he struggled even to breathe.

The director stood there, blood dripping constantly from his mouth.

"Why didn't you obey orders, my boy?"

Upon the table ..

The mangled remains of a half-eaten corpse.

The body of one of those he had played with for years.

"Oh, my dear Snow..."

A bloody hand gently ruffled his hair.

"You didn't see anything... did you?"

That face...

he would never forget it.

"You're a good boy, after all."

Suddenly, the boy was yanked away.

Snow awoke, gasping for air, his body drenched in cold sweat.

He clutched the silver pendant hanging from his bare upper body ...

his only adornment.

His flawless, sweat-soaked body...

his trembling hands...

Old scars do not fade easily.

And they had become his greatest driving force to move forward.

...

...

...

—Frey Starlight's POV—

One day left.

Tomorrow... everything would end.

I raised my recently reattached right hand, testing a few movements.

My hand responded, but I felt it clearly—

A slight delay, even if just for a fraction of a second, caused by the nerves not having fully healed yet.

As a result, I couldn't rely on it for now.

I was forced to wield my sword with my left hand again.

Sitting on the ground beside my bed,

I checked my physical condition, and everything I had prepared over the past two years ..

All my abilities... the ones I had forged for this very moment.

For Snow.

I recalled Uriel's words — how she had told me it would be impossible to fully recover before the battle.

Even if I appeared fine now, the accumulated injuries had left their mark...

Unlike my opponent, who would be fighting in perfect condition.

Perhaps the only deadly weapon left at my disposal was Ignition.

The sole technique that surpassed Snow Lionheart's arsenal.

But I could only unleash it as a last resort.

A normal sword would draw out far less aura than Balerion...

Thus, even if I could launch a deadly blow, it would be much weaker compared to what I had unleashed back on the island. The risks were enormous.

If Snow survived the blast... I would lose everything.

First ... ordinary swords wouldn't withstand the ignition and would shatter into pieces — meaning I would lose my weapon after firing it.

Second ... my body would be destroyed too, as I'd be forcing my aura pathways to channel far beyond their natural limits.

I wouldn't even be able to fight afterward.

The risks of using Ignition were simply too great.

Meaning, I could no longer fully rely on my most powerful weapon.

That left me with a set of other skills I had honed until now.

Snow Lionheart...

I couldn't face him the same way I faced others.

Pure willpower wouldn't mean much against him.

I couldn't simply exhaust him like I did with Daemon ..

if I tried, he'd annihilate me immediately.

My mind had reached a dead end.

I knew I would give it everything I had in tomorrow's battle — even if it killed me.

But no matter how much I thought...

no matter how much I struggled...

I couldn't see it.

I couldn't imagine a scenario where I won.

Every path ended in defeat.

And so, to keep myself from losing my mind, I spent the entire night staring at the system's advice.

Hoping to find salvation...

But before I even realized it...

The final day had passed in the blink of an eye.

And now, I was walking toward it.

Toward the appointed day.

"Today... I will write the ending of this journey."