

VILLAIN 221

Chapter 221: To Live or to Die (1)

The days passed...

And yet, that young man remained locked away in his dark cell.

From time to time, many came to see him ... his sister, his comrades.

But Frey Starlight never responded to anyone. He simply sat there, lost in a daze, occasionally falling into fits of hysterical madness.

He had been like this for days now.

His body, strangely enough, continued to heal on its own.

He refused food, refused water ...rejected them all.

And yet, his body still functioned perfectly.

Every day, Frey Starlight became more of an enigma to those who watched him, as the empire prepared itself for his trial.

The victor of the Victoriad ...once hailed as one of the greatest talents, the boy who defeated the chosen hero ... was now a prisoner, chained atop cold stone, awaiting the judgment of others to decide his fate.

Events unfolded quickly.

Yet far away from Frey, and the endless uproar within the empire ..

Back at the hospital that had witnessed Frey's madness and his suicidal outburst ..

That facility now lay in ruins.

Among the wreckage and the crumbling building,

you could still see broken medical equipment and a few lingering stains of blood.

Hidden among the debris was something no one had noticed:

A laptop.

A black laptop, still running, its screen illuminated with a simple, unwavering message.

Unseen by anyone, it remained like that for days.

On its glowing screen, a set of words gleamed:

> Final Mission: Completed.

– Phase One: Complete.

– Upgrading Author's Tools to the Next Level.

– Author's Tools Level 1 >>> Level 2.

– Progress: 91%

Slowly, that number inched toward the perfect 100% ...

marking the beginning of an entirely new chapter in the story of Frey Starlight.

Belgrad.

The day had come ...the day that would determine his fate.

The fate of Frey Starlight.

Inside the Court of Light ...the place where the empire's most critical trials had been held throughout its history ...the doors opened once more, this time for a boy who had only just turned eighteen.

The trial was made public. Every seat inside the grand courtroom was filled to the brim.

It was almost laughable ..this was the same court that once sentenced the former temple head, Raphael Bloodmader.

Now, it was about to do the same to a mere student.

Special seats were reserved for the heads of noble houses, behind them the guild leaders, and the strongest awakened.

The courtroom was built in a circular fashion, with the accused standing in the center, surrounded by countless watching eyes.

Seated at the highest position, Emperor Maekar Valerion himself presided over the proceedings ...

the man who would ultimately decide whether Frey Starlight would live... or die.

All of Frey's acquaintances were present his family, his peers... everyone.

You could even see that strange alliance forming:

the Starlight and Sunlight families sitting together, side by side.

Aegon and Sansa sat near their father, while, strangely enough, Oliver Khan sat closer to Princess Sansa than to the emperor this time.

The sound of murmurs filled the courtroom as people whispered about the situation, but the entire hall fell silent the moment the great doors opened.

Through them entered Ivar Valerion, followed by two guards dragging a young man behind them.

Frey Starlight.

Chained, barefoot, he staggered toward the center of the court ...

his white hair disheveled, falling messily across his face and body.

He wore nothing but a dirty white shirt and black trousers.

Yet despite everything, his body looked... flawless. Perfectly healed.

It made no sense.

Who could believe that this was the same boy who had once stood as the champion of the Victoriad?

The hero who had turned into a criminal overnight.

They tied him in place under hundreds of watching eyes,

and the guards stepped back ..leaving Ivar alone standing there, facing Frey.

Ivar inspected him closely...

"Don't bother resisting. The more you struggle, the tighter these chains will bind you."

"..."

Frey said nothing.

The chains wrapped around him were a special tool, crafted to imprison even the most dangerous criminals ..

tightening their grip with every attempt to resist, to the point where they could literally crush the victim's body.

Seated upon a wooden chair, bound in place,

Frey silently waited for the trial to begin.

And it was Maekar who finally announced it:

"Let the trial of the former Lord of House Starlight... Frey Starlight... begin."

The courtroom fell into complete silence for a moment, until Maekar continued:

"First... let us present the defendant's crimes one final time for all to hear."

Responding to the Emperor's words, Ivar stepped forward and began.

"The crimes committed by Frey Starlight are as follows ..."

He listed the charges:

"He murdered thirty-eight individuals ...both men and women during his rampage at the Temple Hospital.

All his victims were killed barehanded, without the use of any weapon."

Rumble...

That first charge alone was enough to ignite a wave of indignation toward Frey.

The courtroom stirred with anger as murmurs and shouts for his execution filled the hall.

But all noise ceased the moment Maekar Valerion released his oppressive aura,

forcing everyone to submit under its overwhelming weight.

Without even glancing at them, the Emperor motioned to Ivar.

"Continue."

With a nod, the current Headmaster of the Temple proceeded:

"Second... the defendant unleashed a devastating attack that could have annihilated the entire Temple.

Fortunately, it resulted only in material damage."

Ivar paused briefly before adding:

"Although further casualties were avoided, it is crucial to recognize that the defendant possesses powers capable of killing not just thirty-eight people... but potentially thousands, if not more."

In other words, Frey Starlight could not be treated as an ordinary criminal ..

he had the potential to cause a catastrophe.

"The defendant also wields an SS ranked flaming weapon,

one of the rarest in existence .. classified in the same league as the Sacred Sword, Vermithor.

We still don't know how he acquired it, but it is suspected that it originated from the Eastern Nightmare Lands, where the defendant spent an entire year."

With each revelation about Frey, the murmuring slowly began to return.

A boy who lived among monsters... and became a monster himself.

That, most likely, was what everyone thought.

But Ivar wasn't finished yet.

"And finally... although we have yet to confirm it completely .."

The Headmaster hesitated seriously before uttering the final bombshell:

"The defendant appears capable of breaking the limits of his talent.

His innate potential, initially ranked as A, has recently risen to S."

It was as if someone had lit a fuse.

The courtroom erupted into chaos,

an explosion of gasps, cries, and disbelief.

Many could not accept what they had just heard ...

some gasped in horror, others flatly denied it.

Breaking the limit of one's innate potential was deemed impossible ..

a miracle.

A miracle achieved by this boy.

In other words, Ivar was telling them:

the boy standing before them was a monster whose bounds were unknown.

A monster whose path was unpredictable.

In the worst-case scenario...

he could grow into the greatest threat they had ever faced.

That thought alone was enough to drive the masses into hysteria.

Calls for his immediate execution roared through the courtroom.

It wasn't just the spectators ..

even some of the powerful ranked individuals seated in the special sections demanded his death.

Amidst the escalating chaos, as the public sentiment heavily tilted toward one side ..

An old man rose from his seat and walked slowly toward the center.

Every gaze fell upon him.

Iris Sunlight.

Chapter 222: To Live or to Die (2)

Without saying a word, his mere fiery presence gradually silenced the courtroom.

The old man, with his flaming beard, chuckled lightly as he stood beside Frey.

"Look at yourselves... all of you... throwing your knives at this boy,

desperately trying to stab him."

He lifted Frey's head for all to see.

Frey, however, remained utterly vacant,

as if he wasn't even there.

His black eyes... looked completely dead.

Everyone watched in heavy silence as they witnessed his face ...

a face radiating overwhelming despair and infinite emptiness.

"Tell me .. what do you see?

A criminal?

A murderer?"

Iris slowly shook his head.

"He's nothing more than a child... A child who hasn't even fully matured yet."

The old man released Frey, shifting his attention back to everyone around him.

"I'm not denying that he committed a terrible act, a crime beyond question ..

but he's still a young man, barely at the start of his journey, not even half the age of most of you."

Iris pressed forward deliberately with heavy words:

"Yes, he should be held accountable. Yes, he must atone for his sins ..

but not through death.

He isn't just some ordinary individual... His talent is tremendous... He's a miracle!"

Something the world had never seen before.

"We must not bury such a gift.

A talent that, while it took thirty-eight lives, could one day save countless more ..

with the right guidance and proper education.

Surely you felt it too, didn't you? When you saw him fight."

Iris pointed out something that many had overlooked.

"You witnessed his struggle .. how he climbed from the very bottom,

how he rose up to challenge monsters,

and how, in the end, he became a monster himself."

Frey's journey in the Victoriad, the epic that told the story of his struggle...

"Even if many accused him of cheating,

for a brief moment, all of you saw yourselves in him."

With modest talent,

he carved a path toward the summit.

Many imagined themselves in his place,

because he resembled them.

And many of the young had raised him up,

declaring him their hero.

His fight... was never hidden.

Everyone had witnessed it.

Iris' words were powerful.

Yet, despite this, an opposing voice rang out:

"You're only defending him because of his talent!"

"You're trying to save him simply because he holds a high status!"

Iris' words were both true and false at the same time.

Frey Starlight was no longer a youth of modest talent ..

he had been revealed as a monster with unknown limits.

Naturally, much of the public resented Iris' defense.

In their eyes, if Frey had been an ordinary killer, without talent or a powerful family,

they would have executed him immediately, regardless of his age or circumstances.

To them, this all reeked of pure hypocrisy.

But Iris showed no sign of anger.

Instead, he flashed a terrifying smile.

"You're absolutely right!"

Everyone was taken aback by his unexpected reaction.

"You say I'm biased because of his talent? Of course I am!"

"Who ever said that all lives are equal?!"

He continued unleashing words that left the courtroom bewildered.

"I'm telling you ... we must let him live precisely because of his talent.

Because he is gifted,

because he can offer something extraordinary to this empire!

That is how worth is measured here nothing else."

Morality meant little in the world they lived in.

Double standards were the norm inside the empire that had survived countless horrors.

A person's life depended heavily on the value they could bring to the empire.

That was the truth Iris was delivering.

At that moment, Ivar Valerion's eyes widened slightly as he recalled what Maekar Valerion had said on that day:

"His worth... will determine his fate."

Could this have been the Emperor's true meaning all along?

Iris Sunlight declared his stance with pride,

fully aware he was attracting hostility and disdain from many within the hall.

Meanwhile, Ada Starlight watched how Iris had fought for her brother ..

with a ferocity she hadn't imagined.

At last, she understood why the old man had insisted on speaking instead of her.

Iris Sunlight was someone who had lived too long,

who had seen too much...

A truly unfathomable man.

Maekar himself nodded with a faint smile,

releasing his aura once more to silence the courtroom completely.

"Well said, Iris Sunlight,"

the Emperor declared.

"In the end, it is a man's worth that determines his fate."

The audience grimaced at Maekar's direct support of Iris' stance.

Iris simply nodded respectfully toward Maekar.

"Your wisdom is truly admirable... Your Majesty."

The Lord of Sunlight gracefully stepped back,

leaving the rest for the Emperor to handle.

"I would now like to hear the opinions of everyone present."

In order, the courtroom allowed each major group to express their stance.

House Starlight...

Their position was made absolutely clear by Ada Starlight's powerful statement:

they fully supported her brother and firmly rejected any possibility of his execution.

House Moonlight...

To everyone's surprise,

Frost Moonlight declared that their house would remain completely neutral regarding the case.

He stated that any rumors about House Moonlight seeking Frey's death were merely fabricated by certain disgruntled members of their family.

The young lord of House Moonlight showed clear maturity as he declared his family's stance without hesitation.

The Church.

They were perhaps the decisive factor, the main force that had demanded Frey's execution.

Yet to everyone's shock, the Church suddenly announced its neutrality!

Their sudden reversal, after being so vocal in calling for Frey's death, was blatant hypocrisy.

You could practically feel the suffocating frustration radiating from Blatter.

But he couldn't do a thing once the Hero himself declared his support for Frey Starlight out of nowhere.

Since Snow Lionheart was the bearer of Vermithor,

his decisions were seen as the embodiment of the Will of the Lord of light.

Opposing him would mean directly opposing their god's will—and completely destroying their credibility.

The High Priest was finally experiencing the dark side of appointing a Hero ..

becoming shackled to the whims of a 17-year-old boy named Snow Lionheart.

Blatter quietly wondered whether it was even possible to manipulate that young man anymore,

especially after gaining the constant backing of Saintess Yurasha.

It was a true disaster.

One that brought a subtle smile to Emperor Maekar's face.

The Emperor then requested the opinions of his children, since one of them would inherit the throne one day.

Sansa Valerion did not hesitate.

She openly and boldly voiced her full support for Frey Starlight.

"His execution would be the stupidest decision this empire has ever made since its founding."

With that powerful declaration,

having already helped dismantle the hidden forces that sought Frey's death,

and cleverly securing the presence of a major influencer like Oliver Khan at her side,

Sansa had gained a significant advantage with seemingly simple moves.

"You claim he's just a murderer...

But to me, he's the man who saved my life when no one else would."

The princess spoke of how Frey had risked everything to save her inside the Temple.

A person like that...

did not deserve death.

She made her stance crystal clear.

Her dark eyes briefly glanced toward her brother sitting on the opposite side.

Aegon Valerion sat quietly, wearing his usual smile.

Yet his gaze never once left Frey Starlight.

This insect who had grown into a monster,

whose true size even he could not yet measure.

A being who had survived every attempt on his life,

who had defied logic with miracle after miracle...

Before Frey, for the first time ...

Aegon felt something he hadn't even felt toward his father, nor the Empire, nor the Ultras ..

Despair.

The despair of facing true defeat.

Frey Starlight had, quietly, become Aegon's top priority.

Calmly, Aegon expressed his stance:

"I will remain neutral."

The prince decided to play it safe.

Of course, he wanted Frey dead,

but he couldn't afford to be the sole open opposition.

That would've been pure idiocy.

Now, very clearly,

almost every major power was against Frey's execution.

Everyone was left bewildered

at how quickly Frey's situation had turned around overnight.

And it was all thanks to the old man sitting back with a satisfied smile ..

Iris Sunlight.

He had overturned what seemed like an impossible situation in record time,

showing that the terror of the old generation was not only on the battlefield...

but in the political arena as well.

Everyone could now feel the momentum of the court shifting completely in Frey Starlight's favor.

Yet Maekar had not announced the verdict.

There was still one person left whose voice had yet to be heard.

That person... was Frey Starlight himself.

"I would like to hear what the accused has to say,"

Maekar declared, his voice echoing throughout the silent courtroom.

In other words, Maekar was giving Frey a chance to defend himself ... and perhaps tip the scales fully in his favor after all the support he had gained.

Finally, all attention was focused on the boy at the center.

Frey Starlight,

who had remained vacant and detached all this time, his eyes still staring blankly into the void.

Chapter 223: A Letter to My son

– Frey Starlight's POV –

So much noise.

So many faces.

Dragged straight out of that gloomy, quiet hole and thrown into this blinding light and obnoxious noise.

My head felt utterly empty.

Were they holding a trial for me now?

To decide whether I should live or die?

No... why even bother?

Just kill me already.

But no, things were never that easy.

Why the hell did that old man Iris defend me?

What was all this bullshit they were spewing about "my value" determining my life?

Value?

What fucking value?

The value of your lives I was about to annihilate that day?

"I would like to hear the defendant's stance on everything that has happened so far... and what he has to say."

Maekar Valerion spotlighted me completely.

They wanted my testimony.

They wanted to hear what I thought of this circus around me.

Hadn't I made myself clear enough?

Wasn't it obvious to these damned fools what I wanted?

Did I really have to scream it at them?

Fine then.

-Cough-

I coughed lightly, gathering what little voice I had left.

All those eyes were pinned on me as I raised my head and stared straight at the Emperor and everyone present.

"First of all, let me just say one thing."

I took a deep breath... and then spat it all out.

"You're all a bunch of bastard sons of whores and bitches who don't even understand the simplest fucking thing... Ah, my apologies"

I caught sight of Ada among the crowd.

"Everyone here's a bastard... except my sister Ada."

Wait... I wasn't the real Frey, so technically her mother wasn't my mother...

"Ah, whatever, who cares! I'm a bastard too, and you, Maekar Valerion, are the biggest son of a bitch here! King of bastards, Grandfather of whores!"

The collective shock was almost visible in the courtroom ..

but I wasn't finished vomiting up the rage boiling inside me.

"The world would be a much better place if we got rid of every last one of you sons of bitches! So how about we all just die together? Since we're all bastards anyway! Go on ...kill me!

Because if you don't... I'll fuck every last one of your whore mothers myself, and then kill all of you!"

Saving me?

Who the hell said I wanted to live in the first place?

"Kill me! I'm not sorry for what I did! Do I look like someone who regrets it?"

If I regret anything, it's that I didn't wipe you all off the face of the earth that day!"

"Kill me! Kill me! Kill me! Kill me! Kill me!!!"

My screams of madness filled the courtroom.

Confusion, fear, horror ...

all etched across their faces.

They didn't know what to make of it.

They didn't know whether to call it courage... or pure, naked insanity.

While I continued to scream for my death ..

A sudden impact cracked against the back of my skull, silencing me instantly, sending a harsh tremor through my head.

The one who hit me... was the last person I expected.

Phoenix Sunlight.

The so-called brightest talent of the previous generation.

Phoenix gripped my head tightly and offered a calm apology:

"Forgive him. Frey Starlight is clearly not in a sound mental state right now."

With a devastating punch, he made me spit blood onto the pristine floor.

"Allow me to discipline him for his words."

Punch!

Smash!

Kick!

I was beaten so brutally that the courtroom was almost painted with my blood.

Phoenix, now covered in my blood, turned calmly to the onlookers ..

Most of whom had no idea how the hell to react to the madness unfolding.

Phoenix Sunlight remained eerily composed as he continued to hammer me down.

"We supreme talents tend to understand each other very, very well."

He shattered the chains restraining me and grabbed me by the hair.

"Your Majesty, esteemed guests... allow me to be selfish for a moment."

The brightest talent among them all,

Phoenix Sunlight, stepped forward with his proposal.

"Everyone fears what Frey Starlight might become in the future... but let me ask you ... Does this look like someone who could threaten anyone ever again?"

Displaying my bloodied face to everyone, Phoenix continued:

"I could kill him with a single blow, break him without even lifting an arm.

So how about this?"

His eyes burned fiercely.

"Leave him to me. I will personally take charge of Frey Starlight, forging him into a sword this empire can wield in the wars to come ...

a sword to rival his father... Abraham Starlight."

The pressure surrounding Phoenix Sunlight ... the Sunlight Family's brightest jewel ...grew heavier.

"And rest assured," he added coldly,

"if he fails... I'll kill him myself. And I'm more than capable of it."

Everyone watched Phoenix standing there, holding me up effortlessly with one hand, delivering his insane offer.

Maekar Valerion's expression didn't change in the slightest ...

Not even after the way I had publicly insulted him.

He simply nodded.

"Are you confident you can handle him?"

Phoenix responded without hesitation.

"On my honor, as a proud warrior of House Sunlight."

"Then it is decided."

Maekar's hand slammed onto the table, his voice final:

"Frey Starlight shall be imprisoned within Alcatraz—the Prison of Time—for three months.

After that, he will return to the temple under Phoenix Sunlight's direct supervision.

I grant you full authority."

The courtroom was stunned.

Whether it was Phoenix's stance,

the mention of Alcatraz,

or the fact that Frey Starlight would actually survive ...

Everything had shifted.

Maekar had made his decision.

From the very beginning, he had never intended to kill me.

How could he?

When another Abraham Starlight had appeared right before his eyes?

Just as the father had fought in the War of Light,

so too would the son fight in the war to come.

Maekar had seen too much of history...

And history was about to repeat itself.

In a surreal twist, the trial finally came to an end.

...

...

...

The trial was over.

Everything was done.

At one point, things had been teetering dangerously toward disaster.

You could see it in the expressions of Frey Starlight's allies ..

how Ada Starlight and Iris Sunlight nearly collapsed from sheer panic, when that mad young man nearly destroyed everything.

If not for Phoenix Sunlight's desperate intervention, it would have been a catastrophe.

Frey was saved.

Saved from all those who wanted him dead.

But who...

Who would save him from the greatest danger of all?

Who would save him from himself?

After the trial, Frey Starlight was temporarily returned to the Starlight estate,

awaiting transfer to Alcatraz.

Alcatraz ...

the worst prison in the northern empire.

A place cursed with powerful magic that warped perception of time,

making days feel like endless years,

while prisoners were subjected to daily inhuman torture.

Three months inside that hellhole felt like an eternity.

Ada Starlight was devastated when her brother's sentence was announced.

But to Frey... it meant nothing.

What could three months of torture possibly change for someone like him?

It all seemed laughably insignificant.

Frey Starlight refused to interact with anyone.

No matter who tried to reach him,

he gave no response.

He was nothing more than an empty vessel

staggering silently before their eyes.

Phoenix had saved him today.

He had vowed to rehabilitate him.

But what could he fill Frey with...

when there was nothing left inside?

Even death had been stripped from him by Balerion's cursed restraint.

Now,

Frey was just a hollow young man,

sitting there alone.

On the same stadium bed...

where everything had once begun.

He lay back,

staring blankly at the ceiling ..

The same ceiling he had seen

when he first awakened in this hell.

Two years had passed since that day.

Two years in hell.

And now, he had returned to square one.

But this time... with no goal, no hope.

He sat there, alone.

In that moment, far away from where he was ..

Author's Tools

Level 2 >>>> Progress: 100%

The personal laptop vanished into thin air, disappearing completely.

At the same time, a small dot appeared in the air before Frey's empty eyes.

A glowing blue dot.

The young man slowly stood up, staring at the light.

Those dead eyes ... eyes that wished for nothing but death.

Slowly, Frey reached out and touched the point with a single finger,

and a strange interface unfolded before him.

It was the Status Window he had seen so many times in his previous life...

that classic, cliché system window that appeared so often in stories.

The laptop was gone, leaving behind only this interface.

There, written in bold letters ..

Author's Tools – Level 2

- Additional features and capabilities have been unlocked! Please review them.

Frey's expression didn't change in the slightest as he stared at the new functions.

They all seemed meaningless to him now.

"Got rid of the cursed laptop just to get this..."

The Engineer was stubborn.

Unbelievably stubborn.

Frey Starlight was about to close the interface forever,

never intending to open it again.

But something caught his eye ..

A section at the bottom of the screen flashing faintly...

as if it was calling to him.

"Look at me."

There, a single line was recorded:

Recorded Message – Abraham Starlight

Frey frowned.

He couldn't even comprehend what he was reading, wondering if he had misunderstood the words.

Abraham Starlight,

the mysterious man, had left behind a message inside the system.

At this point, Frey no longer understood anything.

He simply clicked on it, wanting to know what that man ..

the one he knew nothing about ... had left for him.

The moment he pressed it, a magical sound echoed across the room.

A voice.

A voice that stirred Frey's dead heart,

forcing his eyes wide open.

"Hello, my son."

Just two words ..

but Frey jolted violently,

his lips trembling.

"It's been a long, long time...

You don't know how much I missed you,

how badly I wanted to see you again."

The voice of Abraham Starlight...

a man Frey was never supposed to have any connection to.

The voice was strong, warm, gentle, and heartbreakingly kind.

The very thing he had longed to hear his entire life.

That voice...

it was a voice he had heard countless times ..

"If you're hearing this now, it means you've already come a long way.

You've endured suffering I can't even imagine..."

He paused.

Frey muttered under his breath, his whole body trembling:

"Don't... don't use that voice..."

He shook violently.

"Don't torture me any more than this..."

Because that voice ..

that voice belonged to ..

"Before I tell you everything..."

I need to confess something, my son...

You have no idea how shocked I was when I opened my eyes in this world..."

No.

"You have no idea how stunned I was...

to find myself inside the very novel you used to tell me about...

My son."

Frey collapsed to the ground the moment he heard those words.

"It felt like a gift from you,

as if you had given me a second chance to live.

I searched for you everywhere, believing with all my heart that I would find you.

I fought, carried a sword I had never wielded before..."

Kneeling on the ground,

Frey Starlight listened to his father's voice,

tears exploding from his dead eyes.

It felt like his chest was being ripped apart.

His heart shattered again and again.

"I'm sorry, my son..."

I know how much you've suffered,

but please... allow me to tell you my story.

Haha... I really was a terrible father, wasn't I?"

"NO!!!"

Frey choked on his tears and screamed:

"You were the best father I ever had!

Better than I ever deserved!"

He screamed from the depths of his soul,

but it was useless ..

the recording could not hear him.

It could only move forward.

"I know you've suffered more than anyone,

I know you're broken into pieces...

But look at how far you've come.

My son, you have no idea how proud I am of you..."

The words shook Frey's very soul.

"You deserve it, son...

You deserve to know the truth.

So let me show you."

Without warning,

a blinding light engulfed Frey Starlight.

A light that transported him elsewhere.

"Let me show you...

where it all began."

The light swallowed him whole ..

carrying him away...

Into Abraham Starlight's memories.

Into the beginning of everything.

Chapter 224: Memories of the Fallen Star (1)

-Frey Starlight's Pov-

"Come... to the place where it all began."

My father's words...

They still echoed through my mind, even as the blinding light swallowed me whole, ripping me away from where I stood.

I felt the world around me twist and shift at a dizzying pace.

This was ..

"My father's memories."

With bloodshot eyes, I followed the sound of his voice ... the voice that stirred something long dead inside me.

Warmth surged in my chest as I found myself standing in a wide, dimly lit room.

A single cradle sat at its center, bathed in the soft silver glow of the moon filtering through the window.

Inside the cradle, a small infant slept .. his hair as black as ink.

He looked... just like me. Just like Frey.

As I gazed at the tiny figure, my father's voice came alive again.

"When I opened my eyes for the first time... I found myself inside the body of a newborn."

I kept staring at the sleeping baby.

Father's reincarnation was nothing like mine.

Had he truly lived his second life from the very beginning as Abraham Starlight?

Ignoring my swirling thoughts, I focused again on his voice.

"At first, I was lost. I thought it was a dream. But dreams don't last this long."

Days passed before my eyes.

I saw a man and a woman ..both with black hair .. caring for the child with overwhelming tenderness and love.

They must have been from one of the Starlight family's branch lines.

In other words...

my grandparents.

"Once it became clear I wasn't dreaming, I realized I'd been reborn ..

a new body, a new family, a new reality. But the same memories."

I watched as the tiny Abraham grew, day by day.

I laughed quietly when I saw him stumble through his first steps, and grumble in frustration when he couldn't even manage the simplest things.

I witnessed every moment while my father's voice .. warm and familiar ..narrated it all.

And deep down,

a part of me wished he'd never stop speaking.

"Even as I came to terms with my fate...

I could never forget the final moments of my previous life .. that blinding light, that moment when everything fell apart."

Father...

he never forgot.

He never forgot us.

"That's why, the moment I was old enough, I began searching for you.

Trying to uncover the truth behind it all."

From the time he could walk and speak properly, Father began learning about this strange new world he had been thrown into.

And with the knowledge of a grown man trapped in a child's body, he learned at an inhuman pace.

"I was stunned to discover that people in this world wielded supernatural powers,

living in a bizarre era that fused medieval and modern times together."

Father consumed knowledge at an alarming rate.

And the deeper he dug,

the more he recognized the world he was now part of.

"As I pieced things together ... learning the names of the great houses, the territories, the history...

I realized I was living inside your story.

The one you used to tell me... over and over again, just for fun."

By the time he turned four years old,

he knew.

He was inside the novel his eldest son once created.

"For me, it felt like your gift."

A second life, given after the first was torn away.

"And when I realized that...

something else appeared before me."

Just as his voice said so, I watched as a glowing point of light materialized before the four-year-old Abraham.

The moment he touched it,

an interface ...a system ..unfolded before him.

I blinked in confusion.

It wasn't the Author's Tools I was familiar with.

It was something... completely different.

"A strange system window appeared,

showing my stats, my level, like I was in some kind of game."

Abraham Starlight – Level 1

It was nothing like the one I had received.

"The system gave me missions. Completing them earned me Experience points,

which I could then use to level up."

Every time he leveled up, he could enhance one of his attributes ..strength, speed, and even his innate talent.

Thinking about it carefully...

Father had been given one of those classic, game-like systems often seen in novels.

Simple. Practical. Ruthless.

"And back then... I foolishly believed you were there,

watching me from behind that transparent screen."

He truly, wholeheartedly believed... that I was the one who had given him everything.

And so, using all the experience from his previous life .. and that strange system that had appeared before him ..

he threw himself into training, completing every mission assigned to him.

Days passed quickly as Abraham Starlight lived quietly in one of the Starlight family's branch houses.

The branch families were marginalized, living far away from the chaos of the main house.

Because of that, Father grew up in a peaceful, healthy environment.

He lived his second life to the fullest.

"I made sure to treasure every second... training harder, living better .. as a tribute to the gift you gave me."

His strength grew at an alarming pace, unnoticed by the world.

Day after day, Abraham Starlight trained with a sword, cutting again and again.

At a young age, he awakened the Starlight family's basic Light Affinity, earning the right to learn their secret combat style—the Stardust Technique.

"When my parents in this world gave me that technique, I saw the sorrow in their eyes."

The Stardust Technique was powerful, forming stars around the heart.

Each star drastically boosted the user's power and enabled devastating attacks.

However, the branch families were suppressed for generations;

they were only allowed to cultivate the technique up to the Fourth Star.

Beyond that, they needed specialized secret methods ..

methods that the main family kept tightly locked away.

"I understood then. My parents were sad because they could only give me an incomplete technique. But even so... it was enough."

Because the system he had received would forcefully break through the limits they couldn't.

"I was grateful for their love and support, but... no matter how much I tried, I could never truly see them as my real parents."

It was impossible.

After all, my real father's age far exceeded theirs.

And so, the relationship between them stayed ambiguous .. parents who loved their son, and a son who saw them only as strangers.

Time flew by.

I watched my father reach fifteen years old.

And looking at him...

he looked exactly like me when I first arrived in this world.

Father's voice continued narrating his journey:

"After spending years completing the system's endless missions ...sometimes hard, sometimes twisted, sometimes outright bizarre ... a new idea began to form in my mind."

At first, he believed that completing the missions would eventually lead him to me.

But they never stopped.

"That's when I realized...

the entity behind the missions wasn't you.

It was something else entirely."

The world resembled the one I once described to him, yes .

but some things... didn't match.

Still, Abraham Starlight never gave up the dream of finding his family.

Even knowing he was walking blind,

he thought long and hard about how to reach us.

Finally, he came to a conclusion.

"When I turned fifteen, my parents offered to send me to the Temple Academy, since I had the talent for it... but I refused."

The thought of living a "normal school life" again didn't appeal to him.

He wanted to stay hidden, out of sight.

"My plan was simple:

I would train in secret, pushing my strength to its limit.

When the time came, I would make a name for myself so loud and clear... that my real family would recognize me."

He would remain hidden.

He would train like a madman.

And when he became famous enough,

he would send a message only his real family could understand.

That was the whole plan.

It was then that I finally understood why Father's name had echoed across the empire.

Abraham Starlight, the Miracle.

The Third Lord of the Starlight Family.

The strongest of his era.

All of it...

for one reason alone.

"I just wanted to find my family."

Hearing those words...

something twisted painfully inside me.

Me and my father.

Frey Starlight and Abraham Starlight.

We were the same.

Both of us had done everything... for the same exact reason.

Father remained hidden from the world for years.

I watched him train endlessly, awakening the High Star Affinity.

His power grew monstrously fast.

It got to the point where his very body structure began to change.

He was turning into something else altogether.

At that level, the system often sent him into the Nightmare Lands,

forcing him to trigger major events from the shadows.

Father executed them all perfectly ..

without leaving a single trace behind.

Abraham Starlight: Level 70.

Age: 20.

At just twenty years old,

Father's strength was already comparable to those at the SS Rank of our world.

He possessed a completely different perspective than I did.

His method of training was something I had never even thought about ..

a hellish regimen that allowed him to control his aura so perfectly, he abandoned the concept of internal aura pathways altogether.

He simply let the raw force flow freely inside him without restrictions.

I kept wondering...

How did he even manage it?

What kind of pain did he endure to survive his own power burning his internal organs relying only on the system's force to keep himself alive?

He had achieved something that even I ...the very author who created this world... thought impossible.

On another front, after wandering the world and completing countless system missions,

Father noticed something else.

"After observing this world long enough, after piecing together all the scattered clues...

I became certain: I hadn't been transported to another world."

As I had said before .. Father was sharp.

Unbelievably sharp.

Something like this could never escape his attention.

"This is the same world we once lived in... but far in the future."

Chapter 225: Memories of the Fallen Star (2)

He realized the truth I had spent two long years trying to uncover.

But unlike me, Father didn't despair.

Instead, he grew even more determined ..

more certain that he would eventually find us.

In his heart, he believed he wasn't the only one who had been given a second chance at life.

He believed that fate had distributed chances equally among all our family members.

And so... he pressed forward.

Then, at the moment he fully accepted the reality of the world he lived in ..

"A mission arrived from the system."

A final mission.

One that commanded him to enter the Eastern Nightmare Lands ..

and reach its very end.

"I knew immediately... this task was on a completely different level from anything I'd faced before."

At the time, the Nightmare Lands were ruled by four Nightmare Lords ..

not three, as in my era.

Each one was a monstrous entity whose strength exceeded the SS+ rank.

Not to mention the endless swarms of nightmare creatures that roamed the lands.

But none of that stopped Father.

He took only a single sword,

packed enough rations into a dimensional ring to survive a while,

and set off on his journey.

Unlike me .. who had been thrown directly into the Nightmare Lands ..

Father entered through the eastern Oclas Mountains,

and pushed forward in search of the truth.

...

...

...

The mission asked only that he reach the end of the Eastern Nightmare Lands ..

but it gave no further instructions.

Was he simply meant to cross the continent?

Or was there something specific he needed to accomplish?

Father had no way of knowing.

So he made the only logical choice:

he would explore the Nightmare Lands fully until he found the answer.

Days passed.

Then weeks.

"I wandered for a long time across the Nightmare Lands.

During my time there, I killed countless nightmare creatures...

and nearly died dozens of times myself."

He faced every imaginable monstrosity ..

from beasts with razor-sharp limbs, to humanoid abominations, to horrors that attacked the mind itself.

One particular battle caught my attention more than the others.

One day, a thick fog engulfed Father,

causing him to hallucinate violently.

From my perspective, I clearly saw the entity haunting him:

A massive figure draped in black robes ..

its brain exposed atop its head ..

empty, hollow sockets where eyes should have been .. and a mouth full of jagged teeth.

It circled Father like a predator ready to strike.

I shuddered when I realized ..

I had once faced this thing too.

Had I really survived something like that?

Father was seconds away from falling into its illusion, but his quick thinking saved him.

I watched, stunned, as he stabbed himself through the side with his own sword ..

using the intense pain to anchor his mind and resist the hallucination.

It was a brilliant move, especially since he hadn't discovered the easier method of simply closing his eyes.

Once free from the illusion,

Father unleashed his true power ..

eight blazing stars spinning violently around his heart.

A strength comparable to the Second Lord of the Starlight family at the time.

And with a single, devastating slash of his sword, he unleashed a wave of blinding light .. one that obliterated the Mist stalker in an instant.

Seeing the destruction he left behind as he stumbled back, panting heavily ..

I realized once again just how terrifyingly powerful my father truly was.

The journey continued.

I was merely a third-person observer,

drifting rapidly from scene to scene,

barely noticing the passage of time ..

until I caught sight of the thick, rugged beard growing on Father's face.

His voice soon confirmed it:

"Six months inside the Nightmare Lands...

Six months of blood, filth, and fighting the unknown .. and yet the mission still stands, just as it did on the first day."

In half a year, thanks to the fact that he had reached the SS rank and developed skills far beyond anyone his age,

Father had already explored most of the Eastern Nightmare Lands,

facing almost every type of creature lurking there.

All of them...

Except for one.

"I kept avoiding it... hoping I wouldn't have to confront it."

I watched from afar ..

as one of the worst nightmare creatures I'd ever seen revealed itself before me.

A monster I hadn't even written about...

A being even I knew nothing about.

The Nightmare Lords I had created numbered only three.

That's what I wrote.

That's what I believed.

But the thing that now stood before me was not one of them.

Its roar was unlike anything I'd ever heard ..

a scream of sorrow, rage, and hatred.

The sound alone made my throat dry up.

It was a hulking beast, its body covered in thick, black fur, with two horns sprouting from its skull like a twisted crown.

Its face ... or what should have been its face ..

was nothing but a hollow cavity where a mind should have been.

The creature clutched its head and screamed again .. a desperate, agonized cry that seemed to shake the very heavens.

It was almost as if it was pleading to all who heard it:

"Give me back my brain... Give me back what was stolen from me!"

That was the message I instinctively understood.

And it was the same realization that struck Father.

This creature was ..

"Amygdala... one of the Nightmare Lords."

Father whispered its name, his voice heavy, as he drew the battered, scarred sword that had accompanied him through countless battles.

"To be honest... I wondered if I could even kill it."

Father leapt high into the air, eight stars igniting fiercely around his heart.

The light of the stars flared brilliantly,

piercing through the eternal darkness of the Nightmare Lands.

"I didn't know if I could kill it .. but I knew I had no choice."

To move even a step closer to his goal ...he had to fight.

Even if it cost him his life.

The battle between Abraham Starlight and Amygdala was a catastrophe on every level.

The black behemoth let out a roar that shook the earth, spewing waves of black fire that consumed the sky itself.

A wave of darkness .. cleaved clean in half by Father's blade.

With a monstrous battle cry, Father hurled himself straight into the heart of hell,

crashing into Amigdala's overwhelming darkness.

This monster ..

this nightmare ..

scorched mountains, rivers, and forests with flames that could never be extinguished.

And still ..

the light of the stars shone defiantly within the endless blackness.

Father's blade tore into Amygdala's filthy flesh, but the creature's regenerative power was horrifying.

No matter how deep the wounds,

it kept fighting .. driven not by thought,

but by pure, mindless instinct.

It continued to spew black fire from every inch of its body.

I watched as Father cloaked himself in the aura of the stars, desperately struggling to survive.

A single white dot against a canvas of endless black.

They clashed over and over for what felt like eternity.

3 Days passed.

Their battle shook the very foundations of the world.

Amygdala wasn't an SS+ level monster for nothing.

I couldn't understand how Father survived that hellish onslaught.

Nor could I fathom how no one else noticed .. given the sheer scale of the aura disturbances they unleashed.

The battle was not in Father's favor.

Amygdala was a force of nature.

A walking cataclysm.

Those black flames didn't just erupt from its mouth .. they surged from its entire body, threatening to reduce everything to ash.

And in the middle of it all...

Father's light continued to shine.

Were it not for the fact that he had shattered his aura pathways and allowed his body to harness aura freely, he would have been vaporized long ago.

The fight reached a deadlock.

Amygdala, covered in thousands of wounds, refused to fall.

On the other side, after three straight days of brutal combat, Father had reached his absolute limit.

And so ..

gathering every last shred of strength he had left ..

he leapt high into the sky, unleashing one final, suicidal attack.

He gathered every ounce of Star Dust aura he could muster around his crumbling blade, and struck!

At the same time, Amygdala unleashed a tidal wave of black fire to meet him.

When white and black collided ..

the world turned dark.

Father's sword shattered .. but it pierced through Amygdala.

From the other side, he too fell into the flames, losing consciousness.

The battle ended in a way that left me wondering ..

Who had actually won?

A cold sweat drenched my back after witnessing the hellish battle I had just seen.

Was this... what it truly meant to face an SS+ ranked nightmare?

"Amygdala was far stronger than I had ever imagined,"

Father said,

"I had to drain every last ounce of my power just to survive... It was a close fight. Death brushed right past me."

Everything turned black as Father fell unconscious.

I waited patiently, anxiously hoping for him to wake up so I could finally see the result.

"After that battle, I don't even know what happened,"

his voice echoed again,

"My mind was a complete mess from the exhaustion and the wounds I'd suffered during the fight."

He drifted in and out of consciousness,

barely able to open his eyes before being pulled back into the darkness.

Normally, he should have died.

Even if he had succeeded in killing Amygdala, the Nightmare beasts would have surely devoured his body down to the bones.

But that didn't happen.

I watched in shock as Father's battered body was dragged away.

Among the ruins of death and destruction ..

where Amygdala's corpse now lay motionless after Father's final attack ..

they came.

"When I opened my eyes again... what greeted me was stranger than any dream."

There, lying atop the cold, hard ground of that ancient sect...

Dragged all the way to that black mountain—

The same mountain where I had once bled out and nearly died.

The place that still remained a mystery to me even now.

Abraham Starlight woke up...

Inside the Shadow Sect.

Chapter 226: Memories of the Fallen Star (3)

His world turned upside down as his senses slowly returned.

"It's him, isn't it?"

"It has to be him!"

"We've waited so long!"

When Father regained consciousness,

he wasn't alone.

A strange boy hovered excitedly around him ..

"It's really him!"

The boy looked about ten years old,

drowning inside a shirt far too big for him,

a hood pulled low over his golden-blond hair,

bright blue eyes sparkling with life.

He shouted happily when he saw Abraham:

"It's him! Right, sis?"

He turned excitedly toward another figure.

That's when Father noticed her ..

a woman with dark skin and jet-black hair,

her muscular build the very definition of a warrior.

With a deep frown, she muttered:

"Is this really the one we've waited all this time for?"

"Of course it is!"

"Calm down, you're scaring him!"

More figures appeared...

A man with long black hair and black eyes,

carrying a massive spear strapped to his back.

An Old man, hobbling along with a cane, barely able to keep himself upright.

They all surrounded Father,

staring at him intently.

Their eyes held everything ..

longing, respect, obsession, admiration, and awe.

Father was confused.

And truthfully... so was I.

No matter how hard I searched my memory ..

I couldn't recognize a single one of them.

At that moment, I heard Father's voice once more.

"That day, when they surrounded me... I wasn't scared by them."

" But I was terrified by the fact that I couldn't sense a single thing from any of them."

After reaching SS rank, Father had developed an acute instinct ..

an ability to instantly gauge the strength of others, even those stronger than himself like Amygdala.

But now?

Nothing.

He couldn't read these people at all.

"Who are you? And how did I end up here?"

The moment he spoke, they all backed away, giving him space.

"See? You scared him!"

"It's not my fault! He probably freaked out because of your black skin, sis!"

"What did you just say?!"

Father shivered as the woman delivered a devastating punch to the boy,

unleashing a shockwave so powerful it shattered everything within its reach.

And yet ..

The boy stood there, completely unharmed.

"That's enough, Evankhell. You're the one scaring him."

"Even you!"

Those strange people began bickering amongst themselves.

They looked like nothing more than a bunch of lunatics .. madmen loitering inside the Shadow Sect, surrounded by the Nightmare Lands.

Both Father and I...

we felt the same void while watching them.

And as their argument escalated, a voice came from behind ..

a voice that made everyone fall silent,

a voice that froze me in place and darkened my face.

Everyone turned at once .. as he appeared.

The man shrouded in black,

his glassy blue eyes glowing ominously,

just like before.

The only difference I noticed was...

he now had two arms instead of one.

That bastard...

"Step away from him,"

the Engineer ordered, his voice cold and absolute.

"He's not the one you've been waiting for."

The atmosphere shifted instantly.

Those who had seemed like a bunch of reckless fools just moments ago ..

their entire presence changed in an instant, becoming something... monstrous.

They didn't unleash any visible aura,

but the void itself seemed to tremble around them as they glared at the Engineer with seething anger.

"What the hell are you saying?! He's not the one we've waited for?!"

Evankhell clenched her fist, stepping forward, pointing furiously at the Engineer.

"Didn't you say the time had come?! The one we've been waiting for all these years! If this isn't him, then why gather us here?! Damn you!"

Their rage boiled over.

"I told you never to trust him! He's not even human..."

Despite the surging tension, the Engineer remained perfectly calm, as if none of it could touch him.

In a simple, detached tone, he spoke again:

"This man is the key to his arrival."

He pointed at Abraham Starlight, continuing coldly:

"He is... necessary."

I could see the confusion written on all their faces.

Meanwhile, Father instinctively leapt back, widening the distance between them.

He didn't attempt to run ..

somewhere deep down, he already understood escape was impossible against them.

"Who the hell are you people?!"

he demanded.

"What were you mumbling about earlier? 'The key?' 'The one you've been waiting for?' What kind of bullshit is this?!"

Everyone stared at Abraham.

And the one who answered ..

was none other than the Engineer himself.

"You don't need to know that right now."

he said.

"Abraham Starlight, you want to find them, don't you? Your family. That's why you kept completing every task until now."

Father's expression stiffened as realization began to dawn on him.

"You... you're the one behind the system, aren't you?"

In response, the Engineer simply opened a screen in the air.

Written boldly across it were the words Father had been longing to see ever since entering the Nightmare Lands:

> Final Mission: Reach the End of the Eastern Nightmare Lands (Completed)

He had completed the task.

And now it was time to claim his reward.

"You fulfilled your mission perfectly,"

the Engineer said.

"Now, claim your prize."

In addition to an enormous amount of experience points,

the Engineer gestured toward the woman.

"Evankhell, give it to him."

Evankhell hesitated for a moment before sighing heavily.

With a flare of aura between her hands, something materialized .

A black, cursed sword ..

a katana radiating an overwhelming, ominous power.

"Take it."

With clear reluctance, Evankhell tossed the sword toward Abraham Starlight, who instinctively caught it midair.

The moment he touched the scabbard,

Father felt it ..

the overwhelming power contained within that blade.

Even I stared at it in awe, recognizing its distinctive features immediately.

It was one of the Seven Legendary Swords ...

The Dark Sister.

"You have no idea how much I suffered to reclaim that sword from that bastard Avalon,"

Evankhell grumbled.

"And now you want me to hand it over to some random guy?"

She glared, while the boy floating beside her chuckled.

"Not like you ever needed it anyway. You're an archer, not a swordswoman."

Father ignored their bickering for a moment,

focusing instead on the sword in his hands ..

then looking straight at the Engineer.

"You... what exactly are you? What's your connection to me? What do you want from me?"

Everything was a mystery to Abraham.

But surprisingly, the Engineer responded plainly.

"I am nothing more than an ancient will ... one that has lingered far too long, waiting for a certain event to come to pass."

"And what I want from you..."

he said coldly,

"is for you to finish your mission... to prepare the perfect vessel for his arrival. Nothing more."

"Vessel? Vessel for what?"

"..."

The Engineer did not respond.

Meanwhile, the others .. those strange beings who shared his kind, beings like him.. stared at him in complete silence.

Father wanted the truth.

The truth behind everything that was happening, and what it had to do with him and the story his son once told him.

Gripping the Dark Sister tightly, Father's eight-star aura ignited ..

the full might of the Stardust technique surging within him.

He prepared to strike.

"You're going to tell me the truth..."

he growled,

"even if I have to smash that strange face of yours to pieces."

Father had had enough.

Enough of the riddles,

enough of the confusion that kept piling up around him.

So he decided .. if the truth wouldn't come to him, he would tear it out by force.

Harnessing the terrifying power of the Dark Sister,

his aura exploded violently as he lunged toward the Engineer,

releasing a monstrous amount of power that shook the entire space around them.

The others present could not hide their surprise at his level.

"That man..."

"No aura pathways..."

What Father had achieved ..

mastering the legendary sword so seamlessly on his first attempt ...was astounding even for them.

With a devastating strike, Abraham aimed straight at the Engineer, intending to kill.

But just before his blade could reach ..

it stopped, as if time itself had frozen.

"You are still unworthy to fight at this level."

The Engineer's hand ignited with cold blue flames as he moved.

Too fast ..

Father didn't even see him coming.

With a single touch to his chest,

Father felt a burning surge of power rip through him, and his consciousness began to fade.

"You wish to meet him, don't you? Your son."

The Engineer's voice echoed faintly in his mind, just before darkness claimed him.

"Then continue what you started, Abraham Starlight... until the appointed day comes."

Father collapsed unconscious at the Engineer's feet.

The Engineer, unfazed, turned his attention back to the others gathered around him.

"I summoned you all today to discuss the next phase... to complete the preparations."

Everyone listened intently, still shaken after what they'd just witnessed.

"The day we've all been waiting for is near,"

the Engineer said,

"and there can be no mistakes. I will not allow another failure like Cheon ma."

No one dared to speak.

Especially after hearing the Engineer mention that name ..

Cheon ma.

The Engineer ..usually so mechanical, so void of emotion ..

had, for once, let a flicker of feeling slip into his words.

Longing.

Anticipation.

A hunger for a moment he could no longer delay.

That day ..

the preparations were completed.

For what was coming next.

Chapter 227: Memories of the Fallen Star (4)

...

-Frey Starlight's Pov-

Within the Eastern Nightmare Lands...

Inside the walls of the mysterious Shadow Sect...

Abraham Starlight lay unconscious, defeated by the Engineer in a single blow.

What happened was shocking, even to me... the very person who had once written a novel about this world in excruciating detail.

Alongside the Engineer, I memorized the faces of the others... and decided that no matter what, I would never forget them.

A dark-skinned woman, with black hair and a body so sculpted that her abs were clearly visible
...Evankhell, the previous wielder of the Dark Sister sword... perhaps the blade was even named after her.

A boy who looked no older than ten, with golden hair and vibrant blue eyes.

A man with long black hair, standing perfectly straight, with a massive spear strapped to his back.

An old, withered man, almost bald, leaning heavily on a cane.

I would remember them.

I would remember every single one of them.

The scenes flashed quickly as my father awoke once more, only to find himself lying there .. alone.

The Shadow Sect had fallen silent again.

And the others... had vanished without a trace.

"It felt as if everything I'd seen and heard that night was just a fleeting dream... but that sword proved otherwise."

Gripping the Dark Sister tightly .. a pitch-black katana pulsing with immense power... Abraham realized that what he had experienced was real.

It was no hallucination.

"Where will this path take me? Was following that strange system really the right choice?"

A journey into the unknown.

That's exactly what it was.

But my father didn't waver. He simply continued doing what he had always done.

He returned to the Starlight branch family's lands and resumed his training.

He lived his daily life to its fullest, blending in naturally with the world as if he had been born into it, as if he hadn't lived a completely different life before.

Everyone around him saw him as a mature young man .. far wiser and more composed than his age should allow ...and he gained deep respect, all while hiding the true extent of his strength.

"Stronger... I knew I had to become much, much stronger."

Even when he thought he had enough power, the Engineer's effortless defeat had shown him otherwise.

He knew better than anyone ... no one could predict what the future would bring, nor what challenges awaited.

Abraham Starlight: Level 90

Age: 25 years

Stardust Technique: Ninth Star

Leveling up had grown excruciatingly difficult.

My father finally faced the ultimate wall at SS+ rank.

The gap between SS and SS+ was monstrous .. so wide it shattered the ambitions of even the most gifted talents.

And beyond SS+... lay only the unknown.

At the age of 25, he finally made his decision.

"To send the signal... to find my family...

I decided to conquer the world."

Twenty-five years of training since his childhood.

Twenty-five years of wielding the sword, fighting without pause.

And now, he was ready to reveal himself to the world.

"The first step... was the Starlight Family."

Being one of the empire's most powerful factions, it was the perfect starting point.

Thus, on that day, Abraham Starlight packed his belongings, said goodbye to his false family, and set out toward the Eastern Oclas Mountains ... the stronghold of the Starlight Family.

There were many tales later told about that day ...

A day when a young man appeared at the gates of the mighty Starlight Family, demanding a duel with the strongest warrior within.

The gatekeepers mocked him.

"Black hair? A branch family fool? What the hell are you doing here?"

They jeered, slapping him on the back condescendingly.

"You better leave before you get yourself hurt..."

With a single glance, my father assessed them .. mere B-rank insects crawling before him.

"I wish to challenge the strongest man of this house. From what I've heard... that would be the current Lord.

Could you kindly direct me to him?"

Even as the guards burst out laughing at the "nonsense" spoken by this strange young man,

Abraham maintained his calm.

They tried to shove him away, but he stood his ground.

"Please,"

One last time, he asked politely.

When they tried to forcefully remove him, they made the greatest mistake of their lives.

I watched with a blank expression as my father fought dozens of guards at once.

I saw him send them all flying with a single blow .. without even drawing his sword.

"I asked nicely."

BOOM!

The front gate shattered into pieces as the alarm bell echoed across the Oclas Mountains.

An alarm signaling that a disaster had befallen them.

"You draw your swords against me... Don't you realize these weapons are meant to kill?"

BOOM!

More bodies were sent soaring.

"So you want to kill me, is that it?"

BOOM!

Cold sweat trickled down my back when I saw my father hurl one of Starlight's strongest generals clear over a massive mountain like a mere punching bag.

"Since you want to kill me...

Then it's only fair I respond in kind!"

That night, for the first time in Starlight's history, the threat came not from the Nightmare Lands ..

but from within the empire itself.

After crushing the faces of an absurd number of Starlight family warriors, the true elites finally began to appear one by one.

The Senate .. a council of powerful fighters ranked S and above .. descended upon him.

Among them, a woman resembling a wild beast charged forward, launching a devastating punch straight at my father.

Seven stars of the Stardust Technique blazed around her heart as she attacked.

But my father caught her fist effortlessly nullifying her attack completely.

Looking closer, I was stunned to recognize her.

Carmen Starlight.

She looked exactly the same as when I had last seen her...

Was that even possible?

This was supposed to have happened long ago, yet Carmen hadn't changed at all .. as if it had just happened yesterday.

"Carmen Starlight was a sharp woman...

I knew it the moment our fists collided."

My father's voice echoed through the memories as I watched him face nine elders of the Starlight Family alone.

Yet even against that number of elite-class powerhouses, he didn't lose.

"Who are you?! What do you want?!"

They all shouted at him in unison, even as their battle laid waste to everything around them.

"I simply wish to face your strongest.

I didn't come here to cause trouble.

I didn't even kill your guards ... only knocked them unconscious."

He wasn't lying.

Sure, he beat them half to death .. but he hadn't killed a single one.

"Are you playing with us?!"

I watched Carmen lunge at him with terrifying speed.

But he dodged effortlessly, brushing her aside with casual ease.

"Calm down and think... If I really wanted to kill you, you'd all be dead already."

"What the hell are you saying?!"

BOOM!

From the beginning, he never even drew his sword.

He fought them all with nothing but his fists.

Continuing to beat them into the ground.

Carmen wasn't stupid.

She realized the gap in power the moment she clashed with him.

The strange young man before her was on an entirely different level ..

pressure heavier than anything she'd ever felt, even compared to the Starlight Lord himself.

But she couldn't retreat, not in front of an enemy like this.

The nine elders launched their strongest coordinated attacks at him ..

but he blocked every one of them with ease.

They were relentless, especially Carmen, who fought tirelessly at the front.

Eventually, all of them collapsed under his relentless assault ..

all except her.

Her stubbornness made my father serious for the first time.

"What a stubborn woman..."

Forming a blazing white flame around his right fist, my father disappeared ..

reappearing before Carmen at the speed of light.

His punch exploded toward her face,

and in that instant, she felt the overwhelming aura pouring from the blow.

She saw death rushing toward her.

But just before it landed, his fist stopped a hair's breadth from her face ..

the shockwave alone obliterated everything behind her, leaving a massive fist-shaped crater in the giant mountain behind her.

Carmen's legs gave out and she collapsed before him.

Glancing at the imprint on the mountain,

she realized she had never been closer to death than she was that day.

"Will you listen now?

Or do I need to do more?"

After obliterating the Senate like they were mere toys...

They finally realized the magnitude of the threat standing before them.

"W-What do you want?!"

"I've repeated myself so many times that my mouth's about to fall off..."

"I want to face your strongest."

The strongest in the family.

The moment he uttered those words, a beam of light descended behind Abraham.

As if answering his call.

From within the beam, two elderly men emerged, unleashing their overwhelming auras.

Though the marks of old age were evident on their faces, their bodies radiated a terrifying level of strength as they stood tall like spears challenging the heavens.

They looked alike, a clear sign that a deep bond connected them.

"What's going on here?"

Both were strong, but the true monster was the elder standing at the front.

"That pressure..."

So you're the current Lord of the Starlight Family."

Chapter 228 Memories of the Fallen Star (5)

The two elders were none other than the former Lord Izan Starlight and his younger brother .. the same face I had seen before.. Leonides Starlight.

The latter's light was faint compared to his brother's.

"And who are you?"

Lord Izan, with his long white hair and aged face, stared at my father, ready to strike at any moment.

Facing that crushing pressure, my father answered calmly.

"Abraham Starlight, from the branch family."

You could see the shock flash across the former Lord's face.

"Why would a member of the branch family attack the main house?"

Izan spoke as he drew his sword, unleashing a pressure that was no joke.

"I haven't attacked anyone.

I simply wish to fight you."

Despite the overwhelming force bearing down on him, my father didn't flinch.

"And why would you want that?"

"To test myself."

Without any warning, he unsheathed Dark Sister and pointed it directly at Izan Starlight.

The old lord immediately unleashed his full strength, summoning eight stars of the Stardust Technique.

Yet even he broke into a heavy sweat when he saw his opponent manifest a ninth star.

Their swords clashed violently ..

their strikes splitting mountains and leveling the earth.

Izan Starlight was a monster at the very peak of SS rank.

One of the strongest in the world at that time.

But against Abraham Starlight, who had already stepped into SS+ rank and wielded Dark Sister, The old lord never stood a chance.

After a fierce and wild exchange of blows, Izan Starlight fell to one knee before Abraham .. his sword completely shattered.

Meanwhile, my father stood tall .. unharmed, unscathed, utterly pristine.

Abraham Starlight had won. Decisively.

"This is the end."

He sheathed his sword and slowly stepped back.

That day, news spread like wildfire...

of a man who had toppled the Starlight Family by himself.

Everyone wondered:

Who was this man?

They thought they'd never see him again, assuming he was just some ghost provoked by the Starlights.

But they were shocked when they saw him casually wandering among the branch families afterward.

It made no sense.

"I remember when the Lord of the Starlight Family himself came looking for me."

At first, things were tense between them.

But after getting to know my father's true nature, everything changed.

He gained the deep interest of the old lord, especially after Izan learned that Abraham Starlight had never intended any harm.

"I often sat down with that old man, exchanging conversation...

He had lived for over a hundred years, and for someone like me who had lived longer than most people here, I found myself learning from him."

For the first time, my father .. who was always older in spirit than those around him ..

found someone who had lived far longer.

Every time Izan met Abraham, his admiration grew deeper.

"He repeatedly tried to pry the secret of my power from me,

asking how I reached the ninth star of the Stardust Technique...

But I couldn't tell him about the system.

So I simply said I figured it out through relentless training."

A 25-year-old man who reached the ninth star ..

a feat not accomplished since Nova Starlight, the first Lord, who had achieved ten stars before his death.

Abraham Starlight grew into a colossal mystery ..

a force that drew countless eyes.

"Then there was Carmen...

That woman constantly messed with me."

She often challenged him ..

either trying to kill him or sparring for fun.

"Especially after that incident..."

During that period, tensions between the Empire and the Ultras were constantly flaring, and one day, a full-scale assault was launched by one of the Lords of the Ultras .. Gavid Lindman.

That day, Carmen Starlight would have died had it not been for Abraham intervening and saving her.

He utterly crushed Gavid Lindman, and the latter barely managed to escape with his life.

That event forged a strange bond between my father and Carmen.

A bond that was... suspiciously friendly.

It made me wonder .. what kind of woman had Carmen been before I ever truly knew her?

Especially considering she already had a child...

One day, I saw a memory of my father's where Carmen had invited him to her house.

I walked in with a blank face as I watched the scene unfold.

The moment they entered, Carmen fiddled with a few bottles...

"How about a drink, Abraham?"

Holding bottles of fine liquor, her intentions were painfully obvious ..

but my father simply shook his head.

"No, thank you. I don't drink."

That was the father I knew !

a man so upright it almost hurt.

His polite refusal made Carmen pout.

"Turning down an offer from an older lady, huh?"

Smiling slightly, my father played along.

"I never said I wouldn't drink with you.

We could always have tea instead."

"Wow~ The great Abraham Starlight who toppled an entire family... a tea-lover?

You sound like an old man."

He wasn't the monster I'd seen that day.

He was just a simple young man, carrying the weight of years he hadn't even lived yet.

Carmen was much older than him, yet she didn't feel that gap at all when she was around him.

Despite all her grumbling, she honored his request and went rummaging through her kitchen for tea supplies.

My father watched her with a soft smile.

"You seem... different here, at home."

"Different? How?"

"You're more like a housewife than the fierce warrior I once knew... Peaceful, and unguarded."

At those words, Carmen stiffened for a moment ..

realizing she was alone with a man who could crush her easily if he wanted to.

"Do I... need to keep my guard up against you, Abraham?"

Laughing, he pointed to the tea.

"No.

I'm just an old man who drinks tea."

At that, Carmen laughed too.

"Smooth talker, huh? Abraham Starlight...

You're going to cause a lot of trouble for the ladies outside."

As the atmosphere between my father and Carmen grew more... heated,

I stood there, gripping my head.

Was my father really this good at talking to women?

When? How?

Did my mother even know what was going on here?!

I didn't want to watch anymore.

It felt so wrong.

Please stop... I don't want to see this...

Thankfully, my father managed to control himself till the very end and avoided a catastrophe.

I exhaled in relief as the memory continued...

For a moment there,

I almost thought Carmen might have been my mother...

...

...

...

In any case, surprisingly, the Starlight Family didn't hold any grudges against my father.

Izan Starlight was a sharp man, and he realized Abraham could become an incredible asset.

After all, they both bore the Starlight blood ..

even if one came from a branch family.

Izan was terminally ill at that time.

His sons were unfit to inherit the title of Lord, and that left only one contender ..

his ambitious younger brother, Leonides Starlight.

Leonides had lost to Izan in the past, but now he sought the position once again after learning about his brother's illness.

But Izan had other ideas.

The future of the Starlight Family wasn't in his sons.

Nor was it in his selfish brother, whose only loyalty was to power.

He saw it instead ..

in that miraculous young man who had appeared from nowhere.

Izan didn't care about origins or background.

The fact that Abraham had Starlight blood was enough.

However, my father didn't seem particularly interested in the family from the start.

"Izan Starlight was a smart man.

He helped me countless times without asking for anything in return.

I truly respected him."

My father knew the old man wanted something from him.

But he didn't resent it.

Without even realizing it, he learned much from Izan ..

and benefited greatly from him.

Abraham Starlight slowly but surely became the Starlight Family's deadliest hidden weapon...

without even knowing it.

At that time, as his fame continued to spread, my father tried desperately to send us a signal ..

To his family.

Every time he appeared publicly ..whether during speeches in front of large crowds, or in broadcasts meant to be seen by all ..

he always tried to reach out to us, using words and phrases only we would recognize, or gestures only we could understand.

Small things...

but enough to make my heart ache for the days we lived together.

Yet it was all in vain.

For years .. no matter how hard he tried ..he received no response.

His repeated failures made him doubt whether we were even in the same world to begin with.

"I often wondered... if I was the only one who reincarnated,

the only one granted a second chance at life."

He had no proof of our existence.

The only evidence he clung to was the story he once heard from me ..

and the Engineer's words, who had told him his son was "on the way."

"At the time, I convinced myself... maybe I'd see you all someday.

Maybe it just wasn't time yet."

Maybe ..

if he grew stronger.

If he completed all the system's missions to the end ..

Maybe then he would finally meet us again.

Years passed.

One after another.

And during that time, so much happened.

"Abraham! Fight me!"

The young lord of the Moonlight Family, Drogo Moonlight—Seris' father—would often come to challenge him.

Back then, both my father and Drogo were SS+ ranks.

It was a golden age, with three SS+ level individuals in the Empire if you included Emperor Maekar Valerion.

I saw Drogo lose to my father again and again.

He challenged him ten times ..

and lost ten times.

My father's fame only grew and grew.

And little by little...

Abraham Starlight became part of that world, without even realizing it.

Especially after living thirty full years there.

Thirty years spent searching for his family...

and yet, he never found us.

"One day... I felt so hopeless, I wondered if maybe you were on the other side of the world."

He hadn't found us within the Empire.

So he started to believe that maybe...

just maybe, we were in the Ultras Continent.

It was a reckless idea, without a shred of proof ..

but it was possible.

"So I set off for that place."

The legends of Abraham Starlight were countless.

And this was one of them.

The day he invaded the Ultras Continent ...alone.

Chapter 229 Memories of the Fallen Star (6)

He crossed the Demonic Sea by himself, killing countless nightmare creatures that lurked within those waters.

And in the end ..

he made it to the other side.

The moment he breached their shores, he found them waiting.

The Four Lords of the Ultras.

Gavid Lindman,

Madam A,

and a tall, filthy man wearing a black mask that hid his disfigured face .. the former lord, Val.

Along with another figure clad in a plague doctor's robes and crow mask—

the former lord, Everblack.

Four SS level lords gathered to meet him.

"I see... so you were waiting for me."

Unleashing the full pressure of his nine-star Starlight Aura, Abraham walked toward them with a face full of impatience.

The Dark Sister gleamed coldly in his grip ..

and without warning, he attacked.

That day, an earth-shattering battle broke out.

Abraham Starlight versus the Four Lords of the Ultras.

"I fought with the intent to kill.

But they were too damn stubborn."

Each of them wielded monstrous demonic contracts that turned their bodies into weapons beyond human limits.

And worse still ..

they unleashed horrors against him.

Creatures shaped like humans, but utterly distorted ..

with black blood oozing from their eyes and mouths.

"They used them as cannon fodder...

Every time I cut them down, all I felt was disgust."

"I remembered what you told me about the Ultras ..

about how their society worshipped blood."

The Ultras Continent was like another world entirely.

A world the Empire knew nothing about.

In that land, blood itself was sacred.

Those born with tainted blood had no future ..

their bodies doomed to rot away, infected by the very demonic power that ran through their veins, until they mutated into abominations.

I clenched my fists as I watched it.

This horror...

was ultimately my crime too.

As the author—the creator of this world—

I bore some responsibility for what was happening there.

Those monsters that attacked my father... were once humans.

Humans who had been forcibly infused with demonic blood.

Sometimes the process would succeed, creating what they called the "High-Blooded."

But those cases were exceedingly rare.

More often, the demonic blood acted as a deadly poison, killing us humans, twisting us into grotesque abominations...

Into the creatures that assaulted my father without end.

Sometimes, mutations would occur... turning the corrupted humans into even more horrifying monsters.

The stronger the demonic blood infused into them, the more powerful the resulting creature.

These monsters had roamed the earth for over three hundred years...

I closed my eyes against the bloody battle unfolding between my father, the Lords of the Ultras, and those hideous beings.

Those monsters...

They were what we now call the Nightmare Creatures.

The very creatures humanity hunted across the Empire, the same ones I had faced countless times myself.

They weren't monsters.

They were people.

Humans hunting humans ..

all this time.

A truth that should never be known.

My father... Abraham Starlight...

he knew it.

After a grueling battle against the Lords, the strongest Human Demon finally intervened ..

Dragoth.

He wielded one of the most powerful legendary swords in existence ..

the Moonlight Sword.

The aura released by that sword devoured all other forms of aura,

and even my father struggled against the onslaught as Dragoth and the four Lords surrounded him.

In the end, my father was forced to retreat ..

barely escaping with his life, thanks to the intervention of Maekar Valerion.

That battle only escalated the animosity between the Empire and the Ultras even further.

After that infamous incident...

my father continued to live.

He continued to grow stronger.

In gratitude for the help he received, Emperor Maekar invited my father to a grand banquet within his imperial palace.

"Maekar Valerion was a man of profound vision.

He saw further than anyone else.

His insight was genuinely admirable, alongside his overwhelming talent.

Though he was older than me,

he too had reached SS+ rank ..

and that alone was astonishing."

My father respected the Emperor.

And the Emperor, in turn, was intrigued by him.

"That day, Maekar invited me to a one-on-one duel ..

A friendly match to strengthen our bond."

True warriors spoke with swords,

not at dining tables.

It was an unspoken rule.

And so, the duel was arranged in secret.

Only a handful of the highest-ranking officials even knew about it.

The battle lasted a long time ..

fought deep within the Eastern Nightmare Lands between the Empire's greatest spearman, Maekar Valerion,

and the miracle swordsman, Abraham Starlight.

And after a brutal, hard-fought duel ..

for the first time, Maekar's back touched the ground.

He lost.

From that moment, it became clear:

this man from the minor Starlight branch was the real deal.

Many believed he would be the next great hero after Kazis Valerion.

But the Church denied such claims ..

for the Sacred Sword Vermithor had not chosen him as its master.

Yet my father never needed that sword in the first place.

The Dark Sister alone was more than enough.

His name was now on every tongue across the continent.

He had finally reached the height he sought.

But not the goal he truly desired.

He refused to give in to despair.

He had always seen this life as a gift.

"I made sure to live every day to its fullest,

out of respect for the blessings given to me."

Yet despite everything ..

he could never forget his family.

Even after thirty long years.

He never gave up.

He endured the hollow emptiness their absence left behind.

And then...

came the meeting that changed Abraham Starlight's life forever.

"The former lord ... Izan Starlight had finally reached his limits."

At last surrendering to the illness that had slowly consumed him.

An illness that had no cure.

Izan Starlight had fought it bravely for a long, long time.

He had lived an astonishingly long life.

But in the end, he could endure no more.

In his final days, he pleaded ..

he begged Abraham Starlight to become the next Lord of the Starlight Family.

"I didn't even know how to refuse...

not to the man who treated me like a son all those years."

My father, lost and adrift,

found himself unable to accomplish so many of the things he had once set out to do.

He couldn't find his family.

He couldn't break past the SS+ rank.

And no matter how much he searched, he couldn't locate that mysterious Engineer.

Abraham Starlight had reached a dead end.

He stood at a crossroads where he slowly began to surrender to this new life...

and become a true part of this world.

"I accepted."

He accepted the offer ..

to become the new Lord of the Starlight Family.

"But there was a problem."

Abraham Starlight did not possess the pure bloodline of the main family,

and despite his overwhelming strength and achievements, many opposed his ascension.

That was when Lord Izan Starlight made a proposal .. one that changed everything.

"He asked me to marry her... his only daughter."

Lord Izan had many sons, but only one daughter .. a fragile girl who had inherited his incurable illness, leaving her so secluded that Abraham had never seen her before.

At first, my father refused.

He couldn't forget his family, no matter how many years had passed.

But under the relentless pressure of a dying man ..

he eventually agreed to meet her,

if only once, to judge for himself.

And so, it led to that day.

Inside an isolated garden belonging to one of the Starlight Family's main estates,

my father met her for the first time.

She sat quietly in a wheelchair ..

her legs had been paralyzed since birth.

Her body seemed frail,

and yet... it radiated a quiet, undeniable elegance.

When I saw her face,

I froze.

Just one look was enough.

I knew instantly who she was.

She was the mother of Frey Starlight.

The mother of this body I now inhabited.

Her face...

She looked like a more mature version of my sister Ada ..

as if I were standing before her twin.

"That woman was like a blooming rose...

A rose whose roots wrapped tightly around my heart, stirring emotions that had long since died within me."

I listened to my father's words,

expressionless.

"Even after all those years...

She succeeded where everyone else had failed."

It was almost absurd ..

how one woman managed to fill the void

that had hollowed out a man like my father for over thirty years.

I didn't understand the feelings he spoke of.

Those emotions he described...

I had none of them.

But I had no right to judge him.

I—who broke after just two years,

who tried to end it all the moment despair crushed me ..

How could I ever blame a man who endured for thirty years?

How could I fault him for falling in love...

for finding some sliver of salvation?

That woman... became my mother in this world.

Her name was:

Anna Starlight.

Chapter 230 The story of Abraham Starlight (1)

-Frey Starlight's Pov-

Anna Starlight.

The mother of Frey Starlight...

I didn't even know what I was supposed to feel when I looked at her.

I watched how she met my father for the first time, how their relationship slowly built up, step by step.

"At first, I only saw her as a poor girl whom life had left unable to even walk."

Anna Starlight had been afflicted with Aura Decay Disease, a condition she inherited from her father.

She could no longer gather enough strength in her legs to walk properly.

She could barely take a few steps, and even then only with the help of others.

On top of that, being the daughter of the Lord of the family who kept her shielded from the outside world, her entire world began and ended within the confines of that mansion.

And yet ... even in her condition ... I saw that her smile never once left her face.

"I guess what I first felt toward her was curiosity... How could she still smile so brightly despite everything?"

Abraham Starlight was a man who had traveled across the entire world, while Anna Starlight was a girl who had barely seen beyond her garden.

"When I first tried to introduce myself to her, she told me there was no need ... because she already knew everything about me."

Her father had protected her so much that he made sure to share every little detail about his life with her...

And among those tales, there were many about Abraham Starlight.

Anna Starlight had become curious too ... after hearing all those grand stories, she wanted to see for herself what kind of man Abraham Starlight really was.

And just like that...

From simple casual conversations to a friendly relationship... to something much deeper.

Time passed, and Lord Izan Starlight passed away, leaving behind a will that named Abraham Starlight as his successor.

I saw my father visiting that secluded garden more and more often.

Outside, he bore the title of Lord and wielded his sword proudly.

But inside that garden, he was just a man who sat beside a woman.

Many had opposed him, chief among them Leonides Starlight, who wanted to claim the position of Lord for himself.

But my father crushed that opposition easily when he fought Leonides ... and broke him.

Bit by bit, my father spent more and more time with her, pushing her wheelchair around the garden...

"Tell me, Abraham... why do you look so empty?"

Anna asked him that question many times.

But he never knew how to answer.

"I don't know."

He had spent thirty long years chasing a goal from his previous life.

And in this life... he had nothing.

He was utterly empty.

"Anna Starlight managed to understand me without me needing to utter a single word. She was so perceptive... she read me like an open book."

I watched, little by little, as my father fell for her.

One day, Anna told him about her dream .. to see the world.

And he made that dream come true.

Without any warning, he lifted her up in his arms and took her out to see the world beyond those walls.

He soared high into the sky carrying her, while she clung tightly to him.

From that day on, he took her out every day.

Together, they traveled across the entire Empire.

The pair caught many eyes

... this strange couple: a mighty man and a frail woman who couldn't even walk properly.

But who would dare touch her?

The man beside her was the strongest in the world.

Bit by bit, I saw life return to my father's face.

I saw how he laughed.

I saw how he smiled.

Those expressions were the exact mirror of my oldest memories ... the face he used to make when we all sat together as a family: my siblings, my mother, and I.

I should have been happy... seeing him finally find a piece of salvation.

My father married her.

I heard all their conversations...

How they fell in love with each other.

I even heard her happily talking about how she wanted to have two children ... a boy and a girl.

I listened.

And I watched it all.

I was supposed to feel happy.

My father had finally found peace after thirty long years of endless suffering and chasing an unattainable dream ...

A mirage he had pursued for far too long.

I was supposed to be happy for him.

But I couldn't be.

Standing there, witnessing everything,

I just... couldn't.

I couldn't force myself to feel it.

Yes, I knew better than anyone what he had gone through,

The price he had paid,

The battles he had fought for us.

But even so ..

All I felt was suffocation.

A strange emotion that made my chest tighten without warning.

Such strange feelings.

Such incomprehensible emotions.

No matter how I looked at them,

All I could see was a happy family being slowly built from scratch.

But Father...

I know I have no right to say this.

And yet, what I felt at that moment ..

Was betrayal.

...

...

...

A year passed since my father married Anna Starlight.

And soon, they had their first child.

A beautiful girl who resembled her mother.

That girl... was Ada.

My sister grew up showered in love and affection from her mother.

As for my father, I often saw him avoiding her altogether.

"To be honest... I thought I could finally forget the past, and its pain, after meeting Anna."

I heard my father's words ... words of a man who just wanted to escape reality, if only for a little while.

"But I couldn't. Every time I looked at her, all I could see was all of you... how I held you all in my arms on the day you were born, how I watched you grow, day after day..."

Ada Starlight constantly reminded him of the children he had lost ...Of me, and my siblings.

She was like a living embodiment of the memories he had buried deep within.

The emotions he had once pushed aside began to surge violently within him again.

How could he ever run away from a world built from the very story his own son once told him?

From the beginning, he was forced to live with his reality.

His indifference toward Ada planted seeds of negativity within her heart ... seeds that grew rapidly.

She thought her father hated her.

Maybe she wasn't good enough?

Maybe she had to work harder to earn his approval?

And so she did ..

She worked tirelessly to gain even a shred of his recognition.

While other children her age played games and laughed without a care in the world,

Ada Starlight was learning. Growing.

Trying desperately to become strong enough to make him proud.

"I saw how hard she tried..."

My father saw it too.

But even when he tried to get closer to her,

He would pull away without realizing it.

Anna Starlight saw his struggles,

But she couldn't do anything, not when he never spoke the full truth to her.

Slowly but surely, Abraham Starlight was on the verge of losing not just his first family, But his second one too.

Abraham Starlight...

He began to hate himself.

He blamed himself for everything.

All that negative energy, all that burning self-loathing,

He poured into relentless training and endless battles.

Training.

Fighting.

That was all he thought about.

He killed countless monsters,

And countless humans.

At that time, the Ultras lived in constant terror of him.

His sword reaped so many of them that the Dark Sister earned its infamous new title ..

"The Demon Slayer."

Another name added to Abraham Starlight's endless list of titles.

His only salvation had been his wife, Anna Starlight.

But even she was no longer enough.

And so, he continued to push himself ..

To fight madly ..

Especially as the war against the Ultras loomed closer.

And then, one day, when he was burning with regret and self-hatred,

My father finally shattered the limits of humanity.

He broke through.

I watched in awe as Abraham Starlight surpassed the SS+ rank ..

Announcing himself as a being who had transcended the very concept of humanity itself.

He attained the Tenth Star of the Stardust Style.

At that point, my father possessed enough strength to change the world,

Just like the First Hero, Kazes Valerion.

But ironically,

At the very same time...

Another event occurred.

"Anna Starlight... was pregnant again."

That night, Anna Starlight told him ..

She was carrying his child.

At first, he didn't know how to react.

Another child... another chance.

But before he could truly grasp the joy of it, another blow came.

One of the Starlight family doctors, who had been monitoring Anna's condition closely, sought him out in private ..

And delivered the cruelest news.

"That child... must not be born,"

the doctor said.

Anna Starlight had already pushed her fragile body to its limits by giving birth to Ada.

Carrying another child would be too much ...

She would bleed internally, and die.

"Anna must abort the child,"

the doctor insisted.

My father...

He didn't know what the right choice was.

But he knew one thing ..

He didn't want to lose his wife.

And so, shattered but desperate,

He agreed to the abortion.

To kill the child before it could be born.

But Anna Starlight ..

She refused.

She refused with a strength that belied her fragile body, Saying she would never kill her own child.

That she would rather die than do so.

Abraham didn't know what to do anymore.

But fate had even more cruelty in store for him that night.

That same night ..

The night Abraham Starlight would never forget ..

In the dark study he used as his sanctuary,

A guest arrived.

A figure cloaked in black, With glowing blue eyes.

After all these years ...

After all that time ...

They met again.

"That encounter... was the final blow."