

VILLAIN 231

Chapter 231 The story of Abraham Starlight (2)

Father was about to attack him ..

A man who had now reached SSS rank.

But he froze completely, When the Engineer spoke words sharper than any sword on this world:

"The child Anna Starlight carries .. "

"Is your child. One of the family you have searched for so desperately, for so long."

"That child... is ****."

Hearing those words,

I watched my father collapse to the ground, broken.

His face twisted in an expression I could not even begin to understand.

The child they wanted him to kill ..

Was his son.

His long-lost family.

"Those words... destroyed me more than anything else ever could."

He was happy ..

So, so happy, because he had found one of us.

He had found his family, Right there, so close all along.

But now ..

He was thrust into an unbearable choice.

"Choose, Abraham Starlight."

Let the child live ..

And the mother would die.

Save your old family .. And kill your new one.

Or let the child die .. And save the mother.

Save your new family .. And kill the old.

"Your answer... will decide their fates."

The Engineer was truly cruel.

A master manipulator.

No ..

He had been manipulating us all along.

From the very beginning.

I clenched my fists so hard my nails dug into my palms, Feeling a fraction of the agony my father must have endured.

Forced to choose between his family.

My father...

The strongest man alive, A man who could destroy the very planet if he wished ...

Yet his sword could not save him now.

Someone... had to die.

"It broke me completely... to the point I felt myself being torn into pieces."

Father sobbed ... Broken beyond repair.

"Can't you just... take me instead?"

he begged.

"Sacrifice me... let them both live instead..."

But fate ..

Fate showed no mercy.

And this was the cruel reality.

The guilt my father bore that day ..

I cannot even begin to imagine it.

No strength could carry him through it.

"That day... I decided to tell her everything."

I was stunned by his decision.

He went to Anna Starlight ... And he told her everything.

Everything from the very beginning.

Every truth.

Every burden.

He laid it all bare before her.

He told her everything.

His old family, the system, the Engineer, the reincarnation ..

How he was a man from the past, How he had been forced into an impossible choice...Between her and his own son.

He expected her to call him a liar.

He expected her to curse him, to hate him,

To tear him down with her words.

In his eyes, He deserved it.

But Anna Starlight... She did none of that.

Instead, she responded with a single word ...

"I understand."

She believed him.

Smiling softly, she placed her hand over her womb ... Over the fragile life growing inside her.

"There's no need to hesitate. The answer is clear."

Even until the end, Abraham Starlight could not understand ..

How she managed to smile through it all.

"The child... our child, must live."

She had been ready to sacrifice herself from the very start.

"Maybe you see him as someone else,"

"But even if he carries memories from another life... this child is our son. He is a piece of both of us."

"Anna..."

"He will live, not as some reincarnated soul..."

"He will live as Frey Starlight."

My father was stunned.

"Frey."

"That will be his name."

That child ...

"Frey Starlight."

Just like that.

On that day, Abraham Starlight made his choice.

He chose his son.

...

...

...

Thus, the days passed.

"Your birth coincided with the war between us and the Ultras ... the War of Light."

A brutal conflict that claimed countless lives.

"Back then, whenever I returned home from the battlefield... I would find him waiting for me."

The Engineer.

That entity Abraham once could never find,

Now hovered near him every day.

The Engineer stayed close.

Always close.

"He's different from you,"

"Different from all of you."

That's what the Engineer told him.

His son's reincarnation ..

Was different from Abraham's own.

"What do you mean?"

Abraham tried to ask, tried to understand ..

But the Engineer refused to say more.

He only said one thing:

His son's arrival would be monumental.

And that his son was unlike anything this world had ever seen.

"His words made me wonder, over and over again... just what are you, my son? How did you write the events of this world with such precision?"

It was a mystery, One that made no sense no matter how deeply he thought about it.

"Son... sometimes I wonder—what exactly are you?"

What kind of being would make an entity like the Engineer treat his arrival with such gravity?

As the war raged, The world itself began to change.

The world... Was preparing.

Preparing for his coming.

"The closer the time drew near, the chattier the Engineer became."

Even that mechanical, cold being started to display something akin to emotion.

"He was completely mad... but I could only play along."

"For the sake of meeting you... my son."

When the time came .. He would finally have all the answers.

The Engineer lingered nearby, never straying far.

As the due date approached, He even coordinated with Abraham to evacuate the entire Starlight estate.

And instead, He filled it with strange things.

"I still remember the day he brought those strange creatures into the palace..."

Statues.

Some massive, others disguised as members of the Starlight family.

"What caught my attention most were three statues standing at the front."

One wore a laughing face,

Another wore a face of sorrow,

And the last ...

A face of pure rage.

All of them unleashed a terrifying pressure.

Especially the one with the angry mask.

He was something far beyond even Maekar Valerion himself.

These beings had come and surrounded Anna Starlight's manor, trembling in anticipation of the moment they had awaited for so long.

"At that time... I couldn't help but wonder if the child about to be born was truly my son."

The world had been turned upside down so much that Abraham Starlight could no longer make sense of anything.

Time kept moving forward, and the closer the moment approached, the more insane the Engineer became.

To the point where he would often mutter incoherently while waiting.

A madness reflected even by the ancient statues he had brought with him.

"What exactly was happening?"

Days and months passed, until finally, the long-awaited day arrived.

On that day, the entire world trembled... even the flow of aura itself shifted.

The aura became denser ... stronger.

As if the world itself was preparing.

On that day... Frey Starlight was born.

His birth changed everything.

Chapter 232 The story of Abraham Starlight (3)

Inside a dim room, illuminated only by a few faint lights...

Frey Starlight was born.

A small, frail child, crying between Anna Starlight's arms.

Abraham stared at him for a long time... watching both Frey and Anna cry together.

Anna had bled severely ... so much that her blood stained everything around them.

Hugging her tightly, with Frey cradled between them...

Anna Starlight whispered joyfully:

"Abraham... treasure him... protect him... please, he's not just your son."

Tears filled her eyes as her face slowly darkened.

"He's our son... he's our precious Frey. Remember that, always."

Anna cried while gesturing for the little girl standing nearby to come closer.

Ada Starlight had also been present .. she had every right to witness her mother's final moments.

Ada wept bitterly in her mother's embrace.

Anna told her that she loved her.

More than anything in this life, and that she loved the little child in her arms just as much.

"Ada... don't hate your brother... be his support, and he will be yours as well."

"Support each other, for that is the only way to survive in this cruel world."

And finally... within her room, in her bed... surrounded by her loving family...

Anna Starlight passed away.

Only her final words lived on within the hearts of her family.

"Everything happened so quickly that it almost felt like a dream."

For Abraham, who had been torn between the battlefield and his family over and over again...

His body could endure it all.

But his mind... could not.

Especially after the death of his wife, and everything that came with the birth of his son...

Along with those strange creatures that surrounded him, and the Engineer beside them.

To the point where he even thought that what would be born from Anna Starlight wouldn't be human.

But in the end, no matter how long he stared at the child...

He was just human .. frail and small.

He was his son .. he was both his old family and his new one.

And so, Frey was born.

After those events, Ada was sent to the Oclas Mountains to keep her safe, while Frey was left inside that isolated fortress, as the Engineer insisted he must stay there.

"I told you... he is different from you and from all other humans."

That body already carried his soul.

But it had not yet fully received it.

"On that day, I understood, even if only a little, what the Engineer had been speaking of."

Just for a moment... but he saw it.

The true soul of his son that dwelled within that body.

Something he had never seen before.

Something beyond anything he could have ever imagined.

The Engineer was at his peak, fully focused, completely drained, as he transferred everything into Frey's body.

At that time, Abraham's fortress would not accept the presence of any other human soul.

Only the statues and those strange creatures roamed the halls now.

Abraham Starlight continued visiting his son whenever he could, even amidst the chaos of war.

He knew the Engineer wouldn't harm Frey ... if anything, that entity seemed to care for him even more than Abraham himself.

And so, Abraham fought on the frontlines with a battered mind and spirit.

Clinging desperately to the dream of one day speaking with his son... and learning the truth.

Finally, as the war reached its zenith...

Frey's body fully embraced everything it was meant to carry.

Frey Starlight was truly born at last.

That very day, the War of Light reached its conclusion when Abraham Starlight faced Dragoth in a final, earth-shattering duel.

Dragoth, the monstrous entity wielding the fearsome Moonlight Sword, unleashed unimaginable devastation.

But even with all his strength, he was nothing before Abraham Starlight, who had recently ascended to the SSS rank.

Dragging what little remained of Dragoth's mutilated corpse ... merely a severed head and part of a torso ... Abraham proudly declared the Empire's final victory.

He had emerged from that battle completely unscathed.

It had been a massacre.

The Ultras were utterly crushed.

Yet as Abraham stood atop the battlefield, bathed in victory...

A chilling unease gripped him.

The system screen before his eyes began flashing wildly.

And the Engineer's frantic voice echoed inside his mind:

"Return to the fortress immediately ... to Frey!"

"Frey is in danger!"

That was all Abraham needed to hear.

Tearing through the heavens in a blinding streak of light, he raced back toward his son.

That night, after Frey's full awakening, the Engineer had departed briefly to the Shadow Sect to make some preparations.

And in that brief absence ... something happened.

Something even the Engineer had not foreseen.

As Abraham soared through the skies, he crossed paths with the Engineer .. who looked even more terrified than Abraham himself.

Flying side by side, Abraham shouted:

"What's happening?! What's wrong with Frey?!"

The Engineer screamed back, his voice more urgent than ever:

"Listen carefully, Abraham Starlight! Etch my words deep into your soul!"

Abraham, sensing the gravity of the moment, forced himself to listen.

"Your son... Frey Starlight is far more important than you realize."

"For countless ages, we prepared for his coming, hiding our efforts from the eyes that record everything from above."

"We succeeded in evading them all... except his."

There was one being .. one nightmare ... who had noticed.

"Listen carefully. There is a monster among monsters... a being who stands above all creation: the Demon King, Agaroth."

"He is called the Devourer of All. His powers are endless. But above all, his eyes .. his cursed eyes ... are one his greatest weapon."

"With a single glance, Agaroth can perceive the fate, destiny, and hidden nature of any creature. He sees their past, their present, their future .. nothing escapes his gaze."

From the moment Frey entered this world... Agaroth knew.

Abraham's heart pounded in disbelief.

"Are you telling me... that we're about to face such a being?!"

"No!"

The Engineer roared, his voice thunderous.

"If Agaroth himself came, we would be dead before we could even take ten steps!"

To fight the Demon King was beyond foolishness.

"But what we are about to face... is a catastrophe no less terrifying!"

When they finally reached the fortress where Frey was kept, Abraham's face turned grim.

The battlefield before him was a scene of devastation.

The once-mighty statues ... the ones bearing the angry, laughing, and weeping masks .. lay shattered.

Broken into pieces.

Crushed.

Destroyed.

The Engineer manipulated the aura between his hands, conjuring a massive barrier that engulfed the fortress and a wide area around it, isolating them completely from the outside world.

"Abraham! Agaroth isn't the only demon who wields terrifying power. There are others .. The Ten Upper Seats!"

The Engineer continued urgently.

"Each of The Ten Upper Seats shares one ability with the Demon King."

And among them... one demon had inherited Agaroth's Eye.

A demon who could perceive destiny itself.

A demon who could see it all.

A demon who had seen Frey.

"That's our enemy!"

"One of the vilest, filthiest monsters ... a creature that delights in the suffering of all beings, even its own kind!"

Through the bloodstained halls, past the mangled corpses, they advanced...

Until finally, they pushed open the great door.

Abraham's eyes widened at the horrific scene.

The sound of Frey's cries filled the room ... and at the center of it all stood that abomination.

A dark figure, radiating a monstrous aura.

Its hair flowed like a black, putrid liquid.

Its body twisted unnaturally, with four jagged horns spiraling from its skull, like a mockery of an ancient king's crown.

The creature turned to face them, blood staining its hands ... one of which clutched Frey's tiny, wailing form.

Dark aura pulsed violently around Frey's fragile body.

The demon's face was deathly pale, two blood-red eyes glaring hatefully ... and a third eye burning on its forehead...

An eye taken directly from the Demon King.

The creature sneered at them with a wicked grin.

That was...

"The Fourth Upper Seat — Wesker"

Chapter 233 The story of Abraham Starlight (4)

The Engineer growled.

Without hesitation, he shouted:

"No matter what happens ... no matter the cost! We cannot let him take Frey!"

Those words struck Abraham like war drums.

Seeing his son trapped in the arms of such a monstrous being .. a filthy, overwhelming entity unlike anything he had ever faced ... ignited something primal inside him.

With a deafening roar, Abraham unleashed a torrent of aura from the Dark Sister, sending a blast that obliterated the entire fortress.

The explosion shook the heavens.

Abraham lunged forward with savage determination, desperate to tear Frey free from the demon's grasp.

Yet Wesker effortlessly blocked the attack with one hand ... while holding Frey securely in the other.

"Heeheeheeheeheehee..."

The demon laughed, a sickening, syrupy sound that made Abraham's very soul recoil.

He realized then:

This was no ordinary enemy.

Wesker stretched out his hand toward Abraham ... releasing a wave of corruptive power that threatened to swallow him whole.

But a blast of blue aura deflected it at the last moment.

The Engineer appeared from the void, weaving countless seals into the air.

In response, thousands of giant ethereal hands formed, launching a relentless assault against the Fourth upper Demon.

The clash between the Engineer and Wesker shook the skies.

For a moment, Abraham froze, stunned by the sheer magnitude of their confrontation.

But the Engineer's voice snapped him back to reality:

"Attack! Together, we can win!"

Wesker had forcefully broken through the ancient seal of Kazis Valerion to enter this world ... but doing so had cost him dearly.

He wasn't at full strength.

Hearing this, Abraham surged forward, pouring every ounce of his might into the fight.

The ten stars of Stardust blazed fiercely around his heart, feeding the Dark Sister with a blinding flood of light-based aura.

Wesker found himself pinned between arcs of searing white light and the relentless assault of the Engineer's spectral hands.

On the Engineer's left hand, a power resembling a clock spun rapidly ... a technique that halted Wesker's counterattacks before they could even begin.

Thus, three forces collided in the night sky.

Two brilliant beams .. one blue, one white clashing against a tide of absolute black.

Wesker continued to defend with only one arm ... while still gripping Frey protectively.

The battle raged on, splitting the heavens and scattering the clouds, revealing the endless tapestry of stars.

After an earth-shaking collision, Abraham and the Engineer were hurled back toward the ground.

And floating alone in the sky...

Was Wesker.

Still clutching Frey.

The demon's crimson eyes barely spared a glance at Abraham.

Instead, they locked solely onto the Engineer.

Slowly...

Wesker opened his mouth and spoke.

"You... I know you."

Wesker's voice rang out, laced with a malice that made the Engineer's expression darken.

"You've grown weak... far weaker than you once were. But I never forget filth like you. Aren't you one of Nameless's followers?"

The moment that name was uttered, the blue-eyed figure's face went cold.

"Don't you dare speak that name with your filthy tongue, demon."

"Ha... look at you," Wesker sneered, "playing your little games on this pitiful planet."

His gaze shifted to Frey, still trembling in his arm.

"I've seen it. This one's fate... Are you telling me this is the one who created this world? The one who wrote everything?"

He laughed...low, mocking, maddening.

"This eye the King gave me does not lie. What it sees is absolute. But seriously... what do you take me for?"

With every word from the demon, the Engineer's expression hardened further.

"Am I supposed to believe that this pitiful thing created me? I, who lived for millions of years before he ever wrote a single word of his nonsense? Don't make me laugh..."

Wesker had seen everything through that accursed eye ... everything about Frey.

But he still refused to accept it.

He raised a hand, tapping his third eye.

"I don't know how you managed to deceive the King's Sight... to trick him into believing your farce. But you won't deceive me. Not these eyes."

"Here and now... this ends, Nameless pawn. What a shame. After all you've done... after all this time..."

In response, the Engineer clenched his fists, his aura igniting around him in violent arcs.

For the first time in an eternity... his thoughts were clouded.

Why?

Why him?

Why out of all the possible entities beyond the veil... did it have to be Wesker?

Out of everyone... why did he come?

But the demon's words only strengthened his resolve.

No matter what ... Wesker had to be stopped.

"You will not leave this place alive!"

The Engineer lunged forward.

"Then come! Show me what you've got!" Wesker roared.

The two forces collided .. a cataclysmic blast shook the world.

And Abraham joined the fight.

But even together, they struggled.

Their enemy fought with just one hand ... and he wasn't even at full strength, having forced his way through the sealed gates.

The gap in power was monstrous.

From afar, both Abraham and the Engineer hurled themselves at the demon again and again ... only to be slammed into the ground each time by his overwhelming force.

They kept rising.

Kept attacking.

Their speed blurred into flashes of light ... their bodies trailing afterimages behind them.

The Engineer knew... if Wesker escaped with Frey, it would all be over.

They had to stop him ... no matter the cost.

But the Fourth upper Demon was relentless.

Even with all three of them at the SSS rank, they were barely a match.

Without warning .. Wesker tore off the Engineer's time-wielding arm, then smashed his face into the earth.

"I told you! You've grown soft!"

Then came the next wave of corrupted aura .. one that shattered Abraham's body, sending him crashing down in agony.

"This pitiful creature you dragged along changes nothing!"

But Abraham Starlight stood again, trying to strike ... only to find himself bleeding uncontrollably, black aura tearing through his body from within.

Though only moments had passed, they had exchanged thousands of blows.

And every clash left Abraham more broken.

Wesker, on the other hand... hardly had a scratch.

His vitality was monstrous ..limitless .. and worse, he still carried Frey in his other arm, making it nearly impossible to fight back properly.

Abraham Starlight stared with bloodshot eyes at his son, cradled in the arms of a devil.

At this rate... he was going to lose them again.

He was going to lose his family.

The Engineer, who had somehow lost the power he once wielded.

And Abraham, who, despite all the strength he had acquired throughout his life, now found himself helpless.

In that moment, they both made a final decision.

Abraham didn't want to lose his family again.

If someone had to die this time ..it would be him, and no one else.

He ignited the ten stars spinning around his heart ..burning his life force, consuming his core and aura until there was nothing left.

Abraham sacrificed everything... in exchange for power.

Power to save him.

Power to protect his family.

His body blazed with radiant fury as he raised his sword high ..Dark Sister trembled in his hands.

Wesker instantly turned toward the insignificant human now radiating terrifying power.

Abraham poured everything he had into that one final strike.

"You won't take him ... My son!... my family!"

His only son.

"You won't take him! Not again!"

The aura of the stars screamed with every word from Abraham's mouth.

"Not while I still breathe!"

Wesker quickly summoned his dark aura, forming a barrier around himself, while Abraham unleashed a devastating slash that shook the earth and split the sky in two !

His sword lit the night sky as it cleaved through everything.

The Fourth upper Demon was stunned to find his barrier shattered ..his seemingly invincible body torn open.

Abraham's strike severed Wesker from the right shoulder, slicing off his entire arm, a chunk of his chest, and part of his face.

The same arm that had held Frey... fell.

With it, the small child dropped ..only for Abraham to catch him in his arms and hold him close.

And in that moment, the Engineer reappeared beneath them, forming a strange seal that condensed a terrifying amount of energy.

He shouted at Abraham ..

"Go!"

Without hesitation, Abraham flew away .. fleeing the ruined battlefield with his son in his arms.

Behind him, the Engineer roared:

"Wesker! You won't go any further!"

His body glowed with burning blue lines ...his last reserve.

"By the power granted to me by my Master..

You will NOT!"

Aura erupted from his one remaining arm, unleashing a blinding blue column of destruction that shot into the sky.

Wesker screamed from within the blast.

"Don't think this will kill me ... Nameless pawn!"

As his body burned inside the beam, the demon rose, howling:

"I've seen everything! I already know it all! You won't escape me this time!"

"Remember that!"

And with that, Wesker vanished ..leaving only those cursed words behind.

The Engineer collapsed to the ground, trembling, barely able to withstand the aftermath of the disaster.

Elsewhere...

Abraham Starlight had flown far, with Frey in his arms.

His body was broken. His spirit shaken.

He found himself returning to the battlefield where he had once defeated Dragoth.

There, his body began to fall apart.

The ten stars he had ignited were now consuming him .. eating away at his flesh.

He crashed to the ground, still holding his son tight.

He raised his right hand... And watched as it turned to dust ... The Stardust

He knew immediately .. This was the end.

Cradling the crying Frey to his chest, he whispered in pain ..but smiled.

"I'm sorry, son... I'm sorry I couldn't protect you better."

"I'm sorry I didn't try hard enough."

"I'm sorry I wasn't enough."

He held Frey close as his body turned into stardust...

"I'm sorry I was a terrible father."

The Engineer appeared before him ..silent.

His glowing blue eyes watched... but he said nothing.

He simply witnessed Abraham's final moments.

"I love you, my son... more than anything."

With the last of his strength, Abraham infused Frey's body with his remaining power and whispered in his ear ..

"Remember this always, my son... I will always be with you."

And when he reached his limit . he handed Frey over to the Engineer.

And died with a smile on his face.

"Take care of him..."

The Engineer said nothing. He simply nodded, clutching Frey close.

Abraham Starlight gave everything ...sacrificed it all ..for his son.

In that moment, the Engineer vanished.

Abraham's allies gathered around him.

And the man who had once shaken the world ..

Died, screaming only one name.

"Frey Starlight!"

And Frey ..

He saw everything.

He saw his father's final battle.

He witnessed his story.

The story of Abraham Starlight.

...

Chapter 234 A New Beginning (1)

– Frey Starlight's POV –

Abraham Starlight is dead.

My father is dead.

He died protecting me ... right until the very end.

I stood there, frozen, unable to say a word. My mind simply couldn't process what I had just witnessed.

So I did nothing... I just watched as my father's body turned into stardust, while his final words echoed in my ears:

"I'm sorry, my son... Even in my final moments, I wasn't the kind of father you could be proud of. Maybe... maybe you even hated me. But I truly... truly love you, my son."

...

"When I ignited the ten stars of the Stardust technique, sacrificing my life, I reached a level of strength that allowed me to perform feats beyond what any ordinary human could ever achieve."

In his final moments, he entrusted me with all the power he had gathered .. along with a fragment of his will .. sealing it into my small body.

Or rather... into my body.

"Using the last bit of experience I earned through the system, I recorded this message for you. I've lived in this world far longer than you have. So even if you're the one who wrote all of this... I know you'll suffer in this cruel world."

He left me with many things.

My father had a feeling something might one day threaten his life. So before his death, he made arrangements ... preparing for me to inherit the title of Starlight Lord, and ensuring I would have many advantages.

"I left all the aura I had gathered inside of you. You might think of it as borrowed power, but make no mistake... I only filled a fraction of your potential. The sea of aura you possess is far greater than anything I've ever held."

Aura at the SSS rank... That was his gift to me.

And within that aura, he embedded his will.

A will to protect his son... to support and encourage me every time I was about to fall.

All this time, I had felt it .. something was always pushing me forward, keeping me from collapsing.

When I almost died inside the Shadow Sect... it was his strength that kept me conscious.

When Heisenberg tried to kill me that day on the train... it was my father's will that shielded me.

When I faced Baylor... during the island trial...

And even in my final battle against Snow Lionheart...

My father was there. He was always there, watching over me... every step of the way.

The vision began to fade, and I was pulled back into reality.

I was still kneeling in my room .. the very room where it had all begun.

And there... I saw him.

My father, standing before me in the form of radiant white light, slowly dissolving into the air.

I took a deep breath, trying to muster the best smile I could give him.

"Dad... you know, I did my best."

"When I realized I'd never see you all again... it hurt. It hurt so much I wished I were dead. I wished for death, just so I wouldn't have to live in a world without you."

-Frey Starlight (Dual Soul)-

"That's why... when I believed there was even the slightest chance of hope through winning the Victoriad... I fought. I fought and fought."

"I picked up my sword, trained every day, threw myself into battles of life and death... until my body broke time and time again."

"I shed blood, sweat, and tears... just to survive while everyone else kept trying to kill me. And still ... I kept fighting."

-Frey Starlight (Dual Sou-

I gasped, overwhelmed, as all those feelings I had been suppressing finally erupted.

"It hurt! It hurt more than anything! Pain I had never known .. not in my peaceful past life... but I endured. I endured, and fought against the whole world... just for the chance to come back."

And in that moment ... I couldn't hold back the tears any longer.

"It was hard! Every time I tried to move forward, another wall stood in my way. It really hurt! It hurt!"

Gasp

I choked, unable to speak clearly.

Two years of bottled-up emotions... feelings I had never shared with anyone... came crashing out all at once.

"It hurt so bad, I wished I was dead. I wished for death more than once! And yet... I kept going. I kept going .. for you. For all of you."

When I reached a point where ordinary humans would have long since broken, I pushed past it.

I wanted my father to know. I wanted him to hear it.

At that moment, that glowing specter of my father smiled.

"I know."

-Frey Starlight (Dual S-

That spirit... or what was left of my father's will... was beginning to fade.

And so, before it vanished completely, I forced myself to speak the words I had always wanted to say ... fighting past the burning tightness in my chest that made it so hard to breathe.

"I suffered through hell for all of you... Father, so please don't say that I might hate you. You were my world. You all were the reason I kept going."

I tried to keep myself composed as I forced those words out. Even in my previous life, I had never once said them properly to my father.

"That's why, Dad... I wanted you to know—I really, truly love you. You and the rest of our family... I love you all so much that I can't imagine a world without you."

I just wanted to say it once... that I loved him.

To be honest, even now, the thought of living in a world where they don't exist is something my mind simply can't accept. I still want to die .. right here, right now.

But...

"I love you too, son... I'm grateful I was blessed with a son like you. I'm proud of you... and I'm sure the rest of them feel the same."

At that moment, I saw hazy images forming behind my father.

The same figures that had visited me in my dreams so many times.

"Son... just as we were given another chance at life, the rest of our family must have been too. So live, Frey. Live and make the most of your second chance. That's all we ever wanted for you... live, my son. Live."

I listened to his final words in silence, unable to say a thing as tears drowned my voice.

All I could do was nod frantically as I choked on my emotions.

"Thank you, my son... And be careful of what lies within you. Use your power wisely. Because what's inside you... is nothing but darkness. A darkness I could never understand, no matter how hard I tried."

When Abraham Starlight tried to pass on his strength...

What he found inside was an endless abyss .. an unfathomable darkness without bottom or light.

"But when I gazed deep into it... that darkness stared back. I saw something sitting at its depths."

Something he couldn't comprehend.

Something that sent shivers down his spine ... something that not even the Fourth High Demon had managed to do.

"So keep moving forward, son... but do so carefully. Little by little, you'll uncover the truth."

You'll discover the truth of that darkness within.

The message ended.

The final specters of my family vanished from before my eyes.

And with them, the words faded from my system interface.

The Dual Soul... was finally gone.

And what remained ...

Frey Starlight.

I couldn't accept it. I couldn't accept that they were really gone.

So I ran toward them .. toward him .. reaching out with my right hand, trying to hold onto that fading light.

But my hand didn't catch them.

It grabbed something else entirely.

I felt the coarse, solid texture of the object that had emerged from within that radiant glow.

Something dark.

My eyes widened as the shape fully revealed itself.

The engraved hilt, the pitch-black blade...

A black katana that unleashed a wave of power, surging through my body in an instant.

"The Dark Sister..."

My father's final gift to me.

I collapsed to the ground, sitting there, gazing at that sword for a long, long time.

This... this was the last thing he had touched before his death. The sword that had been with him for so many years.

I sat in silence, thinking.

Thinking about the true meaning of my life up to this point.

My chest was still burning. My eyes were red and sore from crying. I had probably cried more today than I had in my entire life combined.

Even now, I still wanted to die.

I still refused to live in this cruel, unforgiving world.

But... my father, he lived here for so long.

He endured so much more than I ever did. He spent his life fighting for me—and in the end, he gave that life to save mine.

My father... who sacrificed everything for me.

By what right...?

By what right could I throw away the life he protected with everything he had?

From the very beginning, this life was never mine to throw away.

I don't know if I deserve to live. I don't know if I can keep going in a world without purpose anymore.

That hollow space in my heart... it's still just as empty as it was the day I got here.

But at the very least.. out of respect for my father's sacrifice, and the tragedy he endured for my sake ..

At the very least...

"I won't die in vain."

To kill myself now would be an insult to everything that man went through.

Abraham Starlight.

"So then... let's start over."

I slid the sharp edge of the Dark Sister across my head, cutting off the long strands of white hair.

They fell to the floor as I walked over to the bathroom mirror—the same one where I'd seen my reflection for the first time.

And there it was again—my face, staring back at me.

A lot had changed...

That pale skin, the dark rings beneath my eyes...

The darkness in my gaze.

And my white hair.

So much had changed. But now, with my hair cut short again... in a way, I looked like I did back then.

Back when I first ran into this bathroom, terrified. Back when my entire world collapsed before my eyes.

Today, I would walk through the ruins of that broken world—searching for a reason to live.

"I will live."

Chapter 235 A New Beginning (2)

-Frey starlight POV-

That day, I walked through the corridors of the old Frey Starlight estate. The servants bowed, one after another, as I passed them.

I spent a long time reviewing the new system .. its changes, its updates...

And the additions I had been granted.

There was so much to process, but perhaps the most jarring of it all... was the truth. That I had been reincarnated into this body from the very beginning .. not just two years ago.

It was a shocking revelation, one I struggled to fully comprehend.

I kept wondering what I truly meant to the Engineer... and those strange creatures around him. And those who called themselves the Nameless Order.

A group without a name .. about whom I knew absolutely nothing.

For now, I chose to focus on uncovering the truth and surviving this world drowned in chaos and destruction.

To find a new purpose. A new reason to exist.

But before that... there was one thing I had to do.

There was still a part of my father's message .. one he hadn't left for me.

It was for someone else.

"Ada..."

I had already listened to that part before.

My father had distanced himself from Ada because she reminded him of the family he lost. While she, on the other hand, believed he hated her... because of everything he had taken from her, everything he had left for me.

My father had felt guilt toward her .. until the very end. That's why he left part of his final message for her. For both of us to hear.

It didn't take long before I found myself standing before Ada's room .. the one she had used in the estate.

I knocked.

And she told me to go away.

Maybe she thought I was a servant. Or someone else entirely.

So I opened the door and walked in anyway.

As I stepped inside, I found my sister seated at her desk. She looked more exhausted than usual.

"Frey?"

She sounded worried .. especially after my recent breakdown and what might've looked like a death wish.

So I tried to stay calm, as much as I could.

"Hey, Ada."

I saw her eyes widen slightly as she got a good look at me.

"What happened? Are you feeling better now? Ah! You cut your hair!"

She examined me quickly, her hands flitting about in concern. She really did look just like her mother...

"I'm fine. I just... wanted to apologize for all the trouble I've caused so far. I'm sorry for being the worst brother ever."

Honestly... she had gone through a lot because of me recently.

"No, it's okay. You don't have to apologize. I wasn't exactly the best sister either... I couldn't do much for you."

Maybe she was blaming herself. Thinking she would've failed if not for Iris' intervention, never even knowing what that old man was truly after.

But I was still grateful for her.

She looked relieved to see me ..more stable, at least for now.

So I seized the moment... and activated the message.

"Ada... there's something you need to hear."

As soon as I said that, my father's voice echoed throughout the room, his words manifesting once more like magic.

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

The instant she heard that voice, Ada trembled as she clung tightly to my sleeve.

In a soft, stunned whisper, she said:

"Frey... that voice!"

I nodded to her.

And my father continued speaking...

I heard him apologizing to her .. telling her he had always loved her as his daughter, and that he had never once hated her.

To be honest, I didn't want to hear his voice again. Every time I did, I felt the void inside me deepen... and those suicidal thoughts return.

But this was something Ada needed.

My father spoke to her at length, though he never revealed any of our secrets. Just a few simple words ...like how much he loved her ...were enough to bring Ada Starlight to tears in my arms, as I knelt beside her, holding her close.

For someone like her, who had spent her entire life trying to earn her father's recognition, hearing those words after all this time was the culmination of everything she had endured.

She had finally heard what she had longed to hear most.

Ada wept in my arms, and I looked at her in silence for a while.

She clung to me tightly, her warmth seeping into my skin.

Ada Starlight .. the girl who did everything she could to be acknowledged by her father, who honored her mother's memory, and who supported her brother with everything she had...

Even when that brother was nothing more than worthless trash.

But more importantly ..

Ada was my father's daughter.

My real father's daughter.

Which meant she wasn't just my sister by name .. she was real. Truly real.

I returned her embrace, holding her tightly as I buried my face against her right shoulder.

We sat there like that for some time...

I'm not sure what exactly changed that day ... but something did.

Ada's place in my heart had shifted. She became the first real person I had in this world.

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Time passed quickly after that. I had to explain to Ada that I had somehow found that message from our father within me, stored in the form of a power he'd left behind.

It might've been hard to believe .. but she didn't doubt me. Not after I revealed the Dark Sister.

That sword had now fused with my right arm in the form of a large tattoo .. an intricate flower.

A flower on the right, and a serpent on the left.

My body was slowly being covered in tattoos. And I could feel it .. my strength had grown more than ever before.

I was now heading north, inside a carriage bound for the coldest region of the empire... to serve my sentence in Alkatraz Prison.

And the one accompanying me on this journey... was Phoenix Sunlight.

He had been watching me for a while.

"Looks like you've finally come back to your senses."

"More or less."

At the very least, I wasn't the suicidal wreck I'd been before.

"Do you hate me, Frey? For what I did back at the tribunal?"

I shook my head.

"Not at all. I understand it had to be done."

After all, it was the only way to pull me out of the mess I'd dragged them into.

Phoenix nodded, satisfied, as he turned his gaze to the snowy landscape outside.

We were heading into one of the coldest regions in the empire...

The location of its worst prison ..Alcatraz.

"To be honest with you, Frey... right now, the Empire views you much like they did the former Temple Director, Bloodmader. They're trying to use you."

The previous director, Raphael Bloodmader, was also serving his time there, awaiting the next great war.

"They've already crafted a plan around you, Frey .. because of your... inexplicable talent. And me? I'm just the one assigned to keep watch over you. If I ever determine you're a threat .. they want me to kill you immediately."

Phoenix was honest with me. And I appreciated that.

"I understand."

He nodded, then smiled faintly.

"If you want to escape the future others have written for you, Frey... then you need to become like him. Like your father."

Like Abraham Starlight.

Strong enough to shatter every obstacle.

I let out a long sigh, thinking about everything happening around me.

You don't know, Phoenix...

There are greater things at work .. forces planning my future from above.

"I wonder... just how much power would I need to break those chains?"

To free myself from the fate that others had decided for me... I would need so much more.

I continued speaking with Phoenix throughout our journey toward the prison.

He never once felt like a warden assigned to monitor me.

No... he was completely friendly.

As we neared our destination, I received some information about my sentence.

"You'll be staying here for three months. But for you, it'll feel like three years."

Inside, powerful magic is applied to distort human perception .. making time feel much slower.

Aura suppressors would also be enforced, rendering me completely powerless to resist... especially during the torture.

"You'll suffer inside, Frey. But you'll have to endure it."

This was the lightest punishment I could get away with for now.

The duration was set to three months so I could return just in time for the start of the temple's second year.

I understood that clearly.

Alkatraz was considered hell for many...

But physical pain didn't mean much to me anymore.

In fact, it might be just what I needed ... because my mind was overwhelmed with too many things.

Three months that would feel like three years.

It would be more than enough time to clear my head... and reorganize every one of my plans for the future.

After a long, silent ride, that massive fortress finally came into view ..its tall, black walls towering in the distance.

It looked less like a prison, and more like a dark military city.

This was to be my new home.

I closed my eyes as the guards began dragging me through its gates.

"Let's start over..."

It was time to write a new chapter... in this wretched life.

Chapter 236 To Wake a Nightmare

The falling leaves told a tale ..

A tale of a young man who struggled within a cruel world, unaware of the terrifying truth waiting ahead.

The world was shifting. A war loomed on the horizon.

A war crueler and darker than any that had come before.

The Empire was preparing.

And so were the Ultras.

Those extreme factions ... mysterious and unknown to the rest of humanity... inhabited an entire continent of enigma. No one knew how life there truly was.

For that land obeyed laws far different from those of the civilized world.

The continent of the Ultras was split into two parts:

One made up 90% of the land .. barren and dead. A never-ending desert, known as the Desolate Lands.

The remaining 10% was called the Bloodlands.

Scattered cities, ruled under the tyranny of Higher Blood.

The contrast between the two regions was so stark, they might as well have belonged to different worlds.

Amid the shifting sands of the Desolate Lands ..

A man and a young figure walked side by side, cloaked in a fierce sandstorm.

The first wore a regal black suit beneath a long overcoat and covered his face with a scarf.

He was none other than Lord Gavid Lindman of the Ultras, and beside him strode his empyrean—his masked subordinate known only as V.

Judging from their state, they had been traveling on foot for quite some time.

"...Lord Gavid, do we really have to get involved in this nonsense?"

V's displeasure was obvious in his voice.

But Gavid Lindman replied calmly.

"It's a direct order from High Demon Astaroth. We don't have a choice."

He recalled the mission handed to them by Astaroth himself.

"We've been tasked with gathering all the Hollows. They're essential for the war to come. The Higher Blood plan to end the conflict with the Empire once and for all."

As he listened, V grumbled under his breath.

"The Hollows... I've heard all the stories, but are they really as strong as they say?"

"They are," Gavid affirmed. "You saw firsthand what one of them did that day... Ludwig, the Cursed One."

V remembered that mad beast who dared to attack Astaroth.

"Ludwig is the weakest of the five Hollows. The other four? They're far worse."

There were five in total.

And all of them were monsters.

As they pressed deeper into the storm, V voiced another question that had been on his mind.

"If a battle broke out between the Lords and the Hollows... who would win?"

Gavid didn't hesitate.

"Except for the old man Mergo, whom I know little about... they'd most likely wipe us out completely."

"Is it really that bad?"

"Yes."

Suddenly, the two stopped.

Something ahead had made their blood run cold.

Gavid frowned in disgust, and V swore aloud.

"...What the hell is this?"

Before them stood dozens of wooden stakes, each impaled with human bodies ... still alive.

But it wasn't just that.

It was what had been done to them.

Their bodies had been twisted into grotesque forms ...some had extra arms sewn onto their backs or limbs attached in bizarre places. Their real limbs had been severed.

Eyes and mouths were expertly stitched shut, making them unable to scream or beg.

Some men had their genitals mutilated and grotesquely stitched to their faces.

Others were mangled beyond recognition, then sewn back together like mockeries of life.

And all of them were silent.

Whoever tortured them had left them alive ... but destroyed their souls.

"She's near. This is one of her signatures."

Gavid muttered.

With a swift movement, he raised his sword and sent a wave of power that ended all their suffering.

Then, they moved on.

"...Who exactly is the Hollow we're after?" V asked again.

Gavid's voice turned grim.

"There are five Hollows, like I said. Two of them are rumored to be mindless beasts. The first is Ludwig, the one you saw that day... and the second..."

He paused, gaze narrowing against the sandstorm.

"...is the worst of them all."

"The one known as Pontiff Sulyvahn."

"For Pontiff, Lord Godfray was dispatched. He volunteered to confront the strongest of the Hollows."

"There are two other Hollows ...more rational than the rest .. which makes them easier to recruit: the Puppet Master, Simon Manus, and Father Smog. That sly old bastard Mergo said he'd handle them himself, claiming they're the easiest targets..."

Gavid Lindman grumbled bitterly, especially when it came to the last Hollow.

"Which leaves us with the final one... a woman."

As the two continued onward, they encountered more mutilated bodies, twisted and warped in grotesque ways. Some had been horrifically fused together.

It got worse with every step ... disfigured, naked figures staggered through the sand, unable to scream, their mouths stitched shut.

"Don't be surprised by what you see," Gavid muttered. "The one we're looking for is the most deranged of all the Hollows."

A woman described as being closer to demons than humans.

"The Blood Queen... Evelyn."

It had taken them months of searching, wandering what felt like eternity.

Eventually, Gavid Lindman and the masked V reached one of the desolate cities.

A battered sign marked its name:

"Black Flag."

They walked through its streets...completely deserted. Most of its residents were holed up inside tents resembling a freak show circus.

Occasionally, some desperate fool tried to approach, only to be cut down by Gavid's sword before they got within five meters.

His eyes now glowed red ... he could feel it. The presence was close.

"She's nearby..."

They pressed on, eventually stepping into one of the massive tents.

The stench of blood and filth overwhelmed their senses.

A filthy, middle-aged man with a bloodstained apron glared at them from within.

"What the hell do you want?!"

Behind him were scattered corpses, one of them lying sprawled on a table.

It was a large man ... dead.

The old butcher snapped.

"Here to rob me?! These bodies are mine!"

The state of the place was abominable .. human flesh was treated as food, and body parts served all sorts of functions.

V gripped his sword, bloodlust radiating from him.

"Should I kill him?"

But Gavid shook his head.

"Don't."

He stared at the filthy man.

"We're not here to rob you. But take my advice ... get out while you still can. You'll die if you keep this up."

"Hah?! You bastards gonna preach at me now?! Get lost before I shove this blade up your ass!"

The old man raised his bloody knife threateningly.

V moved again, but Gavid stopped him.

"I said don't."

He pointed to the butcher.

"Why don't you keep working? We won't bother you. We're just watching."

"Keep my ass! I told you to leave!"

The old man was about to lash out, but he froze the moment he sensed Gavid Lindman's patience wearing thin.

It was late, but he finally realized ... these two men weren't ordinary.

Reluctantly, he turned around, sweating.

"Damn it! Fine! You can watch this old man work."

Grumbling, the butcher turned to the corpse on his table.

With a steady hand honed by years of grim practice, he sliced open the man's stomach.

The cut was precise and deep ... blood spilled across the table.

Then, suddenly, he screamed and stumbled back, terrified.

"What the...!"

V stepped forward, puzzled.

"What is it?"

The butcher shrieked from the floor.

"Inside his stomach—!!"

From within the dead man's abdomen, two blood-soaked, slender arms slowly emerged.

Bit by bit, the woman curled up inside began to emerge, hugging her bare legs, her body completely drenched in blood as she slowly crawled out from within the corpse.

The moment her face came into view...

Evelyn opened her wide black eyes and cast a sleepy glance at those who had disturbed her rest.

"Oh... you found me."

Slowly, she pulled herself out of the dead man's body.

"Always so annoying... to the very end."

She muttered, then pointed at the old man who had dissected the corpse.

"Die."

With a flick of her finger, the blood soaking the terrified old man's clothes began to ripple... then suddenly exploded ... reducing him to nothing but scattered flesh.

V froze for a moment as the scent of blood tickled his senses.

Especially when his eyes met that strange woman's.

She smiled at him, and a bizarre aura began to radiate throughout the tent .. an aura that was instantly shattered by Gavid Lindman's swift strike through the air.

"Don't look at her."

"Oh, what a killjoy."

Evelyn laughed as she tossed aside the corpse she had emerged from and sat naked atop the bloodied table.

"Evelyn... the High Demon summons you."

"Hm. Let me put something on first... Gosh, you're such a nuisance. Lindman, didn't I tell you last time that if we ever met again, I'd kill you? didn't I?"

She tapped her finger against her lips as she stared at Gavid.

"I wonder what kind of face one of the Lords of the Ultras would make... when being tortured."

Despite the blatant provocation, Gavid didn't attack. He remained composed and patient.

"These are direct orders from a High Demon, Blood Queen... Evelyn. Refusing them now—"

"Are you threatening me?"

Evelyn's expression darkened, but Gavid continued calmly.

"Interpret it however you wish."

His hand moved to his blade, waiting for her reaction.

But Evelyn simply waved him off.

"Leave already. You're such an eyesore right now."

"What?"

She stood and walked away without looking back.

"You want to win the upcoming war, don't you? To fulfill your pathetic ambitions."

She picked up a short coat that barely covered her rear as she walked off, still soaked in blood.

"I'll come when the time is right... But if anyone bothers me now, I'll kill them. So leave."

Gavid hesitated as he watched her turn her back on them completely.

"Ah... I want a new man to play with. But they all rust too quickly. They're all so hideous."

Evelyn kept mumbling madly to herself.

"I need someone beautiful... dripping in blood, used to pain... someone whose body has endured every type of torment ... someone I can truly create with!"

She hugged herself, shivering with twisted delight.

"With someone like that... I could live happily for years... for a very long time~"

Only now did V finally begin to grasp what Lindman had meant earlier...

About the Hollows.

He finally understood how truly deranged and monstrous they were.

Time was moving forward. And war was drawing near.

Evelyn, the Blood Queen.

Simon Manus, the Puppetmaster.

Father Smog.

Ludwig, the Cursed.

And the strongest Hollow of them all .. Pontiff Sulyivahn.

The Ultras were assembling at full power for the war to come.

And elsewhere, deep inside Alcatraz Prison...

Frey Starlight was enduring his sentence ... awaiting the next chapter of his suffering.

Chapter 237 When the Chains Fell Quiet (1)

Between Two Worlds... That was the title of a struggle that ended in tragedy within just one world .

But the world itself was deeply divided, and everyone lived their own version of the tale.

On the desolate side, steeped in the scent of death, beneath lifeless skies and over a barren land, the march of a great army thundered forward ... its cavalry unleashing an aura of raw intimidation.

The knights of this host wore black armor emblazoned with cryptic insignias. At their head rode a towering figure in golden armor ... infamous across the continent: Godfrey, Lord of the Ultras.

His army, one of the strongest known, now marched toward a new battlefield.

But their opponent wasn't an army. It was just one man.

As they advanced further, the Ultras finally reached a strikingly distinct zone ... one marked by a towering barrier stretching into the sky.

A cadre of mages rushed out to greet them.

"We welcome the Highblood."

"Where is he?" Godfrey's voice bore no patience, only battlelust.

The mages understood. They led without delay.

"Still within the barrier, as always ... wandering aimlessly, waiting for new prey."

Godfrey snarled, signaling his forces to prepare.

Their enemy was a monstrous entity hailed as the strongest among the Hollow: Pontiff sulyvahn.

Let there be no misunderstanding ... this was no ordinary foe. He was something else entirely.

Pontiff sulyvahn possessed no awareness of his surroundings. He couldn't be spoken to, reasoned with, or communicated with in any form.

He would simply attack anything in sight.

He was once human. No one knows how that changed.

sulyvahn had slaughtered legions of men and beasts alike.

He had turned entire provinces into wastelands ... so much so that the greatest Ultras mages had constructed colossal barriers to trap him in a vast expanse.

His prison was the size of a nation, its boundaries maintained by mages working round the clock.

These barriers emitted a suppressive aura that usually repelled predatory beasts—but surprisingly, they proved effective against Pontiff Sulyvahn in the past.

And so, for a very long time, Pontiff Sulyvahn wandered alone across that land, after slaughtering everything within it.

A prison the size of a country, built for one man. That's how great a calamity the Pontiff was.

Now, he was their target.

Godfrey commanded his army to ready themselves. They passed through the barrier and entered the sealed zone.

It was said that sulyvahn could sense anyone stepping into his prison.

But no one saw or felt anything at first.

"Find him... now," Godfrey ordered.

Mages quickly triangulated his location.

He was far away ... hundreds of kilometers out ... dragging his enormous sword behind him.

The Ultras began their assault.

Their arsenal included arcane cannons and other weapons of unspeakable power.

Every resource they had was aimed at a single target.

Spells were cast, sonic waves charged, and the magical artillery roared to life. A rain of destruction blackened the sky.

All of it fell upon the Hollow.

An earth-shattering explosion followed, a shockwave cresting skyward.

They had hit him. That much was certain.

The cannons could damage even SS class entities. Surely, he had taken some harm.

A flicker of hope stirred.

"Did we get him?" someone asked.

Then silence.

Followed by dread.

A suffocating killing intent crept into their bones.

The feeling of imminent death settled over the soldiers like a second skin.

Godfrey stepped forward, twin greatswords gleaming.

"He's coming."

They couldn't see him yet ...but the deathly aura closing in was all the proof they needed.

In the end, they trembled where they stood, deep within the barren lands, as a horrifying roar tore through the air.

Moments later, they saw him ... charging from the distance like a feral beast.

A single man, sprinting on three limbs, dragging a colossal greatsword behind him, its weight carving a trail through the earth.

He wore a full suit of armor, rusted and eroded by some kind of dark energy, and atop his helmet sat a crimson plume.

But none of that mattered.

"Raaaaaaaggh!!"

The monstrous scream intensified as he entered their range. They bombarded him instantly with countless magical attacks, tearing apart the ground around him ... yet he never stopped.

"RAAAAAAAAAAAGHGHGH!!"

The sheer weight of his killing intent was enough to make even the most battle-hardened warriors tremble. Among them, Godfrey charged forward—toward Pontiff Sulyvahn.

Godfrey unleashed his full power, flooding the battlefield with gravitational and earthen aura to crush his enemy beneath the weight of his might.

Ultras Lord versus Hollow.

Both of them thundered toward each other, their roars growing more savage with every step.

In seconds, Godfrey found himself face to face with Pontiff Sulyvahn ... only those terrifying eyes visible through the cracks in his helm.

And then the world shook.

Godfrey's twin swords clashed against Sulyvahn's massive greatsword.

Godfrey ...revered as the strongest tank alive, said to be able to withstand both Oliver Khan and Ivar Valerion at once ..was believed to be invincible in raw physical combat.

But jaws dropped in horror when he was hurled into the sky with a single blow.

That mountain of a man, weighing tons, flew through the air before crashing violently, tearing through the terrain and leaving a gaping dent in his armor.

There was no time for shock.

Because the monster was already there.

Pontiff Sulyvahn ... having launched the strongest among them like a ragdoll .. now stood before the rest of Godfrey's army.

Thousands strong, they suddenly looked small ..insignificant ...when the Pontiff's scream thundered once more.

He leapt into the air, spiraling mid-flight, and brought his greatsword down in a sweeping arc of devastation.

Flesh and bone were torn apart in an instant.

Within seconds, he had carved his way deep into their ranks, tearing everything in his path to pieces.

From the beginning, recruiting him had been a fool's hope. The only plan was to eventually unleash him upon the Empire's forces at the right moment.

But they had made a critical mistake.

They had underestimated him.

Godfrey rushed back into the fray ...but Sulyvahn was still slaughtering his soldiers with primal savagery.

He bit and devoured them through the mouth-slit of his bloodstained helmet.

It was a massacre.

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The Empire – Alcatraz Prison

Alcatraz was the Empire's largest prison, sealed with powerful enchantments that distorted the senses and stretched the perception of time.

Three months ago, it received one of its youngest inmates ever ..a seventeen-year-old boy.

Strangely, he showed no fear of the infamous prison that loomed before him.

From the moment he parted ways with Phoenix Sunlight, Frey Starlight was dragged to his cell.

A narrow, empty room with no bed—just a chair and a toilet in the corner.

Frey spent most of his time there, seated with a vacant expression, often found staring into the void. He did nothing else.

No torture was applied at first. That was Alcatraz's method: the first month, equivalent to an entire year for the senses, was pure isolation between four suffocating walls.

This psychological tactic was highly effective, often breaking inmates before the real pain even began.

Thus, the first "month" passed.

Then came the second.

And at that point, Frey felt as if a full year had gone by.

The second phase began.

Chapter 238 When the Chains Fell Quiet (2)

A guard stepped in ...well over two meters tall, shirtless and iron-helmed, his massive muscles glistening.

Frey was shackled with aura-suppressing cuffs. He wore only a tattered black pair of trousers, barefoot and disheveled, slouched silently on the cold floor.

The guard stepped forward, flipping a dagger through his fingers with a fluidity that betrayed long years of experience.

"So you're Frey Starlight, huh? You really are young... probably the youngest I've had to deal with so far."

He leaned down and gave Frey a light pat on the shoulder.

"Anyway, nice to meet you. My name's Vlad, and starting today, I'll be your executioner."

His tone was cold, laced with menace. The iron helmet on his head didn't help.

But Frey simply smiled.

"Pleasure's mine. I look forward to our time together."

Vlad froze for a moment.

Usually, inmates at this point were jittery ... left too long in solitary, only to be greeted by a monster assigned to torture them.

He was supposed to be afraid. But Frey Starlight wasn't.

Vlad adjusted his posture and continued.

Maybe the kid was just mentally unshakable... or maybe he was completely insane.

"Very well then, Frey Starlight. I'll be asking you a few questions. I expect full cooperation and honest answers. That'll make things easier for both of us. Understood?"

Frey nodded with the same casual smile.

"Understood."

"Good."

Vlad sat in front of him.

"First question ... You've killed many innocent people before, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"My report says you regret it deeply, and feel guilty. Is that correct?"

"That's a lie."

"What do you mean?"

Frey shrugged, answering calmly.

"It's true that I killed them. But I don't feel anything about it. Honestly, I couldn't even tell you what their faces looked like."

"So, you feel no guilt?"

"None."

"Second question .. Where did you get your sword and your fighting style?"

"From an ancient sect located in the eastern part of the Nightmare Lands."

"How did you even know it was there? The reports say you already had knowledge of what was hidden in that region."

"I just got lucky."

"Lucky, huh?"

"Yes."

"Third and final question ... What were you trying to accomplish with that attack?"

The suicidal ignition that nearly destroyed the entire Temple.

Frey answered without even blinking.

"I wanted to destroy the world. Or at the very least, Belgrad, the capital."

Vlad didn't know what to say.

Was the boy insane? That would explain the eerie calm... and those insane answers. Destroy the world?

Vlad twirled the dagger in his hand.

This wasn't what he wanted to hear.

He muttered under his breath ...

"That's wrong."

Dead wrong.

"Guilty!"

He roared, plunging the dagger deep into Frey's left thigh.

Blood splattered across the floor as the blade sank into flesh and bone.

Vlad let out a breath of satisfaction as he twisted the dagger.

But the scream he expected never came.

Slowly, he looked up and met Frey's gaze. The boy was staring at him with the same expression.

Those empty black eyes, silently asking ..

What are you doing?

Vlad immediately checked the suppression cuffs ... still active, meaning Frey hadn't used aura reinforcement. He was just enduring the pain... naturally.

Vlad yanked the dagger out and sat down again, facing Frey who was now bleeding heavily.

"I'm going to ask you again."

"Alright."

Frey replied with the same indifference, which only fueled the executioner's frustration. He repeated the same questions. Frey gave the exact same answers.

So Vlad began to torture him.

He sliced flesh, burned skin, broke bones, and crushed fingers.

But no matter what he did .. no matter how far he pushed ... Frey Starlight never flinched, never screamed, never begged.

He just sat there, quietly staring at Vlad from that blood-soaked chair.

Breathing heavily, trembling with fury, Vlad finally snapped and screamed in Frey's face ..

"What the hell are you?! Are you some kind of masochist who enjoys torture?!"

How had he not gotten a single reaction?

But Frey only shrugged.

"You're the one who asked me to be honest."

"Damn it!"

The torture continued, fruitless as ever. And thus, the first day ended with Vlad storming out, leaving Frey behind. bloodied, broken... and silent.

But when Vlad returned the next day, his mind brimming with new methods of torment, he froze the moment he saw Frey.

The boy sat there as if nothing had happened. No bruises. No cuts. Not a single scar.

Vlad rushed toward him, wide-eyed, and checked the cuffs suppressing his aura .. still active, still functional.

He snapped at Frey.

"How the hell are you doing this?!"

Frey tilted his head with the same deadpan face.

"Doing what?"

"This! The healing!"

He pointed to Frey's perfectly intact body.

Frey replied flatly.

"I didn't do anything. My body just recovered. It's been a while since you left."

Vlad clutched his face.

It had only been a day, but to Frey, it had felt like a full week. His subconscious mind had concluded that a week had passed .. and so, believing that was enough time to heal, his body simply did.

Regenerated on its own.

Without him even realizing it.

"You're messing with me!!"

"I'm not."

"Damn it!"

And so, the cycle of torture continued.

For two whole months ... which, to Frey Starlight, felt like two years.

By the end of it, Vlad was a wreck. He screamed, he shook, he wept.

"Why?"

"Why didn't this boy break?"

He began to question his own skills, the years he'd spent perfecting the art of agony. Was he truly incapable of doing his job?

But the problem wasn't him.

The problem was the boy in front of him.

On the final day, Vlad left the cell with slumped shoulders, utterly defeated.

Frey waved him goodbye with a faint smile.

"I'll miss you, Vlad."

Vlad flinched at the words, trembling with barely contained rage.

"I hope I never see you again. Go die somewhere far away from me!"

He slammed the door.

Frey chuckled to himself.

"I really do pity him."

Three months in Alcatraz had changed Frey Starlight.

The biggest change? The return of his pitch-black hair, now restored to its original state.

The white hair had merely been a side effect of the Moonlight family's curse ... and now, after enough time had passed, Frey's black hair had returned once more.

His features remained the same, but he looked more like the Frey of old ... his former self.

He sat, gazing quietly at the window that appeared before him.

Executioner: Vlad

Affection Points: -50

Vlad despises you. He sincerely wishes for your death.

Frey smiled... then sighed.

He had one more thing to worry about now, alongside his achievement points.

The system ... The new second-level system had brought him many perks ...many new abilities.

But it also seemed like it was going to toy with him more than the first one ever did.

Frey remained seated, awaiting his release, analyzing the system that now governed him.

And at the very bottom, one new section stood out:

[Quests]

A new final quest had appeared.

But its content...

Final Quest: ???

It was blank.

Just like Frey himself.

Empty.

Utterly empty.

Chapter 239: Rebirth Through Silence (1)

- Frey Starlight's POV –

"This is your last day here, Frey Starlight. Hope you haven't grown too fond of the place."

One of the guards smirked as he stood at the entrance of my cell.

Three months had passed in this cage .. a cell that felt more like a tomb. Time inside Alcatraz was distorted. What should have been ninety days had dragged into three long, bitter years in my mind.

This cell had become almost familiar to me, oddly reminiscent of the dorm rooms I once knew in my previous life.

Three years... they should've been enough to change something inside me. I truly believed that.

I thought they'd be enough to fill the void, to give me a reason to keep moving forward in this cruel, unforgiving world.

But they weren't.

And they never will be.

No matter how long I stay, this world has nothing that can fill the space they left behind.

"...It's not fair... Father..."

A bitter smile curved my lips as I slowly rose to my feet, preparing to leave the only place I'd come to know again.

Why did you leave me with those words?

Why did you tell me to live?

Because of you... I no longer have the right to die. Not even that belongs to me anymore.

So what am I supposed to do now?

Three years have passed, and all they've done is confirm how hollow I really am.

There's a war in my head. A chasm swallowing my heart whole. And so many questions tearing at what's left of me.

What should I live for?

For vengeance? Against Wesker, the monster whose fate I don't even know?

Or the Engineer, who dragged my father and me into this hell and forced us to suffer?

Or should I live quietly, as my father wished ... to appreciate what I have, to protect it?

All of those reasons could be fuel. I told myself that over and over, trying to believe it. But after three years locked in my own mind, I realized that fire is gone.

It burned out.

Swallowed by the abyss inside me.

I wanted to be like those epic heroes in stories. Driven by vengeance, screaming to the sky, "I'll kill all the demons!"

But that dream was never real.

Something inside me died a long time ago.

Back then, the Victoriad gave me purpose. A goal I could chase with everything I had.

But now?

Now there's nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

"...God, I'm so empty."

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Lost in thought, I barely noticed when the cell door opened. The guards pulled me out in silence.

As we reached the prison gates and I stepped onto solid earth .. earth not poisoned by the chill of the prison ...I was instantly hit by the bite of cold wind outside.

I was barefoot, wearing only torn black pants, and my upper body was completely bare. The storm stung against my skin.

My black hair had grown slightly, brushing the back of my neck. Three months wouldn't have done much, but three years in my head? Maybe it left a trace.

Waiting for me was the same carriage that had brought me here. And standing beside it, just as before, was Phoenix Sunlight.

"...Phoenix."

The young lord of the Sunlight family smiled gently, placing a hand on my shoulder.

"It's been a while, Frey. I imagine it felt like three years to you."

"It did," I replied.

"Come on. Let's leave this place behind. I'm sure you've had enough of it."

I didn't argue. I stepped into the carriage beside him.

Once inside, I glanced at Phoenix ... and immediately, the system triggered a window.

Phoenix Sunlight

Affection Points: 20

– Phoenix has some expectations for you, but doesn't fully trust you. He remains cautious –

Available Information:

Name: Phoenix Sunlight

Rank: SS

Combat Style: Eternal Flame

Current Thought:

'Strange. He spent three years being tortured, and yet... he's still exactly the same.'

I stared at the system window hovering beside his name. This was one of the new abilities granted by the Level 2 System.

The Affection Meter helped me read people more clearly now.

And Phoenix... he was trying to figure out why I hadn't changed .. why after three years of mental torment, I was still this hollow shell.

Frey Starlight had barely lived eighteen years in this world.

Three years, in the context of that short life, was already a long time .. let alone when spent being tortured in the most notorious prison in the Empire.

But what they didn't know... was that my mental age was far older. And physical pain no longer had any real effect on me.

Thanks to the affection system, I already knew the best way to deal with him.

Throughout our trip back to the capital, Phoenix explained what would happen moving forward.

Apparently, there were still plenty of people who wanted me dead ... unconvinced by the final verdict of my trial.

For now, though, I was safe ... so long as I remained under the protection of Phoenix and my family.

But my movements were being monitored. I was now completely beholden to the Empire's will, my blade expected to point wherever they ordered.

They probably wanted me to take part in the coming war ... to follow in my father's footsteps.

In the previous war, they had always sent him to the frontlines. He faced the enemy's strongest warriors time and time again... until they left him alone against Dragoth.

Perhaps my father had grown into something they couldn't control ... so they tried to dispose of him through war.

In other words... they used him, drained everything they could from him, and then threw him away at the first opportunity.

That thought made my blood boil.

And yet, strangely, I didn't feel any particular hatred toward Maekar.

The emptiness inside me consumed every other emotion like a black hole.

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After some time spent discussing formalities and what was expected of me going forward, I found myself listening as Phoenix began recounting some of the legends my father had left behind during his lifetime.

To my surprise, I actually wanted to hear more.

Phoenix noticed it too ... the only real change that had happened to me.

The light in my eyes... was the same one that had sparkled in his when he spoke of Abraham.

I guess... my father really was my hero.

The journey didn't take long. With teleportation gates always on standby, we reached the capital territory quickly.

As we neared our destination, I took a closer look at my new system and one particular skill that had quietly appeared in its depths:

[Third-Person Pov]

When Affection Points reach 50 or more, you can now enter a Third-Person Player Perspective. This allows you to exist behind the target in an ethereal form, perceive their thoughts and emotions, and—if your affection level is high enough—even control them directly.

A terrifying ability.

As long as the affection level was high enough, I could spy, manipulate... basically do whatever I wanted.

I wondered ... was this some sort of exclusive ability granted to me as the author?

The power to mess with my own characters?

But in this world ... this was no longer a novel. This was reality.

There were so many mysteries still gnawing at me.

How had I reincarnated into this body from the start, yet only gained access to it 2 Year's ago ?

The Engineer. Those statues. The Nameless.

Just thinking about all of it left my mind in shambles. So, I decided to push it all aside—for now—and keep moving forward.

Chapter 240: Rebirth Through Silence (2)

For someone who had spent most of his recent time locked in a cell, my first day outside passed in the blink of an eye.

I saw Ada first. My sister was truly happy to see me again ... and had developed that annoying personality trait where she acted like she was my mom.

I was particularly shocked when I opened her status window...

Name: Ada Starlight

Affection Points: 99

The number was terrifyingly high. I'd thought 50 was the cap.

Unlike Phoenix's window, Ada's status page was incredibly long ... like it could drill into the ground if I let it keep going.

With affection that high, I could see everything about her. Her thoughts, her abilities, what she liked, what she hated...

Every detail, in overwhelming clarity.

That's when I started wondering ...what use did I even have for this ability?

Oh, and I should mention ... I tried using Third-Person pov on Ada.

It worked. Terrifyingly well.

I really did feel like a player, watching her from behind.

It was a relief, honestly, that Ada seemed to be the only person this ability worked on.

If not... who knows what I might end up doing to them?

Yes, Ada was the only one.

...Or so I thought.

"What's with that look on your face? If you keep zoning out like this, I'll beat it back into focus."

A fist slammed against my sword, forcing me back a step.

"...Sorry."

"Being locked up for so long dulled your combat instincts... Let's keep going until that body of yours remembers how to move again."

Carmen cracked her knuckles, her eyes glowing as she locked onto me.

In response, I took my stance, gripping Balerion, and muttered under my breath:

"...What am I even fighting for anymore? What's the point of regaining these instincts?"

Ignoring my idle remarks, Carmen pressed forward, launching attack after attack in hopes of shaking the rust off me before I returned to the Temple.

I understood. She was doing this for me ... even if she didn't say it. And I was grateful, especially for how she had always protected Ada.

Not to mention... the moment I opened her status window, I felt completely at ease.

Name: Carmen Starlight

Current Affection Points: 50

Rank : SS-

Combat Style: Stardust

This person trusts you and sees you as both an ally and someone important.

Her affection score was high enough to reveal a lot. And apparently, it wouldn't rise above 50 unless I did something about it—

Something I'd done by accident with Ada.

Even now, I still didn't fully understand how this new system feature worked.

I spent a full week inside the Starlight estate.

The manor we stayed in was isolated from the rest of the capital, peaceful and quiet.

Ada didn't leave my side for even a minute that whole week. She clung to me constantly.

And strangely enough... I didn't mind it.

Somehow, I'd started seeing her as a real sister.

I never would've guessed that something so simple could change our relationship so drastically.

I still remembered the surprise and joy in her eyes when I started treating her like family, after all those old barriers between us had crumbled.

Family... That was all I'd fought for up to this point.

And now, that family was right here ... manifested in Ada Starlight.

That warmth I felt... maybe this was what my father meant when he told me to live.

This.

This kind of life ... maybe that's what he always wanted for me.

Deep down, I hoped that was the answer.

I wished for a future kind enough to allow such a life to bloom.

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Time really flies.

Before I knew it, I was back at the Temple again.

The place hadn't changed at all.

And strangely enough, I realized I'd made a lot of memories here over the past year ... from my first days and bitter struggle, to the final battle of the Victoriad.

Now, I was no longer a first-year. I had officially joined the elite class of the second year.

I didn't realize it until I tried to enter my old room on the first floor and found a younger girl standing inside.

Awkwardly, I had to carry myself upstairs, drawing unwanted attention and stirring up a commotion I could've done without.

And in that moment... I realized how the others saw me now.

I saw hatred in their eyes ... disgust.

To them, I was a criminal. And to be fair, I had just come out of prison.

But among the disgust, I saw something else ..

Fear.

Dread.

Without me even noticing, my name had started to carry weight.

Far more than it ever did when I was just "Frey, the guy who tried to rape a noble's daughter."

Not that it mattered. I never cared what people thought of me anyway.

I climbed the stairs, step by step, to the second floor ... marking one more level of progression in my Temple life.

And then, I saw someone else heading to the same place I was.

That broad back... platinum blonde hair... a towering, muscular frame that was hard to forget.

We had once fought each other to the brink of death not so long ago.

Now, he glanced sideways at me, a golden eye gleaming with raw intensity.

"Well, well... Frey Starlight. Decided to show your face at last?"

Daemon turned fully toward me, his temper as explosive as ever.

"Daemon. You being the first one I run into here... What's wrong? Did you get lost and accidentally wander into the elite class?"

I smirked, ready for our usual war of words.

But Daemon responded coolly.

"Hmph. You'll be seeing me a lot from now on."

He pulled out a black card engraved in gold, revealing his new designation:

Elite Class – Rank AB-11

Now that I looked closely, his uniform wasn't one from the Abyss class.

"AB-11?"

I raised an eyebrow, and Daemon explained:

"It means I belong to both elite classes now."

Which made sense.

The only reason he'd been placed in the Abyss class to begin with was due to the political struggle between the prince and the princess.

To maintain neutrality, he wasn't allowed in either of their classes.

But now, with the looming threat of war, that neutrality was abandoned.

Daemon was officially added to the elite class ... though in a rather strange way, as a member of both Class A and B.

However, being assigned rank 11 in both classes... that was a clear slight against him.

He read my thoughts instantly, smirking as he pointed at my own card.

"What's wrong? Is Number One pitying me now?"

Just as he said... my rank in Class B had changed since last time.

Frey Starlight – Class B-1

Apparently, ever since the Victoriad, I'd become number one.

I sighed, replying to Daemon.

"Numbers don't mean anything."

"True."

He agreed, and we continued up the stairs together.

I was surprised by how civil he was being with me. I still remembered how hostile he used to be.

"You seem like you've got a lot on your mind," he said.

"I do, honestly. Since when can we exchange more than three words without fighting?"

I asked, confused, and Daemon raised an eyebrow.

"What? You'd prefer if I started insulting you again?"

Honestly... I kind of thought he would.

"No. I just assumed you looked down on people like me."

"I do."

He answered quickly, but didn't stop walking.

"I look down on those who fight for meaningless things ... people who act like they've achieved something when they haven't. That kind of shallow pride makes them shallow people."

I nodded.

That was Daemon Valerion... his warrior's philosophy laid bare.

He turned slightly to look at me.

"But you're different, Frey Starlight."

"Huh?"

"I've never seen anyone fight with such desperation... the way you did. That raw hunger... the drive that said losing would be worse than dying. Like it was truly the end."

Daemon paused, recalling our semifinal match.

"Someone who fights like that... is a true warrior."

His words left me with a strange feeling.

Daemon Valerion ... the combat-obsessed lion of House Valerion ...had just acknowledged me.

I knew what he said shouldn't matter.

It was meaningless, really.

But for some reason, I couldn't think of anything to say back.

My thoughts stalled.

So the first words that came to mind left my lips instead:

"A true warrior? I'm just a killer."

I'd meant it more as an insult to myself than anything.

But Daemon just laughed as he walked ahead toward his room.

"A killer? Open your eyes, Starlight. You're surrounded by people who've all killed at least once."

Killing in this world, in this era, didn't carry the same weight it used to.

The real reason everyone freaked out back then wasn't about who I killed... it was how I killed them.

The danger I represented.

The ones who judged me for my "crimes" were people who had slaughtered thousands themselves.

It was never about morality.

And Daemon understood that ... unlike the common students who despised me for it.

"I'm looking forward to our next fight, Frey Starlight. Be ready."

With that, he ended the conversation and disappeared into his room.

I smiled too, then turned toward my own.

"I'm looking forward to it." I muttered.

I couldn't help but check Daemon's status window out of pure curiosity.

And what I saw caught me off guard.

Name: Daemon Valerion

Affection Points: 30

Rank : B

Combat Style: Dragon's gate

This person respects you and considers you a rival.

I needed to stop treating the elite class students like characters from some story.

They were more real than I was, in many ways.

I still didn't know what I was supposed to do next...

Or how I was meant to live.

Even the final mission from my system was still blank.

But whatever the answer was...

I was sure I'd find it here, within the Temple walls.

And just like that ... My second year at the Temple began.

