

## **VILLAIN 30**

Chapter 30 Becoming a killer

-Frey Starlight Pov-

...

I was still standing in the same spot when my entire body screamed in warning.

A primal instinct—an overwhelming sense of danger.

At first, I didn't understand what was happening.

Then—suddenly—the world around me twisted.

The ground, the buildings, the very air itself began to warp in an unnatural way.

"What the hell is happening?"

Everything froze.

The moment I realized what was going on, I cursed.

"This pressure... Is this... magic?"

Magic-users were terrifying entities in this world.

Though they were rare, their existence alone could shift the balance of power.

I had seen the tools they crafted—artifacts of immense power.

But I had never met one in person.

And now, I was about to—

In the worst possible way.

As the frozen world locked me in place, figures emerged from the distortion.

Cloaked figures.

Assassins.

I instantly understood the situation.

The man at the front removed his hood, revealing a middle-aged face, bald and riddled with scars.

He took a step forward as the others surrounded me.

"Nothing personal, kid... Business is business."

I smirked.

"Couldn't the old man send someone better?"

The bald assassin remained unfazed. Instead, he returned my smirk with a chilling grin of his own.

"At least you know why you're about to die."

Leonidas, that senile old bastard...

So, he's sending assassins after me now?

I felt the assassins unleash a crushing pressure toward me, laced with killing intent.

I immediately steeled myself.

"This pressure... D+ rank... No, is it C-?"

The bald man chuckled upon hearing my words.

"You've got sharp instincts... You're close, but not quite right."

Suddenly, the pressure from the squad leader in front of me surged to an even greater level.

At the very least, he was C-rank.

I quickly assessed my surroundings—ten assassins. Their leader was an entire rank above me, and among them, a mage lurked in hiding.

"What's wrong, little lord? Are you scared?"

The bald man was eager to see fear twist my expression, but his grin faltered when I flashed him a chilling smile instead.

"Scared? Quite the opposite... I was just wondering if Leonidas had truly run out of options to send such weaklings after me."

"Big words for a brat."

With a scowl, the bald assassin stomped the ground, tearing through the terrain as he lunged toward me.

He was fast—so fast that tracking him was nearly impossible.

But if he thought getting close to me was a good idea, he was gravely mistaken.

The moment he stepped into my range, the serpent on my skin ignited.

"Come forth... Balerion."

The assassin flinched as a cursed, pitch-black blade materialized in my left hand.

I swung down in a vertical slash at blinding speed.

He reacted quickly, crossing two daggers to block my strike—but the force of Balerion's blow sent him skidding back, leaving a deep wound across his chest.

He staggered several steps, his expression darkening.

"You... that sword..."

There was no turning back now. I had revealed Balerion to them. That meant only one thing...

They had to die here.

"Phantom Steps."

I shot forward, aiming to finish their leader before he could recover.

But before I could close the distance, three assassins attacked from all sides.

I spun, sweeping my sword in a wide arc, deflecting their blades simultaneously.

A shockwave sent them flying, but before I could regain my footing, the ground beneath me shattered—

A dagger-wielding hand burst from below, striking upward.

I was faster. A single, precise slash from Balerion severed the assassin's arm before he could land his attack.

Warm blood splattered across my blade, and for a brief moment, I shuddered.

'Damn it... Focus.'

More attacks rained down—seven daggers streaking toward my face.

Without hesitation, I channeled aura into my feet and launched myself upward, barely evading them.

Now airborne, I gripped my sword tightly and hurled myself toward the ground at breakneck speed.

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Black Meteor!"

A streak of darkness crashed into the earth, blasting several assassins away.

Using the smoke as cover, I lunged at the nearest one.

He barely had time to react.

His dagger rose to block, but I was faster.

Balerion plunged straight through his heart.

A perfect strike.

At that moment, his hood slipped off, revealing his face.

I saw everything—the life fading from his eyes, the blood dripping from his lips as he coughed onto my chest before crumpling to the ground.

My body tensed.

A single heartbeat of hesitation—

And the assassin leader struck.

I dodged—

Or so I thought.

A sharp sting flared across my shoulder as a wound appeared out of nowhere.

"What...?"

I didn't even see it coming. But there was no time to dwell on it—another attack followed instantly.

I raised Balerion to parry.

Metal clashed against metal, but even as I deflected the blow, another gash appeared on my body.

"What the hell is going on?"

A chilling smile crept across the bald assassin's face.

"Why do you look so surprised?"

He pressed forward, unleashing a flurry of wild strikes.

Daggers rained from all directions as he moved with inhuman speed.

I met his attacks head-on, our weapons clashing in a storm of steel.

Sparks flew with every impact, but something was wrong—

Even when I blocked his attacks, fresh wounds kept appearing on my body.

"In the end, your sword is the only impressive thing about you!"

The bald assassin sneered, but I wasn't listening.

Because I was finally starting to understand.

"Hawk's Eye."

With my enhanced vision, I saw it—

His weapon wasn't just a dagger.

A transparent, invisible blade extended from its edge.

An ability.

And at that moment, I reminded myself—my opponent wasn't just some mindless beast.

He was a trained killer.

The assassin leader's expression darkened as I began blocking his strikes—this time, with precision.

Hawk's Eye slowed his movements in my vision, allowing me to read his attacks.

Within moments, I carved a fresh wound across his torso.

Seeing their leader struggle, the remaining assassins charged in.

Once again, I was surrounded—multiple unseen blades slashing toward me.

Every time I struck back, the scent of blood filled my lungs.

'Calm down... I've long since grown used to spilling blood.'

I left afterimages behind, slipping between their attacks with precision.

"What kind of movements are those?!"

The assassins were bewildered—

Because they had never seen anything like this before.

"Let me show you the true power of the shadows."

The battle had been four against one. But the balance shifted when ten copies of me materialized around them.

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Mirage."

In a single instant, I struck ten times—

Slashing deep wounds across my foes.

One of them wasn't lucky enough.

His throat burst open in a crimson fountain, and he collapsed, lifeless.

Once again, I hesitated.

Once again, I found myself staring at a lifeless body—

And in battles like this, even a second of hesitation could mean death.

The assassins seized the opening, launching a counterattack, forcing me back into defense.

"Damn it, damn it, damn it!"

What the hell was wrong with me? Hadn't I prepared for this?

I clenched my fingers tighter around Balerion, forcing my focus back onto my enemies.

"They're just empty figures."

My strikes grew sharper, deadlier, as I poured an overwhelming surge of aura into my blade.

This time, the battle became even fiercer.

I was locked in relentless, close-quarters combat, attacked from all sides.

I couldn't stop—not even for a second.

For every wound I inflicted, I received one in return.

At that moment, I wasn't fighting just one battle—

I was fighting two.

One was physical.

The other... was within me.

"I thought I was ready... I thought this would be easy..."

"Then why?"

"Why the hell am I hesitating now?!"

With every strike, every slash that cut through their flesh—

An inexplicable disgust twisted inside me.

Calm down... Remember...

Just Characters in a Story...

I plunged my sword into another assassin's heart, yanked it free, and pressed forward.

A story of my own creation.

Balerion trembled violently as it drank fresh blood, growing even more savage with each kill.

My hand moved at blinding speed, unleashing a storm of black arcs that sliced through the very air.

The assassins darted away, narrowly dodging the relentless barrage—most of them, at least.

One wasn't so lucky. A single arc struck true, cleaving him cleanly in half.

His body crumpled to the ground, his entrails scattering in a grotesque display.

Lost in my turbulent thoughts, I kept fighting.

"I created this world."

"You bastard!"

The assassin leader's furious roar echoed as he lunged, trying to pin me down.

But facing me head-on while I wielded Balerion? A grave mistake.

"I gave you life, you sons of whores!"

Blood painted the battlefield as the slaughter reached its peak.

"And I'll be the one to end it if I must!"

Six assassins remained, struggling against the storm of shadows ripping through them.

"Just empty characters..."

I cut another one down and advanced toward my next target.

"Erase unnecessary thoughts. Just fight."

The assassin leader's transparent blade expanded, flashing toward my head.

I reacted instantly, evading with a seamless fusion of Hawk's Eye and Phantom Steps.

"Kill."

I surged toward the remaining assassins, every stray thought vanishing.

"Slaughter."

At this point, I held nothing back. I had become an unrelenting force of death.

"Kill, slaughter, kill, slaughter!"

Mirage activated once more, and another body was torn to shreds.

Surrounded by a relentless storm of blood and scattered remains, I continued my ruthless carnage.

At last, I flicked the blood from my blade and turned to face the final two.

Only the assassin leader remained standing, his body riddled with wounds.

Behind him stood a silent figure, motionless since the battle began—the mage.

I was still whispering those same trembling words under my breath.

"Slaughter... Kill... Bury."

Over and over, I repeated them, forcing myself to believe—convincing myself that I had only killed empty characters from a story. Not real people.

I never imagined killing humans would feel so different from slaying monsters.

Step by step, I closed in on my last opponents.

I wanted this to end.

Then, a voice shattered the silence.

"It's done!!."

The assassin leader smirked.

"Too late, bastard."

And then I heard it.

A single word that changed everything.

"Obscuration."

Darkness.

A void swallowed my vision in an instant.

"Hah?"

Confusion hit first. Then, the mage, ever so smug, decided to explain.

"You were close, boy, but it's over now. From this moment on, you'll lose one of your senses every ten minutes—starting with your sight. Let's see how you fight now."

He laughed, assured of his victory.

The assassin leader wasted no time. He struck.

His transparent blade streaked toward my face at terrifying speed.

He thought it was over.

He thought he had won.

But at the last moment, I dodged.

Barely, but I did.

His hidden blade had nearly split my skull—nearly.

"You stole my senses?"

Fool.

From the very beginning, my combat style had relied on—

"Darkness."

The assassin's guard dropped for an instant—convinced I was helpless.

That was all I needed.

Using Mirage, I struck.

He fought desperately, blocking most of my ten consecutive slashes.

But his luck ran out when Balerion carved deep into his chest, sending him straight to the abyss.

The assassin leader collapsed.

And then, I turned to the mage, who stared in disbelief.

"H-How?"

His voice quivered.

"How?" I echoed, a smirk creeping onto my lips. "Because you're an idiot."

He had tried to create an opening for his ally.

Instead, he had sealed his fate.

Darkness was my domain.

Realizing his blunder, the mage panicked.

The ground trembled as he desperately reshaped it to create distance.

"Stay back!"

Dozens of his clones materialized, surrounding me in the pitch-black void.

He tried to flee among them.

But he froze.

Because in an instant, a black shadow tore through his illusions, shredding them to nothing.

"Let's finish this quickly. I'd rather not lose another sense."

The mage collapsed as I appeared before him.

It had been over the moment he crossed my path.

Mages were never built for close combat.

I raised my sword, ignoring his pitiful cries.

"Oh... and thank you."

With a single stroke, his head soared through the air.

"Thanks to you, I didn't have to watch myself kill you two in the end."

The moment the mage died, the suffocating darkness lifted.

We were back in front of the exam center.

And my vision returned.

I glanced at my hands—stained with blood.

Blood that wasn't mine.

"This... feels too real."

No matter how much I tried to deceive myself...

I couldn't deny the truth.

They had been alive.

People.

Just like me.

Even if they were only characters in my story...

Even if their existence was meaningless...

"I killed humans."

I clenched my fists, fighting the nausea rising in my gut.

"I have to kill these emotions... if I want to survive in this world."

That day...

I became a killer.