

VILLAIN 371

Chapter 371: A Final Farewell (2)

Frey, barely able to see straight—

Didn't notice a thing.

All his focus was on escape.

Even after slaughtering most of the puppets, New ones continued to emerge from nowhere, eager to tear him apart.

Running like a madman, carrying Clana in his arms .

Frey finally reached the edge of the city, just meters from safety.

At that moment—

The loudspeakers scattered across the city crackled to life once more, and Frey heard that voice.

"In such a rush, Lord Starlight? Where are you off to?"

Frey glanced over his shoulder.

And there, standing on top of a building that had survived the carnage—

Was Simon Manus.

Smiling.

By his side stood a strange puppet—

Radiating pressure so strong that Frey felt it from afar.

And all around them..

More and more puppets began to rise again.

Shattered limbs fused back together, forming new dolls—

All of them staring at Frey with glowing red eyes.

"It's rather rude to leave when the party's not over yet, don't you think?"

"..."

Frey said nothing.

He was too exhausted to entertain this madness any longer.

He turned his back and kept walking.

"At the very least, won't you tell me what you thought of the gift I went through so much trouble to prepare? Kikiki!"

Simon laughed maniacally.

And Frey ..

Suddenly realized something was wrong.

"Frey!!"

Clana's voice pulled him back.

She had slipped from his arms, falling to the ground in terror.

"What's happening to me?!"

Clutching herself tightly,

Clana trembled—

Horried by the changes she was feeling.

Frey reached for her—

Only to freeze in place when he saw what was happening.

Underneath Clana's now pale, almost ghostly skin—

Her veins began to glow with a strange blue light.

A foreign substance was crawling through her body ..

Spreading slowly.

Taking her over.

"Frey..."

She collapsed into his arms, and he held her tightly.

Clinging to him with all her strength—

Tears finally fell from Clana's eyes.

She couldn't hold it in anymore.

"I don't want to die... Frey."

"I don't want to die..."

Hearing the whisper in his ear—

Frey didn't know what to say.

After enduring so much, Fighting like a madman, Giving everything he had...

Frey's consciousness was fading.

The only things he could hear—

Were Clana's sobs, and the heavy stomps of the dolls closing in.

"I don't want to die... Frey."

Still clinging to her tightly—

His face twisted with pain,

Frey finally managed to speak.

"You'll be fine... I'm here."

He didn't know what else to say.

he spoke the first words that might bring Clana even a small measure of comfort.

Those words were the only thing he could offer her in that moment.

Frey had already resolved to protect her until the very end...

No matter the cost.

He was ready to push his body beyond its limits.

From a distance, Simon Manus continued to laugh. Then, shaking his head with false sympathy, he muttered:

"Frey Starlight... how pitiful."

This was the world he lived in.

"Not everything we want is meant to be."

Clana eventually went silent—

Her trembling stopped.

But for some reason...

Her last words echoed in his mind ..

"I don't want to die."

At that moment,

The world around him went still—eerily quiet.

Then he felt something welling up in his chest.

Something... hot.

When he placed his hand over it to understand what it was—

Frey found blood.

Dripping without end.

He looked down ..

And his face began to empty.

"Clana..."

That wasn't Clana.

It was something else.

A puppet made to look like her—

Its arm had transformed into a massive blade that now pierced through his chest and out his back.

The heat surged up his throat ..

Then through his mouth ..

And he coughed up blood without realizing.

Staring into the red, glowing eyes of the puppet that had once looked like Clana—

Frey asked himself:

"What was I fighting for?"

Why had he bled so much?

All that struggle...

All that brutal fighting...

For what?

All this time—he had buried his emotions.

Ever since those endless training cycles had broken him down again and again...

But now ..

For the first time in a long while..

Frey's expression crumbled.

Looking up at the sky, he questioned the suffering he'd endured—

"Why?"

The puppet-Clana pulled its blade out of his chest.

Frey dropped to his knees, blood streaming from his mouth as he stared at the person he had wanted to protect...

Now raising a blade to his throat.

And behind them..

The army of puppets.

Simon Manus laughing.

The world collapsing.

Frey finally realized—

His struggle had led him only to more pain.

"Ah... what's the point?"

The puppet-Clana raised her sword—

Ready to decapitate him and end his life.

But then ..

A surge of aura blasted her backward with immense force.

Struggling to regain her footing, the puppet looked at Frey—

His body glowing with an intense violet light.

The pressure of his aura ..

Even Simon Manus was stunned.

"He can still release this much power? Even with a hole in his chest?!"

Broken body.

A gaping wound.

Frey chuckled bitterly, his eyes heavy with exhaustion.

"Unlucky for you... my aura pool is SSS rank."

If they thought it would end this way—

They were wrong.

Raising his swords with the last of his strength..

Frey poured out every last drop of his dark aura into one final, desperate attack.

"Ignition."

In that instant ..

The violet light of his Ignition was the only color in the world.

A massive explosion erupted outward—

Swallowing everything.

Clana.

The puppets.

Even Simon Manus, who quickly hid behind the strange puppet at his side.

If there was any place in Puppet City still standing—

It no longer existed after Frey's final strike.

The explosion raged for nearly a full minute, Devouring everything in its path.

And through it all—

Frey's eyes never left the puppet-Clana, who was reduced to dust in the aura storm.

Closing his eyes ..

He accepted the truth.

That this was the end of the girl who had walked beside him for so long.

"Goodbye... Clana."

...

...

...

When the blast finally ceased—

Simon Manus stepped out from behind the puppet that had shielded him,

Staring at the enormous crater left behind by Frey Starlight's final attack.

All the remaining puppets had been destroyed.

He stood alone—

With only one puppet left at his side.

But Frey Starlight ..

Was nowhere to be seen.

A wicked grin spread across Simon's face.

"With wounds like that... he not only launched that attack—he escaped too?!"

He had thought it was over.

But Frey Starlight had gotten away.

Again.

And now ..

Simon understood just how dangerous that boy truly was.

"Very good... Frey Starlight."

One thing was certain.

That monster of a boy—

Would be back.

Chapter 372: A New Era (1)

The Land of the Ultras...

Beyond the end of the mountain range, far from the Puppet City that had been wiped from existence..

Clutching his chest with one hand, trying to keep the gaping, bleeding wound from tearing wider, and supporting himself against the wall with the other—

Frey Starlight walked with a broken body and an exhausted soul, step by step, leaving a trail of blood behind him.

The whites of his eyes had turned crimson from all the blood, clouding his vision to the point he could barely see.

The agony he was enduring wasn't something a normal human could survive.

And yet—

Frey never fell.

"I'm still standing..."

He muttered through clenched teeth, trying to give himself strength as he panted heavily, each breath a battle after having inhaled far too much smoke and toxic gas.

"I haven't fallen yet..."

A bitter feeling swelled in his chest.

He had come such a long way ..

From a boy who once didn't even know how to hold a sword—

To a warrior capable of surviving life-and-death battles against SS ranked threats.

Looking back...

He could see the bloody path he had walked to get here.

A path soaked in pain and loss—

Pain that never left him.

Struggling to breathe in the air around him..

Frey gazed up at the sky in quiet suffering.

Night had fallen, marking the beginning of his fourteenth night in the Land of the Ultras.

Even if this place was far from home—

The moon and stars above him were still the same.

Still the ones that had always lit his path.

After stumbling for what felt like forever—

Frey finally crossed the city's edge and collapsed against the jagged mountain wall, hiding in its crevice.

His head tingled with growing numbness.

He had grown strong.

He knew that.

He had won the battle—

Escaping a hellish siege alive.

He had given everything ..

But... where had it gotten him?

"Nothing's changed... not a damn thing."

He was still entangled in the threads of a fate woven by others.

Clana was dead .. She had thrown away her life for his.

And now his soul was shackled by that burden more tightly than ever.

It made Frey ask himself:

What had he been fighting for all this time?

No matter how strong he became—

No matter how hard he tried—

"Am I destined to survive... only to keep watching everyone around me die, powerless to stop it?"

Frey had always known he couldn't save everyone.

That idea had never been realistic.

But the number of people he did want to save ..

It was so small.

So few, they could be counted on one hand.

If he could save just them...

He would be satisfied.

Yet still—

No matter how powerful he grew..

He kept losing them.

Frey felt something he rarely allowed himself to feel:

Fear.

Fear that what happened to Clana would happen to the others who still mattered to him.

And if that happened—

Then all the blood and sweat he had shed would mean nothing.

Thinking of all this ..

Frey felt his body begin to collapse,

His will starting to break under the crushing weight of life.

More than anything—

He wanted to shut his bloodshot eyes and just sleep.

To leave it all behind ..

All the pain.

All the suffering.

To sink into the dark and disappear.

But he didn't.

Barely able to keep them open—

His dim eyes stared ahead as he forced a faint, bitter smile.

He tried circulating aura through his shattered body, Forcing it to begin healing on its own.

"I won't fall..."

Suffering of this level wasn't enough to bring him down anymore.

Not after walking through every kind of hell—

A hell that had forged his soul and mind in fire,

Making them colder each time.

Frey Starlight was no longer the same boy.

"I won't lose... I won't be defeated again..."

He wrapped his cold, blood-drained body in a long black cloak—

And sat quietly, tending to his wounds.

By now, he should've already lost consciousness.

But he didn't.

With half-lidded eyes,

And barely a thread of awareness left ..

Frey remained awake,

Alone.

Like a wounded predator,

Licking its wounds in silence.

"I won't lose again..."

Those were the only words he repeated every now and then—

The only thing breaking the stillness around him.

They were his fuel.

His anchor.

And with them ..

Frey kept moving forward.

There, beneath the full moon overhead—

His bitter struggle reflected faintly in those glassy, blue eyes.

"That's right... Frey Starlight."

Standing atop one of the distant peaks, watching from afar .. The blue-eyed man observed Frey to the very end.

"Don't you dare give up... I'm waiting for you."

The wind tugged at the Engineer's long black cloak as he turned his gaze elsewhere.

"On the other side... I'm waiting for you."."

"You'll suffer. You'll bleed. And you'll lose—again and again—until death becomes your only desire."

"You'll feel like you've lost everything, like your strength is no longer enough... but no matter what ... don't give up."

Between Frey, who had spent his life running through a dark tunnel, clinging to a thread-thin strand of hope—

And a man who had lived his entire existence for one goal and nothing else ..

The Engineer spoke, his words whispering beside the ear of the wounded boy.

"Kill the boy inside you, Frey..."

"Kill the weak child who breaks beneath every challenge. Kill that weakness—

And let it be reborn."

"Let the monster awaken... Frey Starlight."

In a world as dark as the one they lived in,

The only way to defeat the monsters that ruled it from above with iron fists and unimaginable power—

Was to become a monster yourself.

Frey already knew that.

But he couldn't help but wonder ..

What price would he have to pay to become that?

And so—

Forcing himself to stay awake,

Clinging to consciousness with sheer will ..

Frey spent the night healing the wounds from the massacre he'd just endured.

...

...

...

Clana Starlight was dead.

And with her ..

The last lead Frey had to reach the rest of his companions was gone.

But the tragedy wasn't his alone.

Back in the elite camp, Selena had broken the news—

She had lost the magical signature that tracked Clana's presence.

In other words, she was telling them Frey was dead.

The reactions varied greatly.

There were those who accepted it immediately—like Scarite Sunlight.

Then there were those who gave no reaction at all, as if it meant nothing—like Lara Croft.

And even Aegon Valerion, who simply laughed when he heard the news.

And then ..

There were the ones who refused to believe it.

The ones who immediately rejected the possibility—

Frey's own group.

The clash of opinions led the elite camp to a deadlock.

After waiting for days, hoping Frey would return .. They were now crushed by the announcement of his death.

Phoenix Sunlight was one of those who had staunchly refused to leave without him.

But now—

With the chance of Frey's survival growing slim ..

Even the Miracle of the Sunlight family couldn't risk the lives of the remaining students over a false hope.

He had already done everything he could.

And now,

It was time to move forward.

So, after several tense arguments within the elite class, Phoenix Sunlight made his decision:

"We're leaving."

He had weighed his options.

And in the end, he wasn't willing to gamble any further—

Not when they already had a route that could lead them back home.

His decision was final..

And it brought relief to many of the elite students.

But not all of them agreed.

"Professor Phoenix, please reconsider your decision."

Danzo was the first to speak up, stepping forward boldly.

"I don't know much about magic or whatever, but calling him dead just because his signature vanished? That's ridiculous. There could be a hundred other reasons for that."

"I agree with Danzo."

Snow stepped forward too—

Unable to ignore Frey.

"I know what Frey's capable of. He's stronger than me—and he's not going to die that easily."

They tried to change Phoenix's mind ..

But it was no use.

His mind was made up.

"I'm sorry. But I can't risk fifteen lives on a hope that doesn't exist."

It was final.

"Then run away from this place if you want. You're free to do that."

"But I have the freedom to do what I believe is right, too."

Sansa stepped forward, her voice calm but unwavering.

"I believe Frey is still out there somewhere. So I'll stay and wait for him."

She was ready to be left behind—

And both Snow and Danzo chose to stay with her.

But Phoenix didn't like that.

He'd said from the beginning—

He wasn't leaving any students behind.

And just as the tension was about to boil over ..

Aegon's laugh cut through the air.

Everyone turned toward him.

With his usual smug grin,

Aegon Valerion mocked them all—

"You're all such hypocrites."

Chapter 373: A New Era (2)

He accused them bluntly, without hesitation.

"Look at you. Refusing to leave—just because you feel he might still be alive."

"He's your friend, so I get it. I understand what you're trying to do."

"But what I don't understand ..what I can't stand .. Is your damn hypocrisy."

"If losing the witch's mark isn't enough proof that he's dead—

Then why did you declare the other four students dead the moment their signatures disappeared?"

"Hehehe... what brilliant logic."

He had a point ..

And no one could deny it.

"By what right do you stay behind for him? Wait for what, exactly? He's already dead."

Aegon spoke with a smile—

Though his thoughts betrayed his words.

He knew Frey wouldn't die so easily.

He had tried to kill him several times already—and failed.

But still, Aegon didn't need a reason to keep stirring the pot.

Mockery came naturally to him.

Phoenix, however, would never allow them to stay behind.

"The prince is right. None of you should stay here waiting for him—you're not suited for something like this."

It was Ghost who finally spoke after remaining silent in the corner for so long, as he usually did.

Sansa and the others wanted to object,

But Ghost didn't give them the chance. He continued right away.

"You shouldn't stay here. One person is enough—and that person is me."

The only one with exceptional stealth skills ..

Skills that allowed him to survive longer than anyone else in the Land of the Ultras.

"As an assassin, my talents are best suited for this. I'll find him—no matter what it takes. And when I do, we'll return home together."

"Just trust me... and leave this place."

Pleading with them,

Ghost Umbra declared his readiness to stay behind alone and search for Frey.

From the beginning, Ghost had always been a shadow.

And a shadow must always follow its light.

And that light ..

Had always been Frey.

"Ghost Umbra... I'm sorry, but I won't allow you to go."

Standing before him, Phoenix released a burst of aura to block his path.

But Ghost merely shook his head.

"Forgive me, Professor Phoenix... but I don't need your permission. And I think you're misunderstanding something."

At that moment—

Ghost's body shifted ..

Becoming nothing more than a dark, shadowy figure that melted into the ground and disappeared.

"I left this place long ago. What you've been talking to all this time was just a shadow clone. My real body is already far, far from here."

The group was stunned.

Ghost had deceived them all.

He had slipped away unnoticed—

And what they had seen was nothing more than a projection.

His stealth was so advanced,

Even Phoenix couldn't pinpoint when he had pulled it off.

What they didn't know ..

Was that Ghost had already left days ago—

Even before Selena announced the loss of Clana's magical signature.

He had moved faster than anyone else.

All for one reason:

To find Frey Starlight.

...

...

...

While the elite class reached a critical juncture in their struggle within the Land of the Ultras ..

The outside world was also shifting,

Ever since the incident of their abduction.

After the catastrophic battle in Shizclar Bay,

Which ended in a victory for the Ultras and a crushing defeat for the Empire—

Despite the win,

Astaroth, one of the demon lords, had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Emperor Maekar Valerion.

He would've died ..

Had Beatrice not intervened and saved him in the end.

Astaroth cursed violently once his body had finally recovered—

Taking advantage of the demonic vitality that allowed him to survive.

Though he hadn't regained his full strength yet, His body had healed enough for him to fight again.

So he returned to his base—

A tower built for him by the Ultras in the capital, Caeled,

Which he had claimed as his domain.

Still fuming from the humiliation dealt to him ..

By Maekar... and Beatrice, who mocked him to his face—

Astaroth found himself spiraling.

His mind was fraying.

Insanity nipping at the edges of his thoughts as he cursed the day he ever came to Earth.

"Where the hell are you, Lord Wesker...?"

He growled.

He walked through the tower's entrance,

Moving toward his throne,

Memories rising from the moment he first set foot on this cursed planet.

Astaroth, the 19th-ranked High Demon,

Was a loyal servant of one of the Four Demon Lords—Wesker, ranked 4th.

In pursuit of his master,

Astaroth had searched the world for him, step by step.

Eventually ..

He arrived on Earth, a planet whose gates had supposedly been sealed in ancient times.

But Astaroth found them wide open.

Someone had destroyed the seal and left it that way.

Wesker's trail ended here—on Earth.

It was the last place the 4th-ranked demon had ever been seen.

And that...

Left Astaroth with far too many questions.

Where had Wesker gone?

What had happened to him?

He searched for answers...

But before he could resume the search,

An order came from above—

Assigning him to rule over this insignificant world.

An order rumored to have come from Agaroth himself.

Meaning Astaroth couldn't leave anymore.

And now ..

He was being humiliated.

By mortals.

Beings he considered pathetic, lowly creatures.

He didn't understand—

Where had Wesker vanished to?

Why had the slumbering Agaroth suddenly awoken ..Only to issue such an order?

The thoughts drove him mad.

He couldn't grasp what the higher beings were thinking—

Beings who saw what he could not.

Finally,

He reached the throne built for him by human hands.

And Astaroth came to a stop.

He stepped into the dark chamber that had become his new home.

The demon's eyes locked onto the throne—

Or rather, the figure seated upon it.

A man in a black suit and long coat,

Resting his hands on a sheathed sword,

Gazing back at him with cold, emotionless eyes.

"What is the meaning of this... Gavied Lindman?!"

Astaroth unleashed his aura in fury—

A crushing, SS+ level force that shook the entire hall, Directing it straight at the Ultras Lord who sat on his throne, seemingly unfazed.

But then ..

From out of nowhere, a second aura clashed with his.

An aura equal in strength pushed back,

Meeting Astaroth's pressure head-on and forcing him to halt.

His eyes widened in disbelief.

"SS+ rank?!"

"You look surprised... Astaroth."

Gavied Lindman slowly unsheathed his blade,

Dark markings forming around his eyes.

"It must be humiliating, huh?

To see one of those insignificant creatures you've always despised... sitting on your throne, defying your rule."

"Since when?"

Astaroth barked, unable to comprehend the overwhelming pressure radiating from someone who was supposed to be far beneath him.

"Since the very beginning... Astaroth."

Gavied rolled up his sleeve, revealing cursed tattoos carved into his flesh.

"You... broke the pact?!"

That revelation stunned Astaroth into silence.

He had broken the demonic contract.

A feat so rare, it was considered nearly impossible.

The only one to ever achieve it was Dragoth ..

The same man who had once battled Abraham Starlight.

Dragoth was the only known human to ever shatter the pact and free himself from the demon's control,

Gaining full access to his powers without being bound by their commands.

That's why Dragoth was hailed as a hero among the Ultras—

The symbol of hope.

The one human who had escaped the demons' chains.

He was supposed to be the only one.

And yet—

Here stood another.

Gavied Lindman.

He had conquered his pact too.

Hiding his true power all this time,

Waiting for the right moment to sever the hold of the demon who sought to control his destiny.

"I was right in front of you this whole time, Astaroth...

But your arrogance blinded you.

You couldn't fathom that a mere 'mortal' had risen high enough to stand on the same stage as you."

Astaroth's face twisted in fury, scoffing.

"The same stage as me?

You think just reaching SS+ qualifies you to stand in my world? How naïve."

Even within SS+ rank,

There was a vast difference between someone who had just reached it and someone who had mastered it.

But Gavied didn't care.

"Reveal yourself, Aether..."

"Die."

Astaroth cloaked himself in a terrifying aura of lightning ..

Then burst forward at blinding speed to finish Gavied with a single strike.

But Gavied Lindman didn't even flinch.

He revealed his hidden blade at last—

A golden hilt with a magnificent silver edge.

"Phantom Form."

He activated his strongest sword form.

Gavied Lindman became untouchable.

As Astaroth's claw neared his chest,

Confident of victory—

His hand passed through Gavied's body completely.

As if he were trying to pierce a ghost...

Not a man of flesh and blood.

Gavied no longer had a physical form.

Astaroth couldn't touch him.

And just as he moved past him—

Gavied turned sharply,

Blade in hand, eyes darkened by the abyss,

His SS+ aura roaring to life.

"You demons...

You've always looked down on humans—

Used them for your twisted games and experiments."

With a swift motion,

Gavied slashed across Astaroth's chest.

Black demon blood splattered to the ground.

Astaroth didn't understand what happened ..

Until he saw the blood pouring out of him.

"Let's see now .. What will you do... when you die at the hands of one of those 'insignificant' humans?!"

In that moment ...

An unexpected war erupted between the Ultras Lord and the Demon.

Chapter 374: Gavid lindman vs Astaroth (1)

The Throne Hall trembled as two SS+ class auras clashed violently, each vying for dominance.

Astaroth, the proud 19th-ranked High Demon, found himself shaken when his hand passed through Gavied Lindman as if striking a ghost, not a man of flesh and blood.

But it didn't end there. Gavied rematerialized just as Astaroth passed through him—and with his revealed Aether blade, he slashed the demon cleanly, drawing black blood that splattered across the floor. Astaroth immediately retreated, his body crackling with gray lightning.

"That's strange... Astaroth."

With confident steps and a storm of SS+ aura exploding around him, Gavied advanced. His eyes were pitch black—identical to Astaroth's own—and his long coat fluttered violently in the wake of the power shaking the chamber.

Raising his sword, he aimed it at the demon.

"You always claimed to be above us. That our power could never reach you. So tell me now..."

"Why the hell did you run?"

Provoked by those words, Astaroth's face darkened with fury, veins pulsing across his forehead.

"You damned traitor!!"

Unleashing a thunderous surge of lightning, Astaroth blew apart parts of the throne hall and charged at Gavied in a flash, striking with terrifying speed. Gavied raised his Aether to block, but the force of impact launched him backwards.

Astaroth didn't stop there.

His fists burned with explosive lightning, and he rained blow after blow while Gavied focused on defense, repelling what he could with Aether—and letting the rest phase harmlessly through his intangible body.

From time to time, when the moment was right, Gavied would strike back with a precise counter, carving through Astaroth with brutal efficiency.

Enraged, Astaroth increased the speed of his blows, delivering dozens of afterimages as he tried to overwhelm him.

In mere seconds, the two had exchanged an impossible number of strikes.

Unlike Astaroth, however, Gavied stayed composed, steadily drawing the demon into his tempo—and then cutting him down when the openings appeared. One well-placed blow even severed one of Astaroth's horns.

"Why... can't I hit him?!"

"..."

Gavied said nothing.

With exceptional skill and near-perfect timing, he blocked what could be blocked .. and let everything else pass through him.

Slowly... but surely... Gavied began gaining the upper hand.

Realizing the damage piling up on him, Astaroth leapt back and thrust both hands forward.

"Take this!!"

Concentrating an immense amount of gray lightning around his arms, he fired a catastrophic beam of condensed energy straight toward Gavied.

The beam detonated the entire area, blasting outward and unleashing a violent thunderstorm across the skies—visible to every terrified citizen of Caeled below.

It was a devastating, full-force attack, launched at point-blank range. Astaroth was certain it had done damage... at least some.

But that certainty was shattered the moment he felt a silver sword pierce through his chest ..

Gavied Lindman still stood before him. Untouched.

He had simply phased through the beam using his Phantom Form, then struck as soon as Astaroth dropped his guard.

"I find it funny... How a stupid demon like you dares to mock us and claim superiority."

Dark energy coiled around Gavied's blade, spiraling rapidly into a miniature vortex that exploded inside Astaroth's chest.

"Wave Zero."

A wave of dark force burst forth from the sword, blowing open a massive crater through Astaroth's torso. The demon reeled back, spitting black blood.

Staring up at Gavied, who now towered above him with disdain, Astaroth's fury reached a peak. His silver hair shot upward as lightning surged around him.

"Blood Activation!!"

Unleashing his full power at last.

The upper half of the tower shattered instantly, leaving both men standing atop a ruined battlefield trembling beneath the pressure of demonic aura.

"I'll kill you here and now!!"

"Let's see you try!!"

Without warning, both charged—vanishing into a storm of fists and blades that devastated everything around them.

Astaroth was not at full power, still wounded from his previous clash with Emperor Maekar Valerion. Even so, his blows were ferocious, and Gavied remained firmly on the defensive.

But even as Astaroth's speed rose, and the pressure increased...

Gavied continued deflecting what he could—and letting the rest phase through.

'Something's wrong...'

As the battle stretched on, Astaroth's rage gave way to cold focus... and suspicion.

'He can let my attacks phase through him. So why... is he still blocking with his sword?'

The two kept sprinting at blinding speed, leaving behind trails of dark aura that intertwined violently in their wake.

Even though Gavied had reached the SS+ class, he was still inferior to Astaroth in terms of aura output and raw physical power.

Yet he managed to endure—thanks to his Phantom Form, which gave him a clear advantage against Astaroth's explosive speed and overwhelming might.

'That damn Phantom technique is the only thing he has that works on me... If I break through his defense even once, it'll be over.'

But no matter how many times he tried, Astaroth failed to land a single direct hit.

Everything he threw at Gavied simply passed through.

Still, Astaroth knew no ability was flawless. He pressed on relentlessly, tearing the battlefield apart, enduring whatever Gavied threw back at him.

Although Gavied landed multiple strikes, the damage wasn't critical—Astaroth's demonic vitality healed it all in seconds.

"Faster!"

The two exchanged blows at astonishing speed. Astaroth's fists relentlessly slammed against Gavied's Aether sword, trying to break his guard.

"Faster!!"

The demon's arms were now invisible from sheer velocity, forcing Gavied into retreat under the non-stop barrage.

As he attacked from the front, Astaroth secretly shaped his lightning aura into a celestial orb behind Gavied's back—taking advantage of his distraction.

He waited for the perfect moment ...then fired a beam of lightning straight at Gavied's exposed rear.

At first, Astaroth thought the attack would phase through him like all the rest.

But the result exceeded his expectations.

As soon as the lightning neared Gavied's back, it exploded violently on contact, causing Gavied to grimace in pain as blood poured down his spine.

The attack didn't pass through him—causing Astaroth to erupt in manic laughter.

"Ahahahahaha! So that's it!"

Coating his fist in lightning once more, Astaroth threw a punch—but it phased harmlessly through Gavied's face as he quickly pulled away to create distance.

"Your ability isn't that special after all, Lindman!"

"..."

Astaroth's aura pressure surged. He was ready to end it now that he had figured it out.

"You're not invincible. Your power doesn't activate automatically, does it? Kekekeke..."

Hearing those words, Gavied focused on mending the wound on his back. He tossed his tattered coat aside and rose to his feet, his silver Aether blade glowing brilliantly.

"...That's true."

He looked down at his sword.

Phantom Form—his ultimate sword manifestation—rendered his body intangible, making him untouchable.

But it wasn't perfect.

Gavied couldn't maintain his phantom state at all times. He had to observe his opponent carefully, and only the targeted part of his body would shift to an ethereal state in time to let attacks pass through.

That was why he blocked some of Astaroth's quicker strikes instead of letting them phase through—because he couldn't detect or react fast enough.

And that explained why the lightning beam struck him earlier ..cit came from a blind spot. By the time he sensed it, it was too late to phase.

"That's a massive weakness, Gavied Lindman... Kekekeke! Now that I know it, your power won't help you much longer."

"You talk too much."

Even after his weakness was exposed, Gavied showed no panic. He simply raised his glowing sword again and stood his ground.

"Come."

This time, Astaroth ramped up his speed to the limit, channeling a significant portion of his power into agility and wave manipulation.

With a mere gesture, dozens of celestial orbs formed and began raining down gray lightning while Astaroth launched a simultaneous assault from the front.

Surrounded by fatal strikes, Gavied fought desperately, blocking with precision as Astaroth cackled madly.

"You can't win, Gavied Lindman!!"

Even though Astaroth was still weakened from his clash with Maekar...

He was clearly overpowering Gavied Lindman.

The difference in potential between demons and humans was vast—and Gavied was learning that the hard way.

Now that he couldn't phase through all of Astaroth's attacks, he found himself cornered.

Little by little...

The wounds on Gavied's body began piling up. Though he still managed to strike Astaroth several times...

The difference in endurance was night and day.

Astaroth's wounds healed instantly, while Gavied bled continuously onto the shattered battlefield beneath them.

With thunderous lightning crashing down endlessly...

The tide of battle had fully turned.

Astaroth pushed his speed to the absolute max, making it impossible for Gavied to block every strike.

After countless exchanges and nonstop barrages from the celestial orbs...

The battle came to a sudden halt—when Astaroth's hand pierced straight through Gavied's abdomen.

Blood poured like a waterfall at the demon's feet.

Phantom Form couldn't save him from Astaroth's blisteringly fast strikes—attacks too swift for his eyes to register. In the end, he lost the timing and failed to phase his body in time.

His form battered and torn, Gavied Lindman had reached his limits. Astaroth slowly pulled his hand out of Gavied's abdomen.

"You dared challenge me with that pitiful level of power? Betting everything on a single, useless ability? Kekekeke... How naive you are, Gavied Lindman."

The celestial orbs surrounding Astaroth began to glow once more, charging up as he prepared to finish it. Gavied dropped to one knee, clutching his sword—blood spilling from every inch of his body.

"Even if you defeat me here... I'm just one demon. There are plenty far stronger than me who can take my place. What exactly did you think would happen if you won?"

Astaroth sneered, convinced of his victory.

Without hesitation, he unleashed a storm of lightning beams from every direction, all aimed at the traitor who dared raise a sword against him.

But Gavied Lindman—his eyes now completely blackened—remained still, haunted by Astaroth's words echoing in his mind.

What exactly did you think would happen if you won?

"...It's time to find out."

Chapter 375: Gavid lindman vs Astaroth (2)

In that exact moment ..

His Aether blade glowed again, and the space around him began to tremble before dozens of swirling black vortexes appeared.

They looked like miniature black holes—sucking in every bolt of lightning Astaroth had just fired, swallowing them entirely before they could reach their target.

These mysterious vortexes pulsed with such terrifying power that even Astaroth faltered in stunned silence.

And then... he failed to notice one final vortex.

It had formed right beside his chest.

The same exact side Maekar had shattered before.

That black hole vortex spun violently—then detonated, tearing open a spatial fissure that devoured half of Astaroth's body, erasing it from existence before the demon could even react.

Cold, black blood poured out of him.

Astaroth didn't even register what had happened until it was far too late—until he realized that the entire right half of his body had been wiped out again.

Gavied had smartly aimed for the weak point Maekar had already exposed.

And now, Astaroth collapsed to the ground—while Gavied Lindman rose to his feet once more.

"...How?"

Staring in disbelief at the man he had pummeled again and again, Astaroth couldn't comprehend how the tables had turned so quickly.

"I told you already. You're just a mindless beast with explosive strength. What made you think Phantom Form was the only card I had?"

Gavied plunged his blade into one of the swirling vortexes, letting it wrap around the Aether and form a curved, black-hole-like edge that radiated power so overwhelming, Astaroth's expression turned to stone.

From the very beginning...

Gavied Lindman had been in control. He knew Astaroth would eventually discover his weakness. He let him believe Phantom Form was all he had—hiding this devastating weapon for the moment it mattered most.

"All I had to do... was endure and wait for the perfect moment."

That moment when an enemy becomes convinced of their victory—when they lower their guard and lose the will to defend.

Using the aftermath of Maekar's battle...

Gavied Lindman utterly crushed Astaroth.

Standing tall, his sword cloaked in black aura, he looked like the Reaper himself in the eyes of the fallen demon.

Astaroth screamed in rage and desperation.

"Do you realize what you're about to do?!"

"..."

"You're dooming your entire race! It won't end with me! More demons will come—stronger demons! They'll wipe out this world! Is that what you want?!"

Though his frantic words were just a final, desperate plea for survival...

They weren't entirely wrong.

Gavied Lindman knew that.

But he still found himself asking ...

"So what?"

Whether now, or later...

What had the Ultras endured regardless?

"This world is doomed either way. If death is inevitable, then I'll at least die by my own will. That is my fate—and mine alone to decide."

With unwavering resolve and a blade cloaked in black flames, Gavied stood like the embodiment of death itself.

Astaroth, dragging himself backward across the bloodstained ground, knew—he had truly lost.

"Stop!!"

He had faced death once before—against Maekar.

And now he faced it again—against another human.

Before the terrifying grip of death, the one thing Astaroth feared most...

He crawled desperately, trying to escape as Gavied Lindman followed with slow, heavy steps.

When the Aether blade glinted above the demon's exposed neck, signaling the end—

Astaroth felt a fear so deep it drowned out his pride.

He screamed in panic.

"Save me!! Beatrice!!!"

Cornered with no way out, Astaroth called for the only one who might still save him.

But the witch never came.

No matter how many times he cried her name...

"No one will save you, Astaroth. Here and now, the demon order that enslaved the Ultras, using them as lab rats for their twisted pleasures, comes to an end... and a new order begins."

"Beatrice!!!"

"A new order where everyone is free... free to choose their own fate!!!"

Between Gavied Lindman, who declared the birth of a new system, and Astaroth, who kept screaming for Beatrice—

Slash!

An era of oppression came to an end the moment Aether cleaved through Astaroth's neck, leaving behind a dark arc in the air...

A dark arc that severed centuries of cruelty endured by a continent that had seen nothing but horrors.

And with the severing of that head—

Gavied didn't stop.

He kept swinging, cutting Astaroth's body into pieces, reducing it to rotting chunks of black-blooded flesh.

Only after dozens of merciless strikes did Gavied finally stop, standing tall before what remained of the 19th-ranked Greater Demon's corpse.

He had won.

"...I killed him."

Gavied Lindman muttered, struggling to catch his breath as he began to walk away.

"I killed one of the upper ranks..."

He had taken the first step ..one that no other dared take.

But his body, wrecked by injuries, could no longer carry his weight. Gavied staggered, nearly collapsing—

Until a hand caught him.

Covered in blood, Gavied looked up to see the old man who had saved him.

"...Mergo."

The Lord of the Dark Hive had arrived on the battlefield, his usual smile on display.

"You really did it, my friend..."

"Heh... Why do you look happy? Aren't you half-demon yourself?"

Gavied asked, and Mergo's smile only widened as a single horn emerged from the back of his head.

"Yes, I'm half-demon... but I'm also half-human. I'm as human as you are, Gavied Lindman."

Gavied let out a dry laugh.

"So that's why you deployed your barrier, huh?"

Mergo nodded, glancing at the translucent barrier he had placed around the tower during the battle.

It was that very barrier that blocked Astaroth's desperate calls at the end, allowing Gavied to kill him uninterrupted.

Still smiling, Mergo drew his Ushigatana, stepping forward and leaving Gavied behind.

"The battle isn't over yet, Gavied Lindman."

Because that was only the first step ..

And now, the second round had begun.

Both Mergo and Gavied Lindman stood with their swords drawn, facing Beatrice, who now hovered beside Astaroth's corpse, gazing down at it.

"In the end, you brought us shame, Astaroth... You were always the weakest and most pathetic among us. That's why Lord Wesker loathed you the most."

With a simple wave of her hand, Astaroth's remains vanished without a trace.

"A fitting end for a pitiful demon like you."

Having spoken her final words toward a fallen comrade of her own faction, Beatrice turned to face Mergo and Gavied, who had already taken their stances.

The aura of Rank 17 was absolutely suffocating.

"I'll take the front. You support from behind," Mergo said, stepping forward and unleashing his full power to face a demon even more terrifying than the one they had just slain.

Beatrice had every intention to kill them both—ready to shatter the game and unleash her full strength on the two traitors who dared betray the demons.

With a flick of her hand, hundreds of celestial orbs appeared above them, and the ground trembled violently under the pressure of her unrestrained might.

"You'll pay your debt with your lives!"

She was about to attack both of them at once .. determined to kill them where they stood ..

But then she stopped.

Before taking a single step, a strange phenomenon occurred around her, forcing her eyes wide open in disbelief.

The world suddenly turned grey.

Time itself halted, refusing to move forward.

In front of her, both Gavied Lindman and Mergo stood frozen, unable to move, caught in the grip of a temporal freeze that suspended even their breath.

"This level of wave manipulation..."

Beatrice whispered, stunned by what she was witnessing—unable to move herself, locked in place by an overwhelming force pressing down on her entire being.

And then—

She heard the voice.

A sweet, wicked voice belonging to a vile existence that had no place in this world.

"Don't kill them."

Those were the only words he said.

And then the shadow appeared before her.

A tall black silhouette with a single crimson eye glaring directly at her, making her entire body tremble in place.

She couldn't bear to look at it for more than a second before falling to her knees, an ecstatic smile spreading across her face.

With a single word—

That entity completely rewrote Beatrice's will, forcing her to obey without hesitation.

"As you command, my lord!"

It all happened in an instant—through nothing but his overwhelming power.

And then, time resumed its flow.

The battle that never began... ended just like that.

Beatrice surrendered willingly to Gavied Lindman and Mergo—who had no idea what had just transpired.

Chapter 376: The Forgotten Covenant (1)

The Empire..

The other land of mankind—untouched by the filthy blood of demons.

Once on the brink of extinction, they reclaimed a part of their lost history by building a continent surrounded by towering walls .. barriers that marked the boundary between them and the tainted world beyond.

Years passed since the ancient war, and the Empire entered one of the most pivotal Chapters in its long history after losing the battle against the Ultras. That defeat cost them a significant portion of their military might.

It was a devastating blow, especially to the people who were left to endure dark days. Countless women waited for husbands who vanished, leaving them widows of dreams.

Children longed to grow up in the arms of parents who never returned from war—left as orphans of hope.

Ambitions, dreams once wrapped in light, turned into nightmares of despair as the world they knew collapsed.

But now, Sir Alon Valerion had returned, trying to salvage what could still be saved.

Yet time spares no one. Would the Iron Emperor succeed where his son had failed?

Only the future could answer that.

...

...

The Empire – Northern Border Region – Ashina

In this frozen land where snow never ceased to fall, the sun was a rare sight.

The northern region of Ashina, bordering the capital Belgrade from above, was desolate and haunting most of the time, thanks to its harsh terrain and severe climate.

It became a place where prisons—like the infamous Alcatraz—were built, or a last refuge for those rejected by the Empire. Especially since it bordered the Northern Nightmare Lands just beyond.

It had been fifteen days since Frey and his companions were kidnapped.

The kidnapping that triggered the chaos now engulfing the world.

That was what brought Sir Alon to this grim and desolate land.

The Iron Elder led the way, accompanied by Oliver Khan, Ada Starlight, and Carmen.

After days of traveling and searching through the frozen region, the four still hadn't found what they were looking for.

But Sir Alon showed no signs of frustration.

As they pressed deeper into the frozen forest, its trees painted white by the relentless snowfall, Ada Starlight found herself compelled to speak up.

"Forgive my naive question, but... what exactly are we searching for here?"

Sir Alon had told them they needed to awaken remnants of the Old Oath to free Frey and the others from their predicament.

But the days were slipping by too quickly, and Ada was far too anxious .. she had checked her brother's life signal multiple times over the past few days.

Especially after it had grown alarmingly faint just the day before, confirming he was severely wounded, at the very least.

"There's no need to rush, Lord Starlight. If there were a faster way, I would've taken it."

"My apologies."

Ada realized her question had been foolish given Sir Alon's clear dedication.

"I know your brother is important to you, but I need you at your best, Lord Starlight. Don't let your emotions cloud your mind."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"Very good."

As he spoke with Ada, Sir Alon continued releasing his aura in waves, probing their surroundings.

"We're approaching the Northern Nightmare Lands," said Oliver Khan as he observed their surroundings carefully.

Carmen frowned at the mention of the Nightmare Lands.

"Isn't that the region where one of the Nightmare Lords resides?"

Oliver Khan nodded.

"Yes. The Abyss Watchers are stationed there."

Among the three Nightmare Lords, the Abyss Watchers were the most enigmatic.

They weren't a single entity but rather a large group resembling knights.

The only thing that set them apart from humans was their massive build and towering height—over three meters tall.

From a distance, one could mistake them for ordinary armored knights.

"Is it safe to go any deeper?"

"It's fine. Our combat strength is more than enough to handle them."

Oliver Khan reassured them—they could handle the Abyss Watchers if they were attacked.

Though truthfully, most of that strength came from Sir Alon himself, a peak SS+ level powerhouse.

"No need to worry about the Abyss Watchers."

Sir Alon stopped walking and a wide smile spread across his face.

"We've arrived."

With those words, he struck the ground with his cane, unleashing a golden wave of aura that surged across the area like a ripple.

And then—they saw it.

The space before them shattered like glass.

Reality flipped before their eyes as the illusion surrounding them was dispelled.

Sir Alon had broken through a strange barrier .. one neither Oliver Khan nor Carmen had even sensed.

Everyone was startled to find themselves standing in a completely different place this time...

"I see they're still good at hiding."

Sir Alon spoke as he took the first step into the newly revealed land.

It was the same location... but vastly different.

Unlike the peaceful land it once was...

Ada Starlight and the others were stunned by the overwhelming chaos that now filled the area before them.

Signs of battle, bloodstains, and corpses littered the ground, and the atmosphere had grown darker with every passing second.

They stared at the disfigured bodies of the fallen knights—scattered across the land, even impaled on trees.

Everyone reached the same grim realization.

"These are the Abyss Watchers..."

Sir Alon confirmed their suspicion without so much as glancing back.

"The Abyss Watchers are a real pain in the ass. They've caused me more trouble than I can count during my time ruling the Empire... They're an army on their own, and their leader is SS+ ranked."

As they pressed forward...

Both Oliver Khan and Carmen's expressions changed the moment they sensed powerful auras emanating from a distance.

"That's why I had to do something before they caused a catastrophe for the Empire. So I created watchers... for the Watchers themselves."

After a long trek, Sir Alon and the others finally emerged from the grim forest into a wide open field that stretched endlessly toward the horizon.

The field was eerily empty .. nothing stood there except a modest wooden house, carefully built at the edge of the woods.

The only sounds in this empty place were the rhythmic chopping of wood... and the whistling of cold wind brushing against their faces.

Standing behind Sir Alon, the group watched a man who continued chopping wood, completely ignoring their presence.

He wore black, tattered robes resembling a kimono—an outfit none of them had seen before. His clothes were worn and old, and his hair was long, black, and unkempt.

A faint beard lined his jaw, and his forearms were strong and calloused.

A sword hung by his waist—just like a samurai.

The man stood there, chopping one log after another.

Sir Alon was the one who broke the heavy silence between them and the man who had yet to acknowledge them.

Stepping forward, his voice rang out, loud and firm as ever.

"Still as rude as ever. Aren't you going to greet your Emperor, Sword Saint?"

At the mention of the title the world once called him by... the man stopped chopping and lowered the axe.

When he turned around, everyone could see his pitch-black eyes and calm expression.

"Sir Alon... I see you're still clinging to life after all these years."

"Heh... death can have me when it earns me."

Sir Alon answered with the same arrogant smile.

The so-called Sword Saint, however, continued on, carrying the chopped wood toward his house.

"Visiting me after all these years? Forgive the lack of hospitality. My humble home wasn't meant to accommodate you and your many guests."

Witnessing this strange exchange...

Ada and the others could do nothing but silently watch this ragged man.

He looked frail and worn out. The powerful aura they'd felt earlier wasn't coming from him...

Yet the way Sir Alon treated him made one thing clear .. appearances could be deceiving.

"I need your help again, Vendrick."

Sir Alon got straight to the point, revealing the true reason for his journey to the farthest reaches of the Empire.

Vendrick showed no reaction. He simply continued working.

"My help? With what?"

While stacking the chopped logs, Vendrick refused to meet Alon's gaze.

"Haven't I done enough? I drew my sword for you. Fought wars for you. Conspired for you. Killed for you. Then spent the rest of my life guarding the Empire from the Abyss Watchers."

Vendrick finally turned, his eyes heavy with exhaustion.

"Tell me... what more do you want? After all those dark years... where are you trying to go?"

Sir Alon's expression didn't change, but his eyes revealed quiet empathy—born from the countless battles they'd fought together.

"I need your sword... and I need her ... Millicent."

The moment her name was spoken, Vendrick's eyes widened for a second before he turned away in anger.

"Go back to the grave you once built for yourself, Sir Alon. This era isn't ours anymore. Our time has long passed. We've already given everything we had."

"Not yet... Not everything."

Sir Alon's reply was calm and steady.

Vendrick let out a bitter, scornful laugh.

"Even death, huh? You damned Iron Elder..."

He cursed, then drew his sword in a sudden blur, unleashing a fearsome arc of wind-infused aura at Sir Alon.

The Iron Emperor simply raised his palm, stopping the attack midair. The blast of wind exploded outward, whipping past the rest of the group behind him.

"Leave, Sir Alon. We owe you nothing."

Chapter 377: The Forgotten Covenant (2)

Sir Alon said nothing.

But he didn't move either.

And that alone was enough to make Vendrick raise his blade again.

"Still as greedy as ever... even in your twilight years."

"I'm sorry... but this is the kind of world we live in, Vendrick."

Sir Alon took a step forward, unleashing his overwhelming aura right in Vendrick's face. At the same time, both Oliver Khan and Carmen prepared for battle—the situation was clearly spiraling downward.

"Come at me then, you damned old man."

Both Vendrick and Sir Alon...

Prepared to fight .. a battle that would most certainly end in disaster.

But before either could make a move, a massive barrier formed between them, preventing any further advance.

"That's enough, Vendrick."

All eyes turned to the small wooden house as its door slowly creaked open, revealing a woman who appeared to be in her fifties. She had pink hair tied back with a golden clip, and wore a robe-like garment wrapped around her body.

With a wave of her long staff—which doubled as her walking stick—she stopped them both in their tracks.

"We have no right to complain, Vendrick... not in front of him—a man who fought longer than either of us, and gave up far more, until the world came to call him the Iron Emperor."

"Millicent..."

Vendrick and Millicent exchanged a single glance. Just one look was enough to make the Sword Saint sheath his blade and step back toward his wife.

Millicent then opened her door to the first guests she had welcomed in many years.

"Come in. I've been expecting you."

After the tense confrontation, things took a strange turn as everyone entered the small wooden home...

Gathering around a table set in front of an old fireplace.

Millicent offered a cup of hot coffee to Ada Starlight, having noticed how much the girl was suffering from the biting cold.

"Here, sweetheart. This place isn't suited for a girl your age..."

Taken aback by the woman's kindness, Ada accepted the cup with gratitude.

"Th-thank you, ma'am..."

"There's no need for thanks."

Millicent chuckled lightly, while Sir Alon grumbled in annoyance.

"Is that the kind of hospitality that leads you to serve only one guest—ignoring your Emperor?"

The only one who had received a hot drink was Ada. A curious move from Millicent, who now sat directly across from Sir Alon, while Vendrick stood by her side.

"An old man like you has no right to complain when the youth ...those who'll carry the torch next are being cared for."

Sir Alon didn't say a word in response. He already understood the real reason she had offered the drink to Ada alone.

Unlike the others—all ranked SS- or above—Ada's body wasn't suited to endure this frozen land of nightmares. That's why Millicent had infused the drink with a bit of hidden magic.

"So? What happened to this Empire of yours that drove you all the way back here, Sir Alon? Did your son die?"

Millicent didn't know much about Maekar... but she knew he was a warrior not easily defeated.

The very fact that Sir Alon stood here before her meant something significant had happened.

He quickly explained the situation, giving both Millicent and Vendrick a full understanding of the Empire's current crisis.

Oliver Khan helped fill in the gaps along the way, offering additional details to make it easier for the elder couple to catch up.

"So, in short... the Empire's strongest generation was kidnapped, your son lost the battle and went missing along with most of the imperial forces?"

Sir Alon nodded, his eyes turning to Vendrick.

"Your student—the girl who wields the same claymore you once carried—is among the missing as well."

Hearing that his student, the bearer of his former sword, had vanished, made Vendrick frown instinctively. Millicent also nodded solemnly.

"So, what you're saying... is that you want our help in saving them all."

Sir Alon gave a single nod.

"That's right... Millicent, I trust that retrieving a few lost children from another continent won't be too difficult for someone who was once called the Crimson Witch. Besides, we already know their exact location."

He motioned to Ada Starlight, who activated her tracker device, displaying a 3D map.

A glowing red dot appeared over the continent of Ultras, revealing the exact location of Frey Starlight—who hadn't moved from his spot.

"All you need to do is bring them back here with your magic."

As soon as he said that... Millicent let out a deep sigh and shook her head.

"You're misunderstanding something, Sir Alon. Magic doesn't work that way."

"We mages don't teleport people randomly as you seem to think. To use teleportation magic, we must first send a significant amount of our own aura to the destination we wish to connect to."

Listening carefully, Sir Alon interrupted.

"Is sending your power to the continent of Ultras really that difficult?"

Millicent shook her head.

"No. For someone of my level, that would be easy. The problem lies with the enemy."

The moment she mentioned 'enemy,' everyone instinctively focused on her words.

"Mages always spread their personal domain over any battlefield they enter—to assert control. And that's the issue here."

"The Ultras have a very powerful witch who's already spread her domain across most of the entire continent... I don't know how she managed it, but she's definitely stronger than me."

Teleportation to the continent of Ultras had become impossible—because of Beatrice.

Her presence alone would nullify any attempt made by the Empire's mages, which explained why figures like Luc Valerion had failed in the past when trying to cross into Ultras.

Upon hearing this revelation, confusion appeared on the faces of everyone present—including Sir Alon, who sighed in frustration.

"Should I go myself, then?"

Vendrick was the one to respond.

"You'd be repeating your son's mistake if you did."

Millicent nodded in agreement.

"You may be the strongest warrior the Empire has, Sir Alon... but charging recklessly into enemy territory will only accelerate their plans."

She clasped her hands, eyes distant as if recalling memories from long ago, before speaking again—this time with visible resolve.

"Though the Witch of Ultras is strong... I possess a spell that might just be able to breach her defenses."

The moment those words left her lips, hope returned to Ada and the others. Sir Alon raised an eyebrow, recognizing the magic she referred to.

"Stellar Magic?"

Millicent nodded.

"Yes. That ancient and mysterious spell we discovered so long ago... with it, I should be able to pierce through her domain."

"But as far as I know... that spell takes weeks to cast, and we don't have that kind of time."

Stellar Magic wasn't something born of mankind.

Even Millicent, a renowned archmage, needed days just to invoke a fragment of it...

Time they simply didn't have—especially with Frey and the others facing death at any moment.

Millicent remained silent for a while, then looked toward Vendrick. After he nodded in return, she turned back to Sir Alon.

"I already prepared the stellar spell long ago... specifically for this day."

Those words stunned even Sir Alon, who could hardly believe what he was hearing.

"How...?"

"I told you already... I was waiting for you."

Looking each of them in the eye, Millicent shared a chilling truth that left the room reeling.

"The reason Vendrick and I were so grim wasn't because of the dark news you brought us... but because it matched exactly what that man told us."

"You mean... you knew about this?"

Millicent nodded solemnly.

"Two years ago... a strange man came to this place, cloaked entirely in black. The only thing visible beneath his hood were his glowing blue eyes."

"Vendrick and I fought him with everything we had... but he overwhelmed us easily with powers we still don't understand to this day."

"And when the battle ended... he showed us a vision of a strange future—a future where the Empire's elite are kidnapped, where it loses the war against Ultras... and where the Iron Emperor returns, accompanied by unfamiliar faces, to seek our help."

Each word she spoke only deepened the silence in the room.

Ada was the only one who immediately recognized the figure Millicent had described.

"That means...!"

"Yes. Sir Alon... that being showed us the future, which is why we've been preparing for this moment ever since. A day we never thought would truly arrive—but one we couldn't ignore."

With those final words, the Crimson Witch made something terrifyingly clear to everyone present.

"There's a hidden game being played around us, Sir Alon. Powerful, unseen forces are toying with us like pieces on a chessboard .. manipulating the future as if it already belongs to them."

And with dark expressions sinking into every face, the truth became undeniable.

"We're not alone."

Chapter 378: The Final Round (1)

Northern Region of the Empire – Ashina ..

After shocking everyone with the mention of the blue-eyed Engineer who had predicted the empire's future years ago, Millicent stepped out of the cabin with the others, positioning themselves in the

middle of the frozen plain that separated the Northern Nightmare Lands from the imperial Ashina Territory.

Millicent was intensely focused, preparing her stellar magic to strike the enemy by surprise.

"The moment I enter her domain, the enemy will sense my presence and move instantly. So instead of us charging in and starting an unnecessary battle, it would be better to open a gate that brings the elite students here."

Once the stellar magic was activated, Beatrice wouldn't sit idle—she would intervene immediately, likely triggering a battle that could cost most of the students their lives.

Instead, creating a portal to bring them back to the empire was the more logical approach and one Sir Alon agreed to.

"Do it."

Millicent nodded.

To save as many elite students as possible, they had to act quickly and precisely.

Meanwhile, her husband, the Sword Saint Vendrick, was not present. He had departed with a church delegation to try and rescue the remaining imperial warriors lost somewhere near the Shizclar Bay on the Ultras border.

Standing in the heart of the frozen field, a massive magic circle flared to life beneath Millicent as her body glowed with a celestial blue hue—ready to unleash her spell.

Seeing this, Ada quickly set up Frey Starlight's location to help Millicent pinpoint where exactly to cast the spell.

Though the red mark revealed Frey's position, it covered a vast area—dozens of kilometers wide—which meant Millicent needed to confirm whether the rest of the elite class was near him.

With deep focus and closed eyes, Millicent prepared to break through Beatrice's domain, while Sir Alon stood at the ready, waiting for the moment he might be forced to strike.

Then, after a few tense minutes ..

A grim expression spread across Millicent's face. She furrowed her brows and slowly dispersed the magic, leaving everyone bewildered—they had all expected to witness the stellar spell in action.

As her SS+ aura faded, Millicent opened her eyes.

"We have a problem."

"What is it?" Ada Starlight asked anxiously, faster than anyone else .. she had been holding onto hope for her brother's rescue.

"Did something happen to Frey?!"

Millicent shook her head, dismissing Ada's fears as she stepped closer.

"The issue isn't whether he's safe or not .. it's something else entirely. We assumed the elite class was still together, which would've made bringing them back easier. But reality has shattered that assumption."

With a heavy sigh, the Crimson Witch explained:

"Frey Starlight is alone. There's no trace of the other elite students anywhere near him."

Everyone stared at her in disbelief. A possibility none of them had considered suddenly stopped their thoughts.

They were sure they had the elite class's location—but that had been a false assumption.

"We have Frey Starlight's location .. not the students'."

Sir Alon cursed under his breath, while Ada covered her mouth, shocked by how far off their plan had gone.

"That leaves us with very few options."

Millicent turned her eyes to Sir Alon, placing the responsibility in his hands.

"We have two choices: either we head now to where Frey Starlight is and try to locate the others after saving him—or we wait until they regroup, then teleport them all back at once."

The first option seemed more reasonable .. but Millicent added critical context.

"Keep in mind that the moment we enter the Ultras continent, the enemy will know we're there. That witch's domain covers the entire continent—she could likely kill every elite student at any moment she wishes. But she hasn't."

"Do you understand what that means, Sir Alon?"

Sir Alon's expression darkened, realizing her implication.

"She's waiting for something."

It didn't make sense that the elite students had survived this long with a witch like her looming nearby.

But Frey Starlight being alive meant the others might be too.

Which meant... a larger game was being orchestrated in the shadows.

To go now, risking the lives of all the students to save Frey Starligh .. Or to wait, betting everything on a young man they barely knew, hoping he'd find the others.

"Oliver Khan."

Sir Alon called to Oliver, weighing the decision as carefully as he could.

"What kind of person is Frey Starlight?"

He had chosen to ask the Valerion family's Grand Warden rather than anyone from the Starlight family, knowing they would likely be biased. Oliver understood that—and answered with complete honesty.

"Frey is the last Victoriad champion, and the wielder of two SS class Ignited Weapons. I've fought against him and alongside him. I can vouch for his strength. Despite his young age, he can go toe-to-toe with SS class fighters if he goes all out."

Oliver paused for a second, then spoke firmly.

"He's most definitely a fighter worth trusting."

Sir Alon was clearly taken aback by Oliver Khan's words .. his evaluation of the young man named Frey Starlight was unusually high.

"Two legendary swords? Is that even possible?" Millicent asked, struggling to process the information.

"It's the truth," Oliver replied, and both Carmen and Ada confirmed his claim with a nod.

"You all speak so highly of him... it makes me wonder what kind of person he really is," Alon murmured, closing his eyes in deep thought.

The choice was already clear to him, yet he questioned whether it was truly the right thing to do: to walk into the enemy's trap himself, or to bet everything on a boy who had only just turned eighteen.

Before the eyes fixed on him in silent anticipation, Sir Alon made his decision.

"We wait."

The hunt... would continue.

...

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Ultras Territory – Capital City: Caeled

Gavid Lindman and Mergo stood side by side, gazing upon the capital city of Caeled .. one of the few places still clinging to life within a continent ravaged by death on all fronts.

Though Gavid's body was riddled with wounds, his expression bore no pain. He was calm. Serene, even.

"Tell me, Mergo... do you think we actually stood a chance against her if we fought?" he asked, his voice tinged with a hint of doubt.

Mergo replied with his usual carefree smile. "Honestly? We would've lost .. miserably."

The blunt response made Gavid laugh involuntarily.

"Even though both you and I are SS+ rank... we still couldn't defeat a Rank-17 demon. That's honestly depressing."

...

The situation was indeed dire. Mergo was regarded as the strongest lord, a confirmed SS+ fighter. Gavid, who had long hidden his power, had recently reached the same rank—placing the two on equal footing.

"If she could have taken both of us down... then why the hell did she surrender so easily?" Gavid wondered aloud.

What was going on in that witch's mind?

As the question hung in the air, Mergo recalled the agreement they had made.

"On the condition that we don't interfere with her little 'game,' she promised to serve the Ultras fully .. and prevent any other upper demons from descending to this world. Honestly, it sounds too good to be true."

Neither Gavid nor Mergo could fully comprehend the enigmatic demon known as Beatrice.

The Rank-19 upper demon Astaroth, for all his terrifying power, was direct. Predictable. That made dealing with him relatively simple.

Beatrice, on the other hand, was a different beast—cunning, manipulative, and powerful enough to dominate an entire continent. She stood above Astaroth, both in intelligence and might.

Despite the victory Gavid had achieved by making the first move, the road ahead remained uncertain and treacherous.

"We've no choice but to keep moving forward," Mergo said, patting Gavid on the shoulder before turning to walk away.

"Where are you going?" Gavid asked.

Instead of replying with words, Mergo took out four keys—silver bangles that gleamed with eerie light.

"Astaroth's death cost us a major source of power... We need something to replace it—something equal or greater."

With a twist of space, Mergo vanished, his parting words echoing across the war-torn ruins.

"It's time for the Human Devil to return."

The Ultras were also beginning to make their move, pouring everything they had into the battlefield. The future of Earth was now more uncertain than ever—caught between an empire fighting to remain sovereign, Ultras seeking domination, and demons who had already poisoned the world from above.

Mercy... was never part of the equation.

Chapter 379: The Final Round (2)

—Frey Starlight's POV—

Hidden among the Nightmare Mountains, I sat alone—leaning against the icy wall of a towering peak that reached into the clouds.

Two nights had passed since the battle in the Puppet City.

With a broken body, I made a vow to never fall again.

I could feel every cell in this body burning, straining to repair the devastating injuries I'd sustained.

I never lost consciousness—not even once. I wouldn't allow myself to.

Trapped in a strange limbo between wakefulness and sleep, I kept my eyes half-open.

Motionless. Frozen in place like a lifeless corpse.

But life hadn't abandoned this body. It wouldn't.

Every so often, primitive nightmare creatures emerged from the shadows, creeping toward me with the intent to feast.

I didn't see them.

I sensed them.

They would draw close—very close—only to retreat the moment they breached the invisible boundary around me.

Even in my semi-conscious state, those monsters seemed to understand that appearances could be dangerously deceptive.

Hours passed rapidly.

Hours of silence.

Hours where I lived through the same moment again and again...

I knew what I was seeing was just an illusion—yet I couldn't escape it.

Surrounded by fire and shattered puppets, their broken limbs crawling toward me, trying to devour me.

Holding Clana Starlight tightly in my arms, her trembling body clung to mine, refusing to let go.

I couldn't forget the words she kept whispering into my ear...

Her final words.

"I don't want to die."

But she did.

She died... stripped of her humanity, turned into a puppet that plunged her blade into my chest, leaving a gaping, bloodied hole.

The Puppet City. Simon Manus. And Clana...

I knew they would continue to haunt my nightmares for a long time.

Even when I'm awake... even when I'm conscious...

Her ghost would keep appearing before me.

I had no choice but to live with it—and move forward.

Sinking deeper into this whirlpool of dark thoughts, drowning my mind in shadows...

My brain shut down for a moment as a jolt, like a thunderous surge, struck my head and violently jolted me back to reality. I gasped, drawing a sharp breath, struggling to breathe.

I was still here, sweating profusely between the mountain chains.

But unlike my broken state before...

This time, I felt no pain—only a surge of explosive power that made me shoot to my feet, throwing off the black cloak wrapped around me.

I couldn't grasp what had just happened.

I tore off my shattered armor—riddled with holes and scars—and looked at my bare body.

As soon as I stripped it off, I stared at my chest, my abdomen... my arms and hands.

This body that should have been mangled with wounds—two bloody cavities, one from Val's puppet, and the other from Clana ..

It had been restored.

Fresh, powerful skin replaced the damage. Not a single scar remained from injuries that should've killed any human instantly.

Struggling to comprehend this absurd regeneration, I released my aura.

A powerful violet glow erupted from my body, radiating pressure in every direction.

"Class A..."

My raw power had risen to Class A—without even using my swords or the rest of my abilities, which would easily push me into SS.

I felt strong.

A raging strength that made me feel like I could do anything.

This body was no longer human.

It was like a separate being—one that could recover from any wound the moment I willed it.

As if I had never been human to begin with.

To be honest ..

I felt a burning urge to return to the Puppet City and bury that son of a bitch Simon Manus who killed Clana.

I wanted to kill him—tear his body into pieces just like I did to his puppets.

This fire burning in my chest...

I wanted revenge—for Clana, who died in my arms.

But the time hadn't come yet.

"There are more important things to worry about."

Thankfully, I had enough self-control to turn my back and keep moving.

Wrapping myself in aura, I bolted westward at high speed, determined to reach the rest of the elite class.

Clana was dead—and with her, the only clue I had to find the others.

But I couldn't just sit and do nothing. I had to go back to square one and search again.

At least this time, I had a lead.

Go west—the direction Clana had mentioned before.

As I finally left the mountain range behind, I used Third-Person Perspective again to locate my friends ..and discovered much.

The elite class thought I was dead, so they'd all started moving toward the gate they'd found earlier. They had already covered a great distance.

All of them... except Ghost, who left on his own to search for me using his high-level assassin skills.

"That idiot..."

Now I had to worry about him, too.

They were good friends...

Ghost, Danzo... even Snow.

Even though I'd never given them anything, never really helped them since we met—

They'd shown they were willing to risk their lives for me, if it came down to it.

To me, they were among the few people in this world who truly mattered.

I wouldn't let them die.

My father—Abraham Starlight. And Clana Starlight...

Both of them died for me. And that was more than I could bear already.

I couldn't handle losing anyone else for the sake of saving me. The chains I already carried were enough.

That's why I decided to find Ghost first.

Locating him was the priority. The others were together, and more than capable of surviving on their own.

With that thought, I accelerated even faster, tearing through the wastelands of the Ultras without a second glance.

Finding Ghost—who was a master of concealment—was a difficult task, even while constantly using Third-Person pov on him...

My current running speed was already at its peak .. everything I could muster...

And yet, I couldn't help but push myself harder as a strange feeling took hold of me.

A sinister premonition slowly crept into my heart the further I advanced.

Especially when I began sensing a massive number of unfamiliar auras moving somewhere up ahead...

There were so many of them...

As if an entire army was marching—heading in the same direction I was.

"What the hell is going on?!"

First Lord Godfrey and Gvardiol...

And now these new signatures...

All of them... going toward the same place I was headed.

This wasn't a coincidence .. there was no way it could be.

But no matter how much I thought about it, I couldn't understand.

They wouldn't be able to catch up to Phoenix and the others—they were already close to the teleportation gate.

So what was the purpose of this army?

Trying to find the answer...

Whether it was a trap set by the enemy...

Or something else entirely...

I had no choice but to run faster—faster than ever—praying from the depths of my heart that I would arrive in time.

...

...

Far from Frey Starlight ..

Back to the demonic witch who had spun her web carefully around the entire Ultras Continent, turning it into her personal stage...

Beatrice hovered in the sky, a powerful magical aura swirling around her body.

"The Witch's Game... is about to enter its final stages."

A glowing magic circle pulsed around Beatrice as the players of the Ultras took their positions.

"This game will determine the fate of the entire Earth!!"

She burst into laughter as she continued weaving her spells.

"Those fated to survive—shall survive."

"And those fated to die—shall die!"

The Witch's Game was perfectly fair.

"Those who seek revenge will get their chance. Those who crave power and glory ..they'll get their shot too! A game of desires at its finest! Kihihhi!"

And just as her maniacal laughter echoed—

Frey Starlight came to a sudden halt, his expression darkening as a group of people stepped into his path.

One look at them was enough to ignite the fury in his eyes.

"Leonides..."

The ancient elder of the Starlight family—alongside dozens of traitors from the same bloodline.

The same faction that once stood against his sister in the battle for control over House Starlight.

Leonides took a step forward, drawing his sword as an ominous aura surged around him—greatly amplified by his pact with a demon.

Surrounded by other warriors, most of them ranked S...

The Immortal Lion of the Starlight family roared with burning hatred.

"You have no idea how long I've waited for this moment, Frey Starlight!!"

Revealing his mastery of the Stardust Style, now at the Eighth Star, matching Carmen's level.

Leonides shouted with a face twisted by age and the toll of demonic blood.

All of it... just to wield the sword once more with that borrowed power.

"The moment I kill you!"

But despite the explosive display of aura Leonides had unleashed—Frey Starlight walked toward him calmly, unbothered.

His cold eyes no longer saw Leonides as human. And with a voice that made the immortal lion's blood boil, Frey spoke:

"Step aside, Leonides. I have no intention of fighting someone weaker than me."

"What did you just say?!"

After all the pressure he had built up... these were the first words Leonides heard from Frey?

"You're going to die anyway. Your body won't withstand the demon's blood."

Frey could see it clearly ..Leonides looked several years older than the last time they met.

"So go bury your pathetic corpse somewhere I won't have to see it."

"You bastard!!"

Driven mad by Frey's taunts ..

Leonides charged with a roar, accompanied by many other warriors, as Frey slowly drew his twin swords to meet them—welcoming them with steel and blood.

Thus began the first of many grudge matches...

Here, in the heart of the Ultras Continent.

Chapter 380: The Death of the Immortal

Somewhere in the western region of the Ultras Continent...

A barren land, scorched by death .. a perfect arena.

An arena for a battle unknown to all, between two members of House Starlight.

One from the new generation... and the other, an old relic worn down by time.

Leonides Starlight charged at Frey, his body cloaked in starlight aura, unleashing pressure that had finally reached the long-coveted SS- rank.

The Immortal Lion was not alone. Many of his followers .. traitors who had abandoned House Starlight after their loss to Ada—joined him.

After forging a demonic contract that allowed him to shatter the limits that had restrained him for decades, Leonides had one goal: redemption.

And the first step was Frey Starlight—the thorn in his side, the ghost of the man who had once dethroned him.

In theory, his power should've been enough to crush a young man who had barely broken into Rank B recently.

But reality was far from what the old man had imagined.

From the very first clash, Frey sent him flying, crashing violently into the ground behind him.

Dual black swords gripped in each hand—one of them, a katana Leonides recognized instantly.

"The Dark Sister..."

The sword Abraham Starlight once used to crush him and claim the throne.

And now, that same sword was wielded by his son .. who effortlessly sliced through two of Leonides' followers, releasing a pressure well within SS Rank.

One of the traitors, Khalifa, a spatial manipulator and teleportation specialist, attempted a surprise attack from behind.

He thought he'd succeeded .. only to realize he had cut through an afterimage left behind by Frey's sheer speed.

By the time Khalifa turned around, Frey had already severed his head.

With the same terrifying speed, Frey unleashed a relentless storm of dark slashes, tearing through the rest of the traitors like paper.

They were all Rank S.

Yet it only took a few minutes to reduce them to corpses, leaving Leonides utterly alone.

Frey walked toward him slowly, cold violet light glowing from his eyes, his body drenched in the blood of the fallen.

It was a look of disdain.

A look that reduced Leonides to nothing more than a stone on the side of the road—something to be stepped on and forgotten.

"Why did you show your face to me again, Leonides?"

Frey vanished from Leonides' vision before he could react.

Moments later, he reappeared at his right flank, slashing with both swords.

Leonides barely managed to block before stumbling backward, gasping for breath.

But Frey didn't let up—he pressed on, wave after wave of dark aura clashing violently against the starlight.

"You should've stayed hidden among the Ultras and begged for their protection!"

They exchanged blow after blow, but the power gap was enormous.

Frey attacked freely, while Leonides struggled to breathe .. let alone retaliate.

"You're nothing but a cowardly bastard... a useless, pathetic traitor!"

BOOM

Leonides' blood soaked the ground as Dark Sister and Balerion carved into his flesh without mercy, reshaping his body into a grotesque, mangled mess.

"Is this the power you sought after for so long?!"

SLASH!

Frey pushed further, breaking through Leonides' defenses completely.

And then—

A scream of agony echoed across the wasteland.

With a single swing, Frey severed Leonides' left arm at the shoulder. Blood gushed out, painting the ground in crimson.

Leonides staggered back in horror, but Frey stayed on him like a shadow.

"What made you think you could win against me with such pitiful strength?"

Their blades clashed again—darkness versus starlight, each aura trying to devour the other.

"You're pitiful, Leonides Starlight."

With ease, Frey parried the old man's blade and grabbed his face, slamming it into the ground with brutal force.

He dragged Leonides across the earth, using his body like a mop, before hurling him away, his blood marking a red trail across the battlefield.

"You've lived longer than anyone else... yet you've learned nothing."

Frey crouched beside the broken man, his expression blank—cold—as if he were staring at a buzzing insect, not a human being.

"You lost to my grandfather. Then to my father. And now, here you are... losing to me. Have you ever known anything but failure?"

"You damn—!!"

Leonides roared, lunging forward in a last-ditch effort to strike Frey.

But Frey caught his blade with ease ... then, with the other sword, slashed across the old man's throat.

"Don't raise your voice at me, Bastard."

Frey spoke with the same cold tone, as Leonides coughed up blood from his half-severed throat, desperately trying to hold it with his only remaining hand.

"Ack... ackk... akhh..."

From his mutilated mouth, Leonides could no longer form words. All that escaped were strange choking sounds mixed with the steady flow of blood gushing from his mangled throat.

"They call you the Immortal Lion, don't they?"

Slash!

"Let's put that title to the test."

With another swift swing, Frey severed Leonides' remaining right arm from the shoulder, causing him to collapse to the ground as torrents of blood sprayed violently, staining both the earth and Frey himself.

Now bleeding from both arms and his throat, Leonides had become nothing more than a pile of mutilated flesh, his body relentlessly spilling blood.

His bloodshot eyes locked onto Frey in hatred ..

A hatred that quickly faded under the overwhelming pain, giving way to hopelessness.

Because deep down, he realized... Frey Starlight was right.

"You lived for 150 damned years. Long enough to build a civilization. Tell me—what do you have to show for it?"

Slash!

Frey cut off Leonides' left leg. The old man tried to scream, but no sound came—only more blood from his mouth.

"You let your childish obsession with power rule you for all those years."

"You asked me once, two years ago, what I had to offer House Starlight as its Lord. So now, let me ask you the same thing, you filthy lion..."

"What the hell have you ever done for this family?"

Slash!

The final leg fell.

And with it, Frey finally said the words he'd longed to speak for so many years.

"You're nothing but a disgrace to House Starlight."

Dark Sister and Balerion vanished into their tattoo forms with a flick of Frey's fingers. Then he picked up Leonides' own sword—and drove it deep into the old man's chest.

Leaning against the blade now embedded in Leonides' heart, Frey stared down at the dying relic beneath him.

The so-called Immortal Lion—House Starlight's oldest surviving member—could do nothing but gaze back in terror at the man who had utterly destroyed him... stripped him of voice, dignity, and life.

Within seconds, Leonides drew his final breath, dying like a mangled wretch, his body torn to shreds, his face disfigured beyond recognition by the merciless blades of Frey Starlight.

And with that... Frey finished what his father and grandfather had started.

He eliminated the malignant tumor that had long festered within House Starlight.

Leonides barely lasted a single minute from the moment Frey began his assault.

When it was over, Frey stepped back, leaving the sword planted in Leonides' corpse—an insult in death to the man he had always despised.

"The Immortal Lion? What a meaningless title."

Turning his back on Leonides and his pathetic entourage, Frey wiped the blood from his face and armor before vanishing into the distance, leaving the corpses behind to rot.

"I need to find the others. Fast."

The battle hadn't even lasted ten minutes.

Just a few minutes—that was all it took for Frey to end a two-year-old grudge.

He killed him swiftly...

And forgot him even faster.

His focus was now fixed on something far more important.

The final round of the Witch's Game was about to begin.

And battles far crueler than this one were looming on the horizon.

What Frey didn't know...

Was just how dark the future would be.