

## VILLAIN 381

Chapter 381: Witch's Homunculus

Every passing second in the western region of the Ultras Continent carried enormous weight...

Ultras forces had been strategically deployed throughout the western zone—chosen to host the final phase of the Witch's Game.

Players had taken their positions, awaiting the signal.

From the east, Godfrey's army was slowly advancing toward their objective.

But strangely enough, neither Godfrey himself nor his Emyrean, Gvardiol, were seen among the troops.

From the south, a different army marched.

A terrifying force of a thousand elite warriors from the High Blood—many of them Rank S, armed to the teeth with deadly gear.

They were the Southern hammer of Ultras, commanded by none other than Mergo's closest follower...

Lawrence.

A wild beast in the body of a manchild .. hardly suitable for command.

No one in the Ultras army knew how to deal with him. So, they chose to follow from a distance, careful not to provoke him. After all, the only one who ever tamed that monster... was Mergo.

Lawrence didn't understand the complex strategies his master used to discuss.

He only knew one thing:

March to the marked destination.

Ultras had gathered enough force to spark a full-scale war against the Empire itself.

Yet their target was not a rival army...

It was something else entirely.

The direction they were marching toward...

Was the very location of Phoenix Sunlight's group.

And that fact was all too clear to Ghost Umbra, who had been slipping through the shadows for days now .. searching for Frey.

But instead of finding his friend...

The silent killer had stumbled upon something else entirely.

Lethal armies. Terrifying warriors gathered for one purpose ..

Annihilation.

And the ones they were meant to annihilate... were none other than the Elite Class.

If Phoenix and his group were to face an army like that head-on, not even their strength would be enough to survive.

Between finding his missing friend—whose fate remained uncertain, dead or alive—and returning to warn the others...

Ghost Umbra stood at a crossroads.

He had seen with his own eyes what the enemy had prepared for them.

"I still have Selina's Mark... I can catch up to them if I move at full speed."

As long as he carried that mark, he could always track the others .. unlike Frey, who had no way to find his team.

And so, Ghost made his decision.

Return. Warn them.

Blending into the shadows once more, the silent killer dashed off, retracing his path toward the group he had left behind.

He had to reach them quickly—only then could he resume his search for Frey.

For a brief moment, dark thoughts clouded his mind. Why would the Ultras deploy such a powerful army just to wipe out a class of students?

But he didn't have long to dwell on it.

His instincts flared .. danger was incoming.

He immediately leapt to the side, barely avoiding a massive sword that had pierced through his shadow without resistance.

Ghost tumbled back, colliding with a giant boulder. As he scanned his surroundings for the attacker ..

He found him.

Or rather, the man made no effort to hide himself to begin with.

Standing atop the hilt of his greatsword—planted deep in the ground—was a man Ghost had never seen before.

Orange hair. Gold teeth. A lightning-charged aura dancing around him.

Draxler.

He smiled down at Ghost as he gripped the sword and pulled it free from the earth, crackling sparks following his every move.

"There you are, you little runaway rat."

Cloaked in his deadly aura, Draxler walked toward Ghost, who now held his daggers—ready for combat.

"You really should've stayed put and played your role in the Witch's Game."

"The Witch's Game?"

Ghost asked, unsure of what he was talking about.

Draxler chuckled mockingly.

"Your little detour nearly messed up the entire game. So we had to... improvise. Looks like your fight starts earlier than the rest."

He spoke casually, as if talking to a friend—not an enemy.

That carelessness gave Ghost the opening he needed.

In a flash, he lunged forward—his daggers just inches away from Draxler's neck.

But ..

Draxler caught both blades with his bare hands and flashed his golden grin once more.

"In such a hurry to die, assassin?"

And in less than a second, Ghost felt his chest collapse under the weight of a devastating kick.

He was sent flying—again crashing into a boulder and coughing up blood.

He tried to rise ..but his body barely responded.

With one hand on his chest, Ghost quickly estimated the damage—at least three to four broken ribs. The power difference was overwhelming.

"Ahaha... Beatrice is the worst, man. Always making me clean up the mess her little game leaves behind."

With a casual swing, Draxler unleashed a massive wave of lightning.

It obliterated the ground Ghost had stood on just moments before—leaving behind a smoking crater of utter destruction.

Ghost barely dodged it ..but he knew.

Draxler wasn't even trying yet.

"You keep ranting about this dumb game... what the hell are you even talking about?"

Ghost asked, drawing a pair of violet-glowing daggers from his shadow—SS-ranked weapons he had retrieved from London.

He knew he couldn't win unless he gave everything he had.

But Draxler didn't seem concerned. It was as if he had already accepted the outcome.

"You want to know what the Witch's Game is?"

Whoosh!

Draxler vanished .. reappearing to Ghost's right mid-swing, lightning surging along his blade. But Ghost narrowly dodged and retreated back.

"It's the game that will decide your friends' fate, assassin."

"And it's already begun."

BOOM!

The ground around them exploded in a storm of electricity as Draxler unleashed serpents of lightning, hissing and crashing toward Ghost—who dodged every strike with expert precision.

"Look forward to it, boy."

Draxler laughed as more of his deadly aura flared.

"It'll be one hell of a game."

Busy fighting for his life, Ghost could no longer warn the others.

They were now walking blind into the unknown...

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Far from where Ghost and Frey struggled alone in the western reaches of the Ultras Continent...

Phoenix and his team had finally reached the gate marked on their map.

After traveling over a hundred kilometers while avoiding enemy patrols, they had made it.

They had finally arrived.

That colossal gate ..their only way back home stood before them.

"Finally..."

Scarite Sunlight collapsed to the ground, overwhelmed by the realization that they were actually about to leave this cursed land behind.

"Don't lower your guard. We're not home yet."

Phoenix's voice was firm as he motioned to Selina to inspect the gate.

The map had been accurate—too accurate to be a trap—but the risk of being attacked before activating the teleportation remained high.

Selina, without delay, began casting a spell to modify the gate and accelerate the transfer process, aiming to return them to the Empire as quickly as possible.

The whole operation would only take a few minutes, allowing everyone to breathe a little easier.

"Once the gate is activated, all of you will leave as agreed .. while I go back and retrieve Ghost Umbra. Is that clear?"

His words were directed at Snow and the others, who had previously insisted on staying behind to wait.

But Phoenix had convinced them otherwise. He promised to bring Ghost back himself.

Once they were gone, he could use the Witch's Mark in his possession to instantly locate Ghost.

With only one person to worry about, Phoenix believed he could rescue him swiftly .. fly him home, if need be.

In the end, the young lord of House Sunlight had managed to persuade them all—Danzo, Sansa, and even Snow.

None of them were truly convinced.

But they could do nothing except follow the plan they had all agreed to.

Now, they stood before the gate—their only path home.

"I don't like this..."

Danzo muttered with a scowl, folding his arms as he stared at the gate, now glowing with Selina's magic.

"Returning while others are left behind... walking through this gate and leaving so easily... it's all just too simple. Too convenient for a land as brutal as this one."

It felt wrong. Too easy.

Could they really escape this continent so effortlessly?

Danzo was uneasy. Deeply so.

Snow Lionheart, gripping his sword tightly, didn't disagree.

"We have no other choice. This is the only path forward."

Aside from the map they had previously found, there was no clue where else to go. Following it was their only option.

Snow hadn't wanted to leave in the first place, but he suppressed his emotions for the sake of the group, not wanting to cause unnecessary trouble.

And so, one by one...

They found themselves standing before the gate, glowing with a swirling white light.

"It worked, everyone!"

Selina shouted joyfully as she completed the activation.

"Once this gate links to its counterpart in the Empire, the imperial mages will recognize my magic and open the way. We can finally go home!"

Hope surged through the group, who had spent what felt like an eternity in the hellscape of the Ultras Continent.

"We can finally go back..."

Standing at the gate, Sansa Valerion froze—lost in thought.

"What's wrong, Sansa?"

Adriana stepped up beside her, a warm smile on her face.

"We're finally going home. Why the long face?"

"Adriana..."

Sansa sighed, trying to convince herself that everything was fine.

"This is the second time I've run away from this place since I was first kidnapped. I just... can't shake this strange feeling growing in my chest."

"Like all roads are somehow leading me back here... back to the Ultras Continent."

As Sansa spoke her thoughts aloud, Phoenix began ordering the group to pass through the gate. One by one, they began stepping forward.

Only Adriana and Sansa remained behind.

Adriana smiled.

"You're right... Sansa."

Sansa turned to her, puzzled, as Adriana's gaze remained fixed on the glowing gate.

"All roads do lead back here. To the Ultras Continent .. including this one."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's a trap."

"What?"

"Didn't you hear me? It's a trap. One that will take us all into the final stage of the game."

Adriana's warm smile twisted into something else .. something sinister.

At the same moment...

The gate's white glow suddenly turned blood-red and pulled everyone inside without warning.

"This is the Witch's Game, after all!"

As the red light consumed them like a black hole, Adriana's body glowed as well—revealing a violet dress and a refined hat atop her head.

Her once gentle smile transformed into something far more terrifying.

Only she and Sansa remained outside the gate, which had just swallowed everyone else whole—triggering the magical trap Beatrice had prepared from the very beginning.

"What's wrong, Sansa? Kihihhi~"

Adriana laughed wickedly as Sansa stood frozen in shock.

Standing before the crimson vortex...

"You look like you've seen a ghost."

And with those words ..

Everyone had been teleported.

Each person, alone.

Each sent to a different place.

Each facing a chosen opponent waiting just for them.

Phoenix Sunlight stood before Godfrey.

Seris Moonlight came face to face with a man she hadn't seen in a long time ..Baylor Moonlight.

Snow Lionheart faced the masked figure V, his old nemesis.

Ragna Claude stood opposite Lorance, the man who murdered his father.

Dawn Polaris found himself confronting a strange woman he had never seen before.

Daemon Valerion encountered two S-class warriors of the High Blood.

Each had met their destined enemy ..

And with that...

The final round officially began.

The Elite Class's last struggle... had begun.

Chapter 382: Battles of Life and Death (1)

After fifteen days of hell in the nightmare land of the Ultras...

The Elite Class finally reached the gate that was supposed to lead them home.

Selena had no trouble casting her spell and linking the portal to the Empire. She was confident .. they were going to make it.

The map hadn't been a lie. Such maps couldn't be tampered with; they were created years ago with unchangeable magic.

But the trap was much simpler than they ever imagined. Beatrice hadn't altered the map. She had merely guided them step by step .. toward the destination she had chosen, setting her trap right in front of the gate.

"I couldn't teleport you all while Phoenix was still nearby. So I had to draw you here... where my spell was already waiting."

Adriana rose slowly into the air. Her clothes transformed into a luxurious violet gown, her hairstyle changed completely, and a graceful witch's hat now adorned her head.

The trap had been inevitable. It swallowed them all .. everyone except for Adriana and Sansa, who stood alone together.

"Adriana... you're the traitor?"

Sansa's voice trembled, unable to process what was unfolding.

Adriana had always been that timid, quiet girl .. afraid of her own shadow. She had lived with them for two years in the temple, suffered alongside them, fought to survive with them.

When the Ultras attacked ..

during the island trial ..

the Victoriad ..

Adriana had been right there with them.

"No need for that face, Sansa."

Beatrice, now speaking through Adriana's body, smiled—revealing the wicked grin she had kept hidden all this time.

"Adriana Hajgeborn hasn't existed in a long, long time. I killed her myself .. before you even entered the temple. Then I created this sweet little doll... a homunculus, to infiltrate your ranks and build a false identity."

From the beginning, every reaction Adriana had, every awkward moment, every lie—

It had all been a performance directed by Beatrice.

"Why?!"

Sansa unleashed her shadow powers, finally beginning to grasp the scale of the betrayal.

"Why would you go this far?!"

Using her shadows, she lunged at Adriana. But the witch effortlessly dodged, vanishing and reappearing with a flash of speed that resembled teleportation.

"Why? For this game, of course!!"

Adriana raised her hand, conjuring dozens of violet celestial spheres that began floating around her.

"This is the grand culmination of the Witch's Game!"

The spheres fired in rapid succession toward Sansa, who responded by shaping barriers from her shadows to deflect the magical barrage.

But her defenses barely held under the sheer force Adriana unleashed through her puppet.

"One game... that shook an entire world. A game that warped destinies and led the future into chaos! There's no greater show! Nothing more satisfying than this! A spectacle that could even entertain him! "

Adriana cackled with wild laughter, the truth finally coming to light.

She was the one who had orchestrated the invasion, turning the Empire and Ultras against each other.

She had lured the new generation, and forced the old one out of hiding.

For years, she had quietly woven her web—playing the long game with perfection.

The western region of the Ultras continent was now surrounded on all sides by enemy armies, while the players had been scattered across the center.

"Everyone will face their chosen opponent. Whether it's someone they want revenge on... or someone who matches their strength. And if not .. then fate will decide. Luck will determine who lives and who dies!"

Adriana continued firing relentlessly, her magical orbs bombarding Sansa, who struggled to keep up.

Behind them, the gate shattered completely. The land crumbled beneath their feet.

"They'll fight each other to the death. Escape is no longer an option. The armies are on the move .. and they'll be here in just one hour."

In other words ... even if some from the Elite Class survived their individual battles . they would still have to face the incoming armies.

No gate.

No exit.

Only death.

A final game of survival, where each would fight until their last breath.

"You're insane..."

Sansa whispered, horror etched into her face.

The land of Ultras was about to become their grave.

"Don't be like that, Sansa. Aren't we friends? That's exactly why I made myself your opponent."

Adriana pulled out a slender wand and smiled wickedly.

"This doll is the weakest of all my homunculi. So your chances aren't zero. Give it your all, dear Sansa!"

As the witch revealed her true strength without holding back, the princess clenched her fists, fury rising within her.

Dark celestial spheres formed around her. Enormous shadow tendrils writhed behind her.

"I'm going to wipe that disgusting smile off your face."

"That's the spirit!"

Adriana laughed maniacally ..

And so it began.

A war of fire and shadows erupted between the two, both women unleashing torrents of aura and clashing with ferocious might.

The first battle had officially begun.

Sansa Valerion vs Adriana Hajgeborn.

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The portal swallowed everyone, and each of them found themselves facing their chosen opponent.

However, some had been standing too close together .. so they were transported as pairs.

Snow Lionheart had no idea what just happened.

When he opened his golden eyes again, he found himself standing in a place completely different from where he'd been moments ago.

As he turned around, he spotted Lara Croft, who had clung to him when the red portal engulfed them both.

"Lara..."

Snow's mind raced, trying to make sense of what had just occurred, while Lara stood up in concern, scanning their surroundings.

"What happened?"

"That's the damn question I'm trying to answer."

Snow's voice carried frustration.

Did something go wrong with the portal? A mistake from Selina?

He tried to stay optimistic, but immediately dismissed the thought.

No... this wasn't a mistake.

He had seen it with his own eyes...

The way the portal turned red before swallowing them whole.

"...It's a trap."

Snow's usually calm face twisted with fury, startling Lara where she stood.

"You're right, Hero of the Empire."

Aside from Snow and Lara, there was a third person at that location.

Snow slowly turned toward the voice, his golden eyes flaring brightly ..

And there he was.

A figure Snow hadn't seen in a long time, standing in wait.

Wearing the same mask, the same dark armor that radiated a cursed aura—

The masked man, V, had returned.

"You again."

Both Snow and V began walking toward each other slowly, their auras pressing against one another like two forces of nature.

"I see you've grown stronger since last time," said V in a serious tone .. far removed from the mocking one he had used in the past.

"I could say the same about you," Snow replied.

The pressure radiating from V was far more intense than it had been a year ago, during the Ultras raid on the Temple.

Snow Lionheart, who had grown immensely in power...

And V ..who had mastered the SSS-ranked Marvas Contract.

V summoned his Moonlight Sword—the same weapon from their last fight. Snow, in turn, called forth Vermithor, his blade blazing with sacred aura.

"Don't think for a second this will go like last time," Snow warned, unleashing his full power and bloodthirst that he had suppressed until now.

"I'll bury you right here."

"Oh? Grown cocky, have you, Hero of the Empire? Just because you got your hands on one of the legendary swords?"

V replied coldly, shrouding himself in writhing black flames as his aura surged beyond even Snow's.

"You'll all die here."

Their clash of auras and killing intent was so intense that Lara Croft could only stand aside, helpless to interfere.

"Run, Lara. Get as far away as you can while I kill this bastard."

"Snow!"

She reached out to him, but the violent burst of aura from both warriors sent her flying backward. She screamed, trying to steady herself.

"War King form !" Snow roared .. just as V echoed back:

"Berserker form !"

Snow transformed into a killing machine, his body covered in glowing golden runes...

While V was cloaked in burning black armor, madness seizing his gaze as his eyes turned fully white.

And then—without warning—

The two of them lunged.

The Moonlight Sword clashed with Vermithor in a deafening explosion of metal.

Snow pushed his Star Aura to the limit, while V unleashed his cursed black flames.

They roared as they fought, clashing with ferocity that turned the battlefield into a whirlwind of blades.

Black fire vs. star aura.

The cursed Moonlight vs. the sacred Vermithor.

Their battle was utter chaos.

Snow twisted the terrain beneath V, trying to bury him alive, but the masked man shattered the ground and soared out—only to be met by a volley of massive ice spears hurled by Snow.

V shattered them one after another, firing black flames without pause...

Until Snow descended from the sky and crashed into him, sending them both smashing through a mountain.

Vermithor left trails of light in the air from its sheer speed as Snow struck again and again, trying to bury V deeper into the rock.

"RAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!"

V screamed wildly ..

An eruption of black fire burst from within his body like a dam breaking, launching Snow backward.

The dark flames surged like a tidal wave, with V at the center, aiming to consume Snow whole.

But Snow, too, pushed past his limits .. his golden runes glowing brighter than ever as he prepared for the next clash.

Unleashing a terrifying surge of Star Aura, Snow clashed with V once more.

Blow after blow, they exchanged strikes without pause, uncaring of the blood that spilled from their battered bodies.

V's Darkfire burned through Snow's star-born energy, trapping him completely.

Taking advantage of that, the masked man launched wave after wave of dark flames, trying to kill his opponent and incinerate him alive.

But then—Snow let out a roar unlike any before, and began his counterattack with reckless fury.

A wave of Star Aura. Then another of lightning. Then a third of devastating blue fire.

Earth, light, darkness...

The Hero of the Empire unleashed his full arsenal of elemental power without restraint, pushing back V's dark flames and matching him blow for blow.

"You're not winning this time!!"

"Then show me what you've got!!"

BOOOOM!

Explosion after explosion shook the land. This wasn't a battle .. it was a natural disaster unleashed upon the earth.

Lara Croft barely escaped in time, having been caught in the epicenter of their clash...

Both V and Snow ..

"They've lost their minds..."

Two raging beasts, unleashing Aura with output at SS-rank and rising...

Lara realized that a single stray attack from either of their swords would end her life instantly.

As their roars echoed and their battle made the very ground scream for mercy...

Thus began a mad duel between two heroes—each forged in a different world.

The second round had begun, headed toward an unknown conclusion ..

Snow Lionheart vs the Masked V.

Chapter 383: Battles of Life and Death (2)

Life was strange.

It often gave you chances... only to take them back at the same time.

Up until now...

Seris Moonlight had lived her life trapped inside a black box since childhood.

She had been manipulated, robbed of so much... and now, her cold heart burned once more with the fire of revenge.

"I wanted vengeance with every fiber of my being... revenge against the one who took my family from me, who turned my father into a heartless monster, and stole my elder sister away..."

Baelor Moonlight. In his pursuit of the title of Lord...

He committed a crime so vile it would forever stain the history of the Empire.

"I wanted to kill him. But I knew this fire was fleeting ..a hollow goal that would one day lead me astray..."

Ever since learning the truth ..

Seris Moonlight had sought change.

"So rather than drowning in revenge, I chose to become stronger... faster... better."

After the incident that unveiled the truth behind House Moonlight, Seris had pushed herself beyond her limits ...honing every skill she had, using her darkest emotions as fuel to keep going.

"I'll become far stronger than I am now... strong enough to make sure something like that never happens again. And when I finally gain that strength... my revenge will come naturally."

Those were the thoughts of Seris Moonlight ..the First-Class Wave Controller who created forms capable of matching knights and swordsmen in direct combat.

She had grown far beyond what she once was.

But life always takes unexpected turns...

The red portal had swallowed her alone .. flinging her into a dark cave.

But her sky-blue eyes saw clearly through the gloom.

There, deep in the cave, sat a man... wearing the same armor she'd seen him in last time, his blue hair slicked up toward the sky.

Rising to his feet with a twisted grin, the former Lord of House Moonlight greeted her.

"It's been a while... my dear daughter."

Hearing those words ...

Seris Moonlight couldn't suppress the inferno inside her. It erupted violently.

"BAELOR!!"

With a furious scream, her body lit up as a frozen armor formed around her—masking her face and giving her the appearance of a phantom-like ninja.

Her glowing blue eyes narrowed into a death glare, eyebrows furrowed in seething rage.

Baelor chuckled softly, scratching his head in mock irritation.

"I see you despise me deeply... how tragic."

BOOM!

The two began manipulating ice at incredible speed.

Seris hurled massive ice swords at him .. Baelor blocked them effortlessly with an icy wall.

He laughed when she charged forward, her frozen armor massively boosting her speed.

"You've grown quite a lot, Seris."

He seemed genuinely proud of his niece. Seris, wielding two gleaming frostblades, slashed at him while simultaneously manipulating celestial bodies to strike from afar.

Her refined combat style allowed her to fight from any range—breaking the old belief that Wave Controllers should only battle from a distance.

The difference in strength between them was immense.

Baelor, an SS rank, parried her blades with the back of his hand.

As for the celestial projectiles she hurled at him, he raised simple ice barriers that effortlessly nullified them.

"It's pointless, Seris. This fight is meaningless."

"Shut up!!"

Seris continued her assault, but Baelor blocked everything she threw at him with infuriating ease.

Like an adult toying with a helpless child.

"You shouldn't be fighting me like this, Seris."

With a casual wave of his hand, Baelor unleashed a wave of Aura that blasted Seris into the cave wall with bone-shattering force.

She hit the ground with a muffled scream, pain searing through her spine as she felt her bones crack beneath the weight of that single strike.

"There's no need to hate me, my dear daughter. Everything that happened to you... was nothing but a bad dream."

Baelor strolled toward her with that same infuriating smile still plastered across his face.

"I'll rebuild it... our happy family ..what was destroyed by outside hands. Then we'll live the dream again. A dream you'll be a part of."

Listening to his madness, Seris slowly rose to her feet.

"After everything you did... you still dare to speak of the family you destroyed yourself?"

Ice began to form around her once more—only to shatter immediately, crushed by Baelor's control over the very element she tried to wield.

"I wasn't the one who destroyed it. Our family saw its golden age under my rule."

With another flick of his hand, Baelor unleashed a devastating blast that smashed Seris into the wall once again, forcing blood from her lips.

"Do you blame me for what happened to Drogo? That was war between him and me! I won .. he lost! I became Lord while he was buried, marked forever as the man behind the greatest massacre in the Empire's history. I won!"

"And what of my siblings who died for your 'victory'? The hanged bodies swinging from trees... the deathtrap you forced us to live in..."

Recalling the massacre she had survived, Baelor sighed in annoyance.

"A price that had to be paid... for a greater purpose."

"So that's how it is..."

Face darkened, Seris surged to her feet again and attacked the former Lord of House Moonlight with everything she had.

Swords, spears, celestial projectiles blazing with fire—

She tried everything. Nothing worked.

"I'll soon become one of the Lords of the Ultras, dear Seris."

Shhhh ..

Baelor deflected her strikes while steadily closing the distance between them.

"Then we'll destroy the Empire and build a new family .one far stronger than the ashes we left behind. A family with you... and my son, Frost."

He laid bare his selfish ambitions, but Seris replied coldly—

"So you still remember your only son. And here I thought you were nothing more than a filthy beast who knew only how to destroy."

BOOM!

"Even filthy beasts like you, Baelor... seem to care for their offspring."

Seris continued her assault as Baelor deflected her attacks, walking closer and closer until he stood right in front of her.

"Of course I care. He's my only son."

"And my father Drogo cared for us too... but you stole everything from him!"

Seris's Aura surged. Ice rapidly built upon itself, forming a massive frozen flower that exploded outward .. shattering the cave and exposing the starless night sky above.

It was a devastating attack.

But Baelor walked through it unharmed.

He emerged right in front of her ..just inches away.

"It's useless. Your attacks won't reach me, no matter what you do."

His cold, terrifying eyes met hers.

Seris didn't flinch. She simply raised her hand and placed it flat against Baelor's chest.

Blood trickled from her forehead, and her frozen armor had already begun to fracture under the weight of his previous blows.

But the fire inside her never once dimmed.

"I'll gladly die if it means I can end your life, you rotten Lord."

Baelor listened with a blank stare. The gap in strength was far too great ..he could kill her in an instant if he wished.

"I told you, Seris, it's poin—ghh!"

He didn't even realize what had happened.

Blood exploded from his mouth as he was hurled back, crashing into the solid stone behind him.

Staring down at his chest, Baelor's eyes widened in shock.

A white serpent had pierced clean through him, dark-red blood dripping in torrents.

The serpent slithered back at once, joining a swarm of others that now encircled Seris.

"Ice Formation: Abyssal Serpent."

The serpents hissed, slithering across every surface .. radiating a terrifying, frigid presence.

Baelor felt it.

The monstrous power now emanating from Seris Moonlight.

She extended her right hand. Her ice armor had shattered from it, revealing pale white skin marked with strange tattoos—spikes and frozen flowers—and wreathed in glacial white flames.

"Come, Baelor Moonlight... I'll drag you with me into the abyss of oblivion. With every ounce of power this body can unleash."

Even if it meant her death .

Seris Moonlight had made her decision.

She would kill that man. No matter what it took.

Baelor, for his part, unleashed his true Aura in response. The time for words had ended.

The third round had begun ..

Seris Moonlight vs. Baelor Moonlight.

A battle between kin whose hearts had frozen long ago.

A battle of life and death, poised to shake the entire continent and cast a long shadow over the dark future to come.

Chapter 384: Blood of the Close Ones (1)

There was no doubt anymore ..

The Witch's Game had delivered its verdict.

And to call it a "game" would be a mistake. It was a massacre ..One that toyed with the lives of a young generation burdened with the weight of great expectations.

Among the players on the side of the Ultras ..

Gavid Lindman sat quietly, now wearing a pristine white suit. His body had recovered from the wounds he sustained during the battle against Astaroth.

His cold eyes were fixed on the young challengers who had just appeared before him out of nowhere.

The Lord of the Ultras muttered,

"Why did I even agree to take part in this ridiculous game?"

Lindman had originally planned to eliminate the Elite Class in one swift stroke. But due to a certain agreement with Beatrice, he found himself forced to participate ..

As a mere player, following the whims of a witch.

He moved toward the designated battlefield given to him and waited patiently for his opponent...

Only to be met with the appearance of the twins ..

Scarite Sunlight and Ivan Sunlight.

Both were painfully weak—so much so that they hadn't even realized the true magnitude of the monster standing before them.

Lindman's eyes darkened, fury buried behind a silent scowl.

"Who are you?! Where are we?!"

Scarite summoned flaming orbs around her while hiding behind her brother, who drew his sword with shaky hands.

Gavid sighed and leapt down from the rock he had been sitting on.

"I'll tell you who I am."

He advanced slowly, ignoring Scarite's shouted warnings to stop.

Her burning orbs struck him ..

Only to pass straight through his body as if he weren't there at all.

A look of pure disgust twisted Lindman's face.

"I am death."

His sword, invisible to them, had already chosen its target—Scarite. Her shrieking had annoyed him.

Ivan didn't even realize what had happened... until blood splattered across his face.

When he turned to his sister, he found her collapsing in slow motion ..

Her face cleaved cleanly in half, horizontally.

Lindman's strike had been so precise that her eyes and brain took a moment to slide apart, splattering across the ground, forming a crimson froth at Ivan Sunlight's feet.

He stared at his twin's corpse, unable to comprehend what had just happened.

Ivan didn't feel rage.

Nor did he feel any desire for revenge.

What he felt—was something entirely different.

And Gavid Lindman recognized it instantly ..

The moment he saw yellow liquid trickling down Ivan's leg.

He had wet himself.

"Pathetic... and revolting."

"No!!!"

Ivan Sunlight, the boy who rarely ever spoke and always hid behind his sister, found himself crawling away, dragging his urine-soaked trousers behind him.

But he didn't get far.

A flash of light struck him without warning, and he collapsed.

He looked down at his legs, which were now radiating unbearable pain ..

Only to discover both had been cleanly severed.

Blood, piss, and tears ...

Ivan Sunlight flooded the ground with the fluids of defeat while Gavid let out another sigh of contempt.

"You were going to die either way.

But couldn't you at least die with a shred of dignity, filthy rat?"

"Please... don't..."

Ivan begged, trying to cling to Lindman's clothes...

And that only made him angrier.

Gavid's arm moved with inhuman speed.

He cut through Ivan's body dozens—no, hundreds of times.

Reducing him to a pile of tiny, bloody cubes. Erasing any trace of who he once was.

"Disgusting."

With a flick of his blade, Gavid sent the blood flying off its edge and walked away from the battlefield, now painted red by the witch's twisted game.

The Lord of the Ultras had become a free player.

His eyes now shifted toward the next arenas.

"Let's end this farce already."

He took off in a blur, determined to wipe out the rest of the elite students.

But then—he stopped.

The magical communication crystal he always carried began to glow.

When he looked at the caller ID, his eyes narrowed.

It was his partner in crime.

"Mergo..."

Reading the message left behind by the Lord of the Dark Hive, Gavid's eyes widened for just a second—

Before he regained his calm and changed direction ..

This time, moving even faster.

But toward a different destination.

Gavid Lindman vs. Scarite & Ivan Sunlight

The battle ended... before it ever truly began.

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There are many reasons a person might live.

Many motivations that keep the heart beating.

But among them all...

Revenge stands out as one of the most powerful.

The death of a loved one...

The loss of something precious...

In Ragna Claud's case—

It was the death of his father.

Since arriving on the Ultras continent, he had been consumed by a single desire:

Vengeance.

A raging fire devoured his heart, turning him into a beast ..

A monster that thirsted only for revenge.

Danzo had once managed to calm the raging fire within him, steering him off that path—at least temporarily.

But the Red Gate that devoured him showed no such mercy. It threw him directly into the path of the one person he should never have encountered.

Ragna, lying in the middle of a vast, barren plain.

He rose, gripping his colossal weapon—Wynnyd, the Spear of Storms.

His eyes had turned blood-red, veins bulging violently under the pressure of the wind aura swirling around him.

Standing before him was a pale young man with short white hair, deep black eye bags, and a disfigured face. His fingers were so thin they resembled bones.

It was Lawrence, taken aback by the sudden appearance of a stranger.

But Lawrence wasn't the true problem...

It was the army of a thousand men standing behind him.

The pressure of their collective aura fell like a waterfall on Ragna's broad shoulders.

His body was nearly crushed into the ground as he realized the absurd difference in numbers ...and power.

Yet he didn't take a single step back.

His eyes were locked solely on Lawrence.

"What's going on here? What is this?"

Lawrence scratched his head in confusion.

"A stranger appears out of nowhere, and he's desperate to kill me? This is great!"

The Ultras warrior laughed, then abruptly stopped. His gaze narrowed as he examined Ragna more closely.

"But who are you? Have we met?"

He asked cheerfully, but Ragna's furious roar shook the air as he stabbed his spear into the ground, summoning a wild gust.

"LAWRENCE!!"

"I can hear you just fine, no need to yell."

Lawrence casually cleaned his ear with a finger, unfazed by Ragna's outburst.

"Today, I'll avenge my father... the one you murdered with your own hands, Isaac Claud!"

Ragna unleashed all his power, pouring it into the storm spear as he prepared to lunge.

Lawrence, on the other hand, only grew more confused.

"Isaac? Who's that?"

Unable to recall the man he had killed, he rubbed his head, trying to place the name.

"My lord, let us handle him."

Two Ultras warriors cautiously stepped forward. From their aura, it was clear they had surpassed at least Rank S.

Despite that, they showed Lawrence the utmost respect.

"He's too weak. Not worth your time."

They wanted to finish it themselves, but Lawrence waved them off with a broad grin.

"No. He wants me. Ahaha!"

"He wants to kill me!"

He cackled maniacally, the strange black markings crawling across his twisted skin.

Seeing that, the two Ultras warriors backed away and returned to the formation, uneasy expressions on their faces.

Meanwhile, Ragna charged forward, consumed by the storm, aiming directly at his father's killer.

And in less than a second ..

A violent explosion erupted. Wind howled, forming a raging cyclone that swallowed them both.

The mighty spear, Wynnyd, was lodged deep in Lawrence's chest—piercing through his heart and vital organs before emerging from his back.

Gripping the spear, Ragna stared into the eyes of his father's murderer, his heart ablaze with fury.

But Lawrence's blood wasn't red...

It was black. Vile. Oozing across the ground, soaking both of them.

Drenched in his own blood, Lawrence licked the foul substance, then grinned madly.

"So this... this is what my blood tastes like. Ahh... ahaha... AHAHAHA!"

"What the—?!"

Ragna's eyes widened in horror as Lawrence laughed and trembled with joy... despite the massive spear driven through his chest.

His skin and flesh began to shift—turning red and black.

His body grew larger by the second, towering over Ragna.

Chapter 385: Blood of the Close Ones (2)

A monstrous figure, over five meters tall, loomed above him—casting a terrifying shadow.

The spear was still lodged in his chest...

But compared to the sheer size of this giant beast ... now with a single eye and four muscular arms—it looked insignificant.

"Ahh... so I've tasted my blood."

Lawrence's voice had changed. No longer the voice of a lean, mad youth ..

It had become deep, grating... monstrous.

As he opened his enormous mouth, Ragna froze, paralyzed by the unknown.

"I wonder... how YOUR blood will taste?! AHAHAHAHA!!!"

Before him, that gaping maw opened wide ...

A portal into a personal hell pulled from Ragna's darkest nightmares.

Elsewhere, the Ultras warriors retreated even farther .. And it became clear why they had left such a wide gap between themselves and Lawrence.

The empyrean of Mirgo .. Lawrence was a beast no one could ever predict. The only one who had ever managed to keep him under control was Mirgo himself.

That's why getting too close to him was never a good idea. At times, simply on a whim, he wouldn't spare friend or foe alike.

He would transform into a grotesque monster, shrouded in a cursed, blood-drenched aura... mouth wide open before his prey.

Ragna tried to act immediately—but froze when he found himself unable to pull his spear out of Lawrence's body, no matter how hard he tried.

The flesh and blood of that monster had hardened, turning into something akin to reinforced steel.

Now disarmed, Ragna was completely isolated... left helpless before the beast.

Mere moments later, the Ultras army heard the sound.

The sound of Lawrence's bite—crushing down on Ragna's lower half.

Ragna didn't even move. Lifted high into the air, he was devoured from the waist down, his legs and entrails torn apart and ground between jagged fangs.

After finally tasting the blood he so desperately craved...

Lawrence spat Ragna aside, his mangled body tumbling across the dead soil of the Ultrassian plains.

"Delicious! So delicious! Deli—DELICIOUS! AHAHAHAHA!"

Laughing like a monster, Lawrence cackled, his bloodstained mouth dripping with fresh crimson.

As for Ragna...

He simply lay there... staring up at the sky, aimless and empty.

He didn't dare look down. He already knew what he would see.

"...You were right, Danzo..."

Collapsed on the ground... his intestines scattered, his organs mangled—Ragna Claud met a fate darker than the one that claimed the father he had come to avenge.

Ragna Claude vs. Lawrence — another battle ended.

And the Ultras army continued to march, trailing behind Lawrence, whose monstrous form was slowly crumbling... reverting back to the emaciated young man he once was.

He looked euphoric—intoxicated.

Like someone who had just spent the night with the woman of his dreams.

In that state, approaching him was dangerous.

That's why the army deliberately stayed at least a hundred meters behind.

Their next destination: the remaining elite students, each fighting their own desperate battle.

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"Now this... is interesting."

Somewhere in the western zone ..

Selena and Aegon Valerion appeared inside a battlefield prepared specifically for them.

Wearing his ever-present smile .. one that never wavered, no matter the situation—Aegon let out a small chuckle, analyzing their predicament as Selena stood beside him, her expression dark and clouded.

"They placed their trap right at the gateway meant to send us home—knowing full well it was our only exit."

"A trap formed of a magical circle that scattered us randomly... splitting us apart to make the hunt easier."

He walked slowly, hands behind his back, and Selena followed, a note of unease in her stride.

"If this really is a trap, then we're in serious trouble."

"Oh, it's definitely a trap," Aegon replied calmly, glancing around.

The place they had been sent to was a desolate city—completely cut off from the rest of the Ultrassian lands.

"And if they went to the trouble of isolating us like this, I assume our executioner is already here... waiting for us."

After walking for some time through the empty city, Aegon came to a halt—and so did Selena.

"What is it?" she asked.

She readied every trick and spell she had, bracing herself for anything.

Aegon's eyes were locked on a massive building topped with an old, rusted clock.

And there .. atop that building stood the one meant for them.

"There you are," Aegon said with a smirk. "The executioner they prepared just for us."

Selena's despair deepened tenfold.

How could it not, when the one standing there radiated an SS class aura?

Wearing a black cloak that resembled the plague-doctors of old...

Wielding a massive scythe...

And exuding a murderous intent so raw it made Selena tremble involuntarily.

It was the Hollow—Ludwig.

The same cursed creature that had appeared in Yharnam just one year ago, where he singlehandedly fought the Empire's finest.

Just as they spotted him ..

He spotted them.

"So that's Ludwig the Hollow, huh? Impressive. The Ultras actually managed to tame him?"

"Is this really the time for your damn commentary?! He's SS class!!"

Selena immediately deployed a magical barrier around herself and Aegon.

"We have to get out of here—right now!"

Activating her spell, Selena attempted to teleport them as far away as possible.

Even if it was random ..

It was better than standing face-to-face with Ludwig the Hollow.

Bzzzt—

Selena was just about to activate her magic—when a focused electric jolt struck her from behind, knocking her out cold.

She collapsed unconscious, and Aegon let out a sigh as lightning danced lazily between his fingers.

"Why are most girls around me this annoying? Look how perfect you are when you're quiet."

After attacking his only ally, Aegon turned his gaze back to Ludwig, who had just leapt down, now standing face-to-face with him.

The Hollow began walking toward him slowly, dragging his massive scythe behind him.

The screech of metal scraping against the ground... the crushing weight of his overwhelming aura...

All of it pressed down on Aegon, who didn't budge an inch.

"So... they've sent someone of your caliber against me. I suppose this is their way of trying to force my hand ..make me play a few of my cards, huh?"

Aegon exhaled in annoyance before walking forward to meet Ludwig himself.

"Very well. You'll get what you asked for."

As both of them advanced toward one another ..

Aegon slipped his hands into his pockets, and a crooked grin spread across his face while his expression turned darker.

"They say you were raised among Nightmare beasts, Ludwig. That you're no different from them now. Which means you probably can't even understand a word I'm saying...kekekekeke..."

His golden eyes gleamed as the air around them thickened and warped, causing Ludwig to stop in his tracks without warning.

"Nightmare creatures are no different from wild animals. They fight using instinct and limited intelligence ..but what they do have... is a strong sixth sense. A survival instinct sharp enough to feel danger of every kind."

With his hands still in his pockets and an air of superiority, Aegon asked his foe in a low, commanding voice ..

"Tell me, Hollow Ludwig... what do you see when you look at me?"

The air grew heavier and heavier. Ludwig didn't move a muscle.

"Do I look like prey you think you can hunt?"

"Answer me."

Aegon continued speaking without pause...

But the world around him no longer felt the same.

Had Selena been conscious, she might've gone insane from the sheer pressure of the killing intent now flooding the air.

Even the cursed Ludwig found himself frozen—gazing at this strange, defiant prince.

"LUDWIG!!"

Aegon suddenly shouted, fury in his voice.

And Ludwig ..without hesitation ..stumbled back several steps.

Then, without warning ..

The Hollow retreated, vanishing into the distance, his scythe swung behind his back once more.

It all happened right before Aegon's unflinching eyes.

He finally let out a tired breath.

"You'll see nothing from me, you bastards... not even you, Beatrice."

Turning back, Aegon walked toward Selena, who still lay unconscious where she'd fallen.

"What should I even do with you now?"

He considered leaving her there... but quickly dismissed the idea. He knew Selena was still a tool that could prove useful later.

So, carrying her in his arms...

Aegon walked off, as if taking a casual stroll through the royal gardens, not the deadly plains of the Ultras continent.

After making a Hollow flee without even lifting a finger in combat—

Aegon ended his battle victorious without ever fighting.

He, too, became a free player on the board.

Aegon Valerion & Selena Hemsworth vs. Ludwig the Hollow

Another round concluded—its outcome as cryptic as ever ..

For a rogue prince no one could quite figure out.

Chapter 386: Danzo Smasher vs Gvardiol (1)

The Glow of the Crimson Gate...

It was the first omen of death that most elite students had witnessed.

The Red Abyss ..

A vortex of doom that dragged them away, smothering the fleeting hope they'd grasped, and drowning them in the depths of darkness.

Among those elite students ..

Danzo had activated his armor the instant the flash consumed him.

When he regained awareness, he found himself trapped in a massive underground cavern, dimly lit by torches blazing with crimson fire ..

Flames so intense, they seared into his vision.

"So, you're my opponent, huh? You look... somewhat strong."

Wearing the Silver Dragon Armor, Danzo turned toward the unexpected voice—

A venom-laced tone belonging to a terrifying figure.

Towering over Danzo, the man stood wrapped in black bandages, his face grotesque and twisted, with glowing red eyes.

Grinning with poison in his smile ..

Gvardiol awaited him.

Danzo was a true warrior ..

Sharpened senses, a body honed to near perfection, and strength built through grit, far beyond his natural gift.

He wasn't stupid.

He sensed the difference between them instantly.

Just one look was enough.

Gvardiol... was a monster.

Danzo scanned the cave. Escape was not an option.

The chamber was sealed tight, buried hundreds of meters underground ..

It felt more like a grave.

And Gvardiol?

He was the executioner.

Danzo closed his eyes behind the armor and lowered his head.

Even with the armor on, he could clearly visualize his own body.

Every scar, every muscle, every single cell.

He knew them by heart.

The strength he had spent his entire life building...

Was this the moment it would be tested?

The decisive battle that would define his fate?

So many questions.

And he was about to find their answers here.

Knowing that, Danzo opened his eyes ..

Filled with unshakable resolve.

Ready to fight, as he always had been.

"I see you're already prepared. That's some impressive composure,"

Gvardiol said with a twisted smile, almost admiring him.

Here, far beneath the earth, in a chamber bathed in crimson flame—

Both men braced themselves.

"Let's begin."

Danzo spoke with a calm, steady voice.

There was no hatred or emotion in his tone.

And the same was true for Gvardiol.

They were complete strangers—

No connection between them.

It was pure luck that Beatrice had chosen to pit them against one another.

"Come at me."

With that gesture and grin, Gvardiol gave the signal.

Harnessing every last drop of power stored within the Silver Dragon Armor—

Danzo shattered the ground beneath his feet as he surged forward.

His fist swelled with might, crashing into Gvardiol's chest at blistering speed ..

The impact thundered across the chamber.

In a single strike, Danzo sent his opponent flying .. Smashing him violently into the cavern wall.

"Magnificent punch!!!"

Half-embedded in stone, Gvardiol let out a booming laugh, applauding Danzo.

Without hesitation, Danzo rushed in again—

Slamming his fist into Gvardiol's face and driving him even deeper into the rock.

With relentless aggression, Danzo unleashed a storm of punches ..

Each blow landing with pinpoint precision.

His fists were like twin cannons, firing at full force ..

Raining down a brutal barrage fueled by every ounce of Aura he could summon.

BOOM. BOOM. BOOM!! ×10

Rocks shattered.

Dust exploded outward as Gvardiol was pounded deeper into the wall with each strike.

"Yes! That's it! Keep going! Stronger! STRONGER!!"

Though the fight seemed one-sided in Danzo's favor—

Gvardiol's laughter and constant praise told a different story.

Something was off.

Danzo ignored every word.

He stayed focused, striking without pause.

Until ..

Suddenly, a dark fist appeared in front of his face mid-attack.

Too fast to react—

Gvardiol's counter landed clean.

Despite wearing the Silver Dragon Armor—

Danzo felt every muscle in his body scream in agony.

It was like getting hit by a freight train at full speed.

The sheer force hurled Danzo backward several meters.

He barely regained his balance, feet carving deep tracks in the stone.

Struggling to remain standing, he looked up ..

And saw Gvardiol step out of the crater in the wall, completely unscathed.

As if the battle hadn't even started.

As if that devastating assault had been a mere illusion.

But the pain in Danzo's body—

The destruction around them—

Told the truth.

Gvardiol was still laughing.

Still smiling.

He pointed at Danzo again.

"Once more."

"..."

"Try again!"

Gvardiol roared with exhilaration, craving more from Danzo.

"Light Maneuver..."

Responding to his challenge, Danzo summoned both Light Aura and Earth Aura, weaving them together to form four additional arms, each one radiating with brilliant white light.

He lunged forward, unleashing his full might.

Every punch landed with explosive force, detonating bursts of Aura across Gvardiol's body.

The clash had turned into a fierce brawl—

A contest of brute strength, nothing more.

Danzo attacked relentlessly.

Gvardiol stood firm, choosing only to defend.

No flashy techniques.

No grand displays of power.

Only raw violence—direct and unfiltered.

"Your movements aren't bad,"

Gvardiol accepted the flurry of strikes—six fists hammering him nonstop—without losing his smile.

He was enjoying this.

"Clearly, you've dedicated a serious portion of your life to training."

Despite his massive frame, one might expect Gvardiol to be slower.

But that assumption quickly crumbled.

Before Danzo realized it, another punch came from the side ..

A bandaged, monstrous fist crashed into his ribs, sending him staggering.

He barely stayed upright.

Just a normal punch—yet its impact was immense.

None of Danzo's blows had shaken Gvardiol.

But Gvardiol's casual strikes had Danzo reeling.

Still, Danzo pressed forward.

White flames erupted from his fists as he moved faster, struck harder ..

Each blow carried more desperation, more fury.

The force of his Aura shook Gvardiol's massive body with each impact,

While the cave around them cracked and trembled from the shockwaves.

Then .. another hit.

A lightning-fast punch slammed into Danzo's face.

But this time, he didn't falter.

He pushed forward.

Faster.

Stronger.

Light Aura surged from within him, making the Silver Dragon Armor shine ever brighter ..

As if refusing to be outdone by the monster before him.

"To reach this level with such limited talent... That's truly impressive!"

The fact that Gvardiol was still speaking so casually ..

Still praising him in the middle of this violent exchange ..

Made something inside Danzo snap.

"What do people like you know about struggling without talent?!"

Pouring every ounce of power into his right hand, His fist burned with light as he launched it forward like a missile.

"Light Maneuver: Sky-Shattering Fist!!"

The strike hit with cataclysmic force—

Amplified further by the Silver Dragon Armor.

The cavern trembled.

The ceiling cracked.

Dust exploded in all directions.

Danzo believed, if nothing else, that this attack would leave a mark.

But as the haze cleared ..

His hope was crushed.

Gvardiol was still standing.

He had caught the punch with a single hand.

Holding Danzo's fist in his grip, Gvardiol let out a booming laugh.

"Oh, I know all about people like you."

He clenched Danzo's hand ..

And unleashed his true power.

A sinister creak echoed from the armor.

Cracks began to spider across the once-mighty gauntlet.

"I've buried plenty of your kind with these very hands!"

With one hand, he crushed the gauntlet—

With the other, he punched.

One blow ..

And Danzo was sent flying, crashing violently into the stone wall.

This punch was unlike the ones before.

It left the chestplate of the armor shattered—

The gauntlet around Danzo's right hand, completely destroyed.

As he struggled to recover, Gvardiol was already in front of him ..

His body wrapped in dark, swirling aura.

"People like you don't survive in a world like this."

Danzo crossed his arms in an X as a shield ..

Just before a thunderous punch slammed into him again, Driving him deeper into the wall.

"We live in a world ruled by strength—nothing else!"

Blow after blow ..

Gvardiol pummeled Danzo, smashing him along with the stone behind him.

Pinned down by the sheer force,

Danzo clenched his teeth, his body glowing brighter with each strike.

"I already know that!!"

With a roar, he hurled himself into Gvardiol ..

Becoming a living projectile, forcing the giant to take a step back.

Danzo centered all his strength in his hands ..

His Aura flaring violently.

"That's why I've spent my whole life chasing it!!"

But this time, his attack wasn't aimed at Gvardiol ..

He struck upward.

"Chasing power!"

One blow ...

And the cavern ceiling shattered.

The roof caved in, debris raining down.

Danzo's plan was clear ..

Bury them both under the rubble, then escape through the chaos.

But Gvardiol wouldn't allow it.

In less than a heartbeat—

His shadow spread outward, engulfing the entire chamber.

Dark tendrils spiraled through the collapsing ceiling ..And with terrifying ease, they held it all in place.

The ceiling didn't fall.

The plan failed.

Danzo was still trapped—

And the monster hadn't even broken a sweat.

"A clever move... but cleverness won't save you from me."

Chapter 387: Danzo Smasher vs Gvardiol (2)

Gvardiol stepped forward, his body cloaked in dark Aura.

Danzo stood frozen.

He was shaken ..

That power...

It was eerily similar to what the Princess had shown several times before.

But this...

This was far more overwhelming.

Danzo unleashed his full strength in response ..The body he had honed over a lifetime.

A strength painstakingly refined, barrier after barrier, until he carved a name for himself among the best of his generation.

He threw everything he had at Gvardiol—

But his enemy received it all with an unmoving smile.

Gvardiol's body was... unnatural.

Wrapped in black bandages, immune to every attack.

Danzo couldn't leave a single scratch, no matter how hard he tried.

Gvardiol's laughter echoed, dominating the cavern.

"Try harder!!"

BOOM!!

Another punch—

And the Silver Dragon Armor cracked even further.

"FIGHT HARDER!!"

BOOM!!

Fractures spread violently across Danzo's armor.

His vision began to blur from the sheer force of the barrage.

Yet still, he didn't fall.

He stood his ground.

He kept exchanging blows with his opponent ...

Even though none of them left a mark.

He fought.

With everything he had.

With every ounce of will.

With every drop of blood.

And in the darkest moment of his life—

Danzo was betrayed by the one thing he trusted more than anything else.

His own body... gave out.

His strength... vanished.

And his armor—his last shield—

Failed him.

But worst of all...

His talent betrayed him.

The very thing that had never been enough...

That had always kept him one step below the monsters at the top.

Blow after blow rained down.

Eventually, the faceplate of his armor shattered .. Exposing Danzo's face for the first time.

Warm blood streamed down from his forehead, blinding his eyes.

Everything turned red.

The only other color that existed in his vision .. Was the black of Gvardiol's fist, slamming into him again... and again... and again.

His consciousness wavered.

His legs trembled.

He could barely remain standing against the relentless flurry.

Among the chaos ..cAmong the agony ..

One sound pierced through everything.

Laughter.

Gvardiol's laughter.

"Don't fall!!!"

He didn't want Danzo to surrender.

He wanted him to suffer—

To live a little longer... and break slowly.

It had always been a one-sided fight.

From beginning to end.

Fate had shown no mercy.

The elite students had been condemned to suffer. Every last one of them.

Snow, driven mad in his fight against V.

Ghost, struggling to survive against Darxler.

Sansa, battered by Beatrice's puppet.

And above all...

Danzo ..

Broken, piece by piece, by the monster named Gvardiol.

That suffering.

That struggle.

It was all reflected in one pair of eyes—

Watching from afar.

Thanks to the third-person perspective...

He saw them all.

He lived their pain with them,

One by one.

His body cloaked in a dark aura,

Frey Starlight sprinted across the barren desert of the Ultras continent,

Witnessing the torment of his only friends—

One after another.

He ran like a madman for what felt like forever...

And then,

He stopped.

A lifeless body lay before him.

Only the upper half remained.

The ground was stained with entrails and blood.

The intestines of the dead spilled out onto the dirt.

There lay Ragna Cloud,

Eyes wide open,

Staring blankly at the darkened sky.

Frey said nothing.

Silently, he knelt.

And gently closed the eyes of the friend who had already left this world.

Moments later... He stood once more.

Still silent.

From beginning to end.

But his face—

That face, darkened with wrath .

Spoke volumes.

He let the stored power in his body surge.

Aura flooded him like a raging storm.

Frey dashed forward with all his might,

Leaving Ragna's body behind—

To be swallowed by dust and silence.

He ran like a demon.

Driven by desperation.

Vision after vision ..

Bloody, hopeless scenes filled his mind.

But his focus..

His soul ..

Was fixed on one thing:

Danzo.

Every cell in Frey's body trembled.

Rage—for what he saw.

Fear—that he might lose them all before he could act.

And regret—burning, bitter regret ..

That he had been so close...

He'd been right there.

It had only been a few meters that separated them... not long ago.

He had already encountered him once ..

Back inside the strait, alongside Clana.

Back then, Frey chose not to strike.

He made the decision to retreat.

He let Gvardiol slip through his fingers...

He made that choice.

And now .. He might be about to pay the price for it.

Everything that had happened so far...

It was all part of the witch's game.

"Faster..."

Frey ran with everything he had.

"Faster!!"

He needed to reach them—before it was too late.

Then, just a few minutes later ..

He stopped.

He stood atop a ridge overlooking a vast, desolate plain.

And there—beneath him—

Marched the Ultras army, led by the same man who had killed Ragna...

Lawrence.

Frey had moved with such inhuman speed,

He caught up to them in what could only be described as a miracle.

Lawrence, with an army of a thousand men behind him ..

All of them elite warriors of the highest rank.

Chosen fighters of the Ultras .. A carefully assembled strike force for this mission.

They advanced slowly toward the battlefield where the elite class had just fought.

Their goal was simple—

To eliminate whoever remained.

And the combined aura that radiated from them .. Was something else entirely.

They were armed to the teeth.

Magical artillery at the ready.

Battle-hardened duelists and warriors—

Many of them at Rank S and above.

And leading them all...

The monster, Lawrence.

Whoever survived the battle from Frey's class... Would only find death awaiting them ahead.

Fully aware of all this ..

Frey Starlight gripped his blades.

He didn't know where his friends were anymore ..

He was completely lost.

He no longer had Selina's mark to guide him.

But he did know where the enemy was.

Taking a deep breath,

He steadied his wildly pounding heart.

He tried to silence the images that kept flashing through his mind—

One after another.

Then, he focused.

On the army before him.

The force that threatened their lives .. The elite class.

"What kind of strength does it take... to stand against a thousand men?"

A thousand top-blooded fighters. strong enough to start a war on their own.

This was the personal elite of the Ultras.

Under the sky of Earth ..

How many people could say they'd stand alone against such a force?

You could count them on one hand.

And Frey Starlight—

Was about to become one of them.

Step by step,

He began his approach.

"I can't let them pass."

If they did ..

His classmates would be slaughtered.

Frey could go around them.

Avoid them entirely.

But letting a force like this walk free...

Would bring disaster later.

Just like he'd let Gvardiol go before ..

And now paid the price.

He realized the same thing would happen again if he let this army pass untouched.

So now .. There was only one choice left.

"Slaughter every last one of those sons of bitches!!"

Step by step ..

He drew closer.

"Tear them apart. Bury them all!!"

If he wanted to save his friends...

He had to cut straight through that army—

Then go and rescue whoever was left.

Frey Starlight understood what he was about to do.

One thousand men.

He had never killed that many in his life.

And whether he could even do it .. Was a complete unknown.

But he would do it anyway.

Emptying his mind of everything else,

He focused entirely on them.

"This isn't one versus a thousand..."

Fighting to stay grounded in reason,

Frey Starlight made his decision.

"It's one versus one .. just a thousand times!"

And with that suicidal thought ..

His swords were drawn.

The battle had begun.

Frey Starlight, alone, charged toward the back of the marching army.. Ready to face them all... by himself.

And as he ran,

He prayed..With all his heart ..

That his friends could hold on a little longer.

Chapter 388: 1 vs 1000 (1)

— Frey Starlight's POV —

1 vs 1000.

With every step I took toward them, the same thought echoed in my mind again and again...

1 vs 1000!!!

My heart was torn between fear and worry—fear for my friends who were dying somewhere far away, and worry about whether I would be too late to help them. At the same time, doubt crept in.

I knew I had to stop these enemies by any means necessary. If I didn't, they would slaughter every last one of my companions.

Even if my friends somehow won their battles, they'd be far too exhausted to survive against a force like this.

1 vs 1000 ..

I approached them from behind, quietly.

Unaware of my presence, they marched forward in formation, dragging behind them massive magical cannons—weapons of mass destruction, prepared solely for our annihilation.

The only sound echoing through the desolate plain was the synchronized rhythm of their footsteps against the ground.

But that wasn't true.

The loudest sound... was my own heartbeat, pounding like thunder in my chest.

Clutching Balerion, the Black Terror, and Dark Sister, the Demon-Slayer, I gathered my breath and released a stream of hot air from my lungs.

I calmed myself as much as I could.

1 versus 1000...

'Can I really do this?'

I asked myself as I stared at the Dark Sister.

'I'm sure my father could've...'

The moment he crossed my mind, I saw his phantom.

Abraham Starlight.

My father, who soared in a realm of power beyond comprehension.

The way he looked at me, with those ghostly eyes, I understood what he meant to say.

"You still have a long way to go."

With a crooked smile, I let out a hollow laugh, realizing I was still at the very beginning.

But I had to do this.

If not me... then who will?

With unwavering determination, I summoned all the dark aura swirling inside me.

My body tensed, fully primed for battle.

Then I marched forward.

"This isn't 1 vs 1000... it's 1 vs 1, a thousand times over!"

Today, the world would know the name Frey Starlight.

...

...

...

The battle was about to begin—an absolute suicide mission.

Elsewhere, inside the Empire...

Millicent sat cross-legged atop the snowfield, eyes closed. A few moments later, a deep frown formed across her face.

"What the hell is going through his mind?!"

The others around her instantly noticed her reaction. After all, she was the only one who could observe what was happening in that distant land.

"What's wrong?"

Sir Alon, sitting before her and gathering his aura in preparation, asked calmly.

Millicent hesitated for a second before answering.

She had been tracking Frey Starlight's movements on the map this whole time—and now she realized something troubling.

"Frey Starlight is about to collide with the enemy..."

Her tone grew serious as she added the part that made her most uneasy.

"But... there are far too many of them. So many that I can't even count—at the very least, they number in the hundreds..."

The atmosphere immediately shifted. None of them could fathom what that young man was thinking.

...

...

...

The Ultras army, composed of elite blood warriors, was marching with perfect discipline—adorned in black armor engraved with red markings and carrying deadly weapons that spoke of their readiness for war.

They belonged to Lord Mirgo's army, stationed in the southern Nokron region.

Step by step, they advanced, targeting the lives of the Elite Class.

At the rear of the formation, one soldier moved steadily—neither tired nor weary.

He was lost in thought.

How would this mission end?

When would he return home?

What were the higher-ups truly planning with this war that had now fully ignited?

Being one of the elites, he had found himself dragged into some of the most important events of all.

Soldiers like him often died early in brutal wars.

But he wasn't worried—not really.

He was positioned at the rear, far from the real danger.

If the enemy wanted to reach him, they'd have to kill all 1000 soldiers ahead of him first.

That was why... he felt perfectly safe.

"I wonder when this will all be over..."

From beneath his dark helmet, he gazed up at the sky with a blank expression.

And when he finally looked down—

He was startled to see someone standing behind him.

But he was the last man in the formation. That shouldn't have been possible...

As he focused, he saw a young man .. barely eighteen, with white hair and dark, shadowed eyes.

Clutching two dark swords, the soldier instantly realized the young man standing before him wasn't an ally.

His hand darted to his weapon, instinctively trying to draw it—

But he barely touched the hilt before he collapsed.

"Huh...? Did I lose already?"

The thought barely formed before he noticed .. His body was still standing... but headless.

It was only then that he understood.

He was already dead.

...

"One."

With a single strike, Frey Starlight claimed his first kill.

His ambush sent a ripple through the nearby troops, and within seconds, dozens of swords were drawn as they rushed at him from every direction.

With blinding speed, Frey's hands moved like the brushstrokes of a mad painter.

And the battlefield—Ultras territory—became his canvas.

But this artist had only one color to use: red.

With a single slash, he cleaved two more soldiers in half, advancing forward.

"Three."

The oppressive pressure of his aura began to alert the rest of the army.

Now, they knew.

Frey parried the oncoming blades with surgical precision .. every swing of his swords brought another man down.

"Four. Five."

And just as the realization struck ...

A warhorn roared across the battlefield like a demonic scream, freezing the entire army in place.

But Frey didn't hear it.

His focus was absolute. His senses had drowned out everything irrelevant.

In his world, there was no horn. No sky. No earth.

Only the enemy.

Surrounded from all sides, a tide of soldiers crashed toward him, conjuring elemental attacks and striking with deadly coordination.

Frey cut through them like a storm.

His slashes were wild—decapitating some, splitting others straight down the middle, carving torsos apart without pause.

The warmth of their blood soaked his hands.

The stench of iron filled his lungs.

There was no turning back now.

"Enemy! There's an intruder at the rear!"

"Reform ranks! It's just one man—take him down!"

Panic spread through the formation. Meanwhile, from the front lines, the elite warriors of the Ultras snarled in annoyance.

"What's all this noise? Are they struggling with a single brat?"

The voice came from one of the Ultras' SS-ranked elites. He frowned at the growing chaos, worried Empeyan Lawrence—marching ahead without a care—might grow irritated.

None of them realized...

A catastrophe had already begun.

...

...

...

— Frey Starlight's POV —

There are things you only feel once you throw yourself into the heart of battle.

Emotions you'll never know... until the blood starts to fly.

The adrenaline that dragged my body forward.

The filth of enemy blood clinging to my skin.

The fatigue burning through my arms with every swing.

"Huff...!"

I exhaled violently, hot steam erupting from my lungs.

I was moving like a madman, tearing through the battlefield with reckless abandon.

Celestial projectiles constantly formed above, pelting me with every kind of long-range magic.

On the ground, swordsmen and spearmen chased me relentlessly.

Slash!

With every swing, I sent another man straight to hell.

"I have to kill them all in one strike."

If I didn't, and one survived for a second blow, I'd be swarmed and slaughtered on the spot.

Slash!

Blood splattered. Flesh flew.

"I can't let them surround me."

I kept running—swinging, dodging, slashing—sending wave after wave of dark blades toward my enemies.

By now, I'd killed more than I could count.

Dodging explosions and flames.

Evading spears and blades.

Butchering them, one by one.

Minutes passed.

And before I knew it, I was covered in blood and grime, from my white hair to the soles of my feet.

The twisted irony?

None of it was mine.

It was all theirs.

Chapter 389: 1 vs 1000 (2)

A searing heat flared in my chest, like fire devouring my insides.

I gasped, my mouth wide open, drawing in desperate gulps of air ..

Only to exhale them as scalding steam, mixing with the blood mist around me.

"Huuuuff..."

How many had I killed already?

Slash!!!

"Faster!!!"

I cut them down—one after another.

Their mouths moved, but I couldn't hear a thing.

Maybe they were screaming... a final cry before they left this world.

"Faster!!"

I left only the afterimages behind me, moving at the absolute limit of what this body could achieve.

I was struck dozens of times, but blocked them all.

It felt like I could see the future—dodging was effortless.

Their combat styles, their movements...

It was as if I had seen them all before.

My body shimmered with a black glow, shadow-like in nature.

My movements were incomprehensible.

Too fast.

Too precise.

Too powerful.

One strike. Certain death.

The Ultras no longer felt they were fighting a mere boy of eighteen...

But a martial artist who had trained for centuries ..

A demon forged through countless wars.

But that couldn't have been further from the truth.

> [Shadow Adaptation: 3/7]

Slash right. Evade left.

Leap. Turn. Dodge forward. Faster!

Stronger!

It was as if some phantom was guiding me across the battlefield.

My mind had reached an unnatural state of focus, completely detached from reality.

"Faster!!"

How much time had passed?

"Faster!!!"

How many had I killed?

I didn't know.

But whenever I paused for a second and looked behind me, I saw the nightmare I had carved with my own hands ..

Severed heads.

Spilled entrails.

Shattered chests and limbs scattered across the dirt.

A lake of crimson blood pooling beneath their corpses.

"I've killed so many..."

And when I turned forward again..

They were still coming.

An endless swarm of Ultras pouring in from every direction, flooding my vision.

"And there's still more..."

I inhaled sharply—then surged forward again.

My eyes darted in all directions.

Hawk Eyes swept across the battlefield, scanning every enemy with deadly clarity.

"Hufffffff..."

Exhaling more of that searing, bloody steam, I continued the slaughter.

"Don't stop!"

I had to move faster.

Those visions still danced in front of me—

My comrades, fighting for their lives.

"Faster!!!"

At some point, the whites of my eyes turned blood-red.

And reality slipped from my grasp completely.

I knew I had reached the strong ones—

Because I could no longer kill them in a single strike.

Now, I was surrounded by S-Class warriors.

Battle-hardened elites who struck with deafening force.

My body boiled.

My armor—heavy and suffocating—was the first to go.

I tore it off and tossed it aside.

My face was drenched in blood.

I tried to wipe it with my elbow... only to find that it, too, was soaked.

Above, black crows descended, feasting happily on the corpses I had left them.

Their caws, the stench of blood, and the blistering heat of war ...

They blended into one.

The battlefield was now a pit of death.

Corpses piled high.

Blood forming rivers beneath my feet.

My enemies were growing stronger with every second.

Shadow Adaptation allowed me to block most of their attacks, but the faster ones began landing hits now and then...

Yet I felt nothing.

My eyes were fixed on only one thing—

Them.

"Kill them!!"

Faster.

"Kill them all!!"

I heard a scream.

At first, I thought it came from them.

But even after slicing their throats, the scream didn't stop.

Only when I looked closer...

Did I realize it was me.

A war cry.

A desperate howl.

A thirst for blood I had never known before.

Blood flooded the ground beneath me.

Trading blows at blistering speed with their strongest fighters, I came to a terrifying realization...

This wasn't even close to the end.

They were still coming.

Every second, more and more Ultras charged toward me ..

This was what it meant to fight 1 vs 1000.

I kept running like a madman.

My body was breaking down.

I was exhausted...

But I never stopped.

In that place... I chased his phantom.

The phantom of my father—who had already torn through the Ultras' army with a speed far beyond mine, and a strength far greater than I could ever match.

Trying to keep up with his shadow, I saw him glance back at me now and then.

"You still have a long way to go... a long, long way."

With a bloody smile and a body on the verge of bursting, I kept moving forward.

"I know."

I knew just how far behind I still was.

But I wouldn't stop.

I wouldn't fall.

No matter what it took... this back would never touch the ground.

"Hooooooooooooof..."

The Aura of Darkness and Shadow flared stronger than ever before, reaping the lives of the Ultras one by one.

The mighty army of Nokron found itself in a state unlike anything it had ever experienced.

"Surround him! Keep attacking!!"

Many of them screamed.

"He's just one man! He'll wear out eventually!!"

They brought out magical cannons, prepared to fire...

But they never got the chance.

I was already too close.

At this range, weapons of mass destruction were useless.

I had killed so many of them.

So many...

And when I finally stopped again, I found my body in a wretched state.

Dozens of cuts, burns, bruises—

Every kind of wound imaginable.

Bathed in red, my blood mixed with theirs, each passing second worsening the burning sensation in my flesh.

But I paid my injuries no mind.

This body would heal.

It always had.

And it always would.

"Come at me!! All of you!!"

It was absolute madness.

The speed at which I tore through them made no sense at all.

What swept over them wasn't a boy...

It was a whirlwind of blades.

An overwhelming force.

A monstrous power.

That's when the Ultras realized...

They were fighting a real monster.

....

Somewhere else in the world...

With wide, disbelieving eyes, Millicent stared blankly into the distance—trying to deny what her senses were showing her.

"He killed... all of them? Alone?"

These weren't weaklings.

They were the Highbloods.

The elite of the elite—soldiers one could rely on in any war.

But their enemy... was simply too strong.

The mages were rendered useless the moment the anti-magic activated.

The Wave Controllers couldn't even touch me due to my speed.

The duelists and melee fighters—

All of them were shredded by Shadow Adaptation, which allowed me to deflect everything thrown my way.

No matter what they tried, no matter how desperately they fought...

My blade would cut them all down.

"Monster..."

One of them shouted.

"He's a monster!!!"

A true monster unleashed upon them by fate.

Then ..

In just a few seconds, a massive shadow loomed over the battlefield.

And when that colossal fist slammed into me, sending me crashing away with immense force—

Everyone realized the other monster had arrived.

The Ghoul.

Lawrence.

...

"AHAHAHAHAHA!! Another one! More of the elite class!"

A stronger warrior!!"

Towering at over six meters tall, with a destructive aura reaching SS rank—

Lawrence stood like a giant among his troops.

That single bloodshot eye of his locked onto me, gleaming with a monstrous thirst for blood.

But he didn't realize...

He was staring at nothing more than the afterimage I had left behind.

Because in less than a heartbeat—

I was already standing before him.

Chapter 390: 1 vs 1000 (3)

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Mirage."

In the blink of an eye, a thousand shadow clones struck him down.

Their blades tore through his flesh with terrifying ease—

The same flesh Ragna had failed to even scratch.

Lawrence let out a monstrous howl,

but his body regenerated at a terrifying pace—morphing into something even more grotesque and hideous.

Spewing dozens of red tendrils, the ghoul lashed out wildly ...

Destroying the battlefield, uncaring of friend or foe.

Those tendrils were unbelievably fast and devastating ..

Everything they touched was reduced to nothing more than bloody pulp.

And yet—

I found myself charging toward him once again.

Wielding both of my swords, I tore through those filthy tendrils at lightning speed ...

His black blood splattering and mixing with the red of his own soldiers.

I kept cutting.

Again and again.

Lawrence kept screaming ..

Each time his body changed, twisting into new, horrifying shapes.

He turned into a grotesque form covered in dozens of mouths.

Then, the ghoul tried to devour me—

And this time, he succeeded.

His many maws clamped shut around me, unleashing a terrifying crunch that echoed across the battlefield...

Slash!!!!

In less than a second, dozens of violet arcs exploded from within those gaping maws—ripping them into countless shreds.

With bloodshot eyes, I lunged at the ghoul once more, cutting him into ribbons again and again.

Black blood poured from Lawrence's body, but each time, he regenerated—adopting a new form to clash with me once more.

That monstrous smile of his never wavered.

He kept howling.

Dozens of fists and massive mouths formed around him as the ghoul attacked from every direction.

Lawrence... wasn't ordinary.

He was one of the hybrid demons with the highest purity among them.

Unlike others like Gvardiol or Mirgo, who were half-demon, half-human—

Lawrence was more like 80% demon... and only 20% man.

That made him a true monster.

A deadly threat with near-instantaneous regeneration.

A difficult opponent, no doubt—

But that didn't matter to me.

His attacks left me with countless wounds.

And that only made him grin wider, tasting my blood with delight.

"Are you happy just because you managed to wound me?"

I asked coldly, murderous intent pouring from my voice as I resumed slicing him apart.

"You're not the only one who can regenerate."

For a moment, my body was drenched in blood ..wounded and broken, every breath weighing me down.

But the next second—

Those grotesque wounds began to heal on their own.

I increased my assault speed several times over, trying to turn him into nothing but minced flesh.

...

Shadow Adaptation: 3/7

Phase One: Adapt to the enemy's style and counterattack regardless of the situation.

Phase Two: Extreme regeneration—perfect cellular reconstruction using the user's Aura to rebuild the body again and again.

Phase Three: ???

---

"I think I'm finally starting to understand this ability..."

With a bloody smile, I fought like a madman, caring little for what might happen to me.

"Let's see who's faster!"

Slash!!!!

I fired arc after arc of dark energy like a lunatic ..

Tearing the ghoul's body apart without pause, forcing his black blood to spill endlessly.

"My blades... or that ridiculous regeneration of yours!!"

Both Lawrence and I screamed as we launched ourselves at one another again.

A roaring monster over six meters tall—

Versus one man, who carved through his flesh without end.

The earth shook beneath us as his giant mouths kept trying to devour me.

And each time I cut him, Lawrence grew even larger.

With a thunderous roar that shook the sky, the ghoul hurled me away with all his might—uncaring for the soldiers caught in his rampage.

Still, I kept leaping, dodging, slashing—

Dark Aura bursting nonstop from my blade.

Again and again, I tore into that nearly immortal body of his with overwhelming speed and unrelenting power.

After attacking me from all sides with his monstrous mouths and giant tendrils—

Lawrence realized he was at a serious disadvantage.

That's when he bellowed with all the rage he could muster:

"Attack him!!!

All of you!!!"

He commanded the last of his remaining soldiers.

They were all powerful captains—

Ones who had fled earlier, too afraid of getting caught in the ghoul's slaughter.

But now... he was summoning them back.

"But... sir..."

Some hesitated, but Lawrence let out a louder roar as he kept attacking.

"Kill him now or I'll kill you myself!!!"

His bloodthirsty killing intent fell upon them like a curse.

And in the next moment, the last of the Ultras charged—

Rushing into the battlefield now covered in gaping maws and slicing tendrils.

Their swords burned with Aura as they closed in, surrounding me alongside the tendrils.

All of them were ranked above S ..

Making it nearly impossible to hold them off while still dealing with Lawrence.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! ×10!!

I found myself fending off all of them at once .. Countering with a storm of blades.

But then ..

One of Lawrence's tendrils slipped right through his own soldiers,

Killing them in the process,

And tore into the right side of my body without warning.

He kept attacking,

Completely indifferent to his troops—

Using them as disposable meat shields to distract me.

As they screamed in horror, faces twisted by fear, I was assaulted from every direction.

I managed to block many attacks ..

But far too many made it through.

Blood gushed from every wound,

My organs nearly spilling out.

The damage was catastrophic.

Deep, devastating wounds.

Their swords pierced my flesh—

And through them... Lawrence attacked as well.

I felt my body begin to fall,

Slowly tipping backward—

Until I collapsed toward the ground.

But just before my back could hit the bloodstained, filthy ground ...

I somehow caught myself.

Mere centimeters from the earth soaked in gore and filth...

I forced my body to stop.

Eyes bloodshot, body torn open by blades and tendrils that had pierced me endlessly...

I pushed forward, dragging myself upright once more.

"I... won't fall!!!"

I won't lose.

I won't fall.

I won't allow it.

Not while those images flash before my eyes...

The image of Danzo, bleeding just as much—if not more—somewhere far from here.

"I won't fall!!!"

With a defiant scream, I spread both my blades wide, forcing them all back as violet lines surged across my torn body.

"Ignition!!!"

In less than a second ..

Darkness swallowed the world.

And in the next moment—

A torrent of violet Aura erupted, engulfing the entire battlefield in an explosion that incinerated both the Ultras and Lawrence behind them.

The massive pillar of Aura soared skyward, shaking the ground and obliterating the last remnants of the Ultras ..

Tearing away a large chunk of Lawrence's body, Forcing a monstrous scream from his throat as he leapt away from the blast.

But before he could land—

I crashed into him like a falling meteor.

"You're not going anywhere!!!"

With both swords in hand, I swung at full force.

Ripping through his filthy flesh again and again—

My screams mixed with his agonized roars.

He tried to strike with his tendrils—

But I severed them all.

Him along with them.

Standing atop his broken body,

I kept slashing, kept tearing him apart—

Faster.

Harder.

My strikes far outpaced his vaunted regeneration.

And then ...

Within less than a minute ..

The ghoul's monstrous body finally burst apart.

Revealing the scrawny young man squirming at my feet.

I stood over a pool of red and black blood,

My body ruined, my breath ragged...

I stared down at Lawrence,

Now screaming in fear—muttering incoherent words between broken sobs.

His arms... gone.

His legs... gone.

The ghoul...

Couldn't regenerate anymore.

"Aya... ayayayayaya!!"

The filthy demon wailed.

A shriek that pierced my skull.

So without hesitation ..

I severed his head with a single slash.

Letting his final blood soak the cursed soil.

"That's it... hooofff... the end..."

I staggered, barely able to stand.

Leaning on my swords,

I dragged myself through the field of corpses and rivers of blood...

Away from the pit of hellfire and ruin.

I walked on,

My body broken—my soul drained.

"I have to reach them..."

I had to move faster.

"I have to get to him..."

Danzo...

"I have to help him..."

I could barely see ahead ..

Staggering... exhausted... shattered.

"I did it..."

I'd made it.

"I killed a thousand men..."

I did it.

I really did it.

Trying to steady myself...

That fleeting feeling of salvation didn't last long.

Because the moment I killed a thousand men ..

I slammed headfirst into the next wall.

I stopped in my tracks—

My face worn, my eyes disbelieving.

I stared...

At the old man standing in front of me.

Tattered robes.

A single blade.

An old man who stared at me just as disbelieving.

"What... are you?"

He asked—his hand resting atop the hilt of his sword.

This life.

This fate.

No sooner had I survived my brutal war...

Than they threw me, without mercy, into the next one.

Before Mirgo,

Lord of the Dark Hive...

An Ultras Lord standing between me...

And the ones I had to reach.

This life...

Kept cornering me from every side ...

Even to the very end.