VILLAIN 391

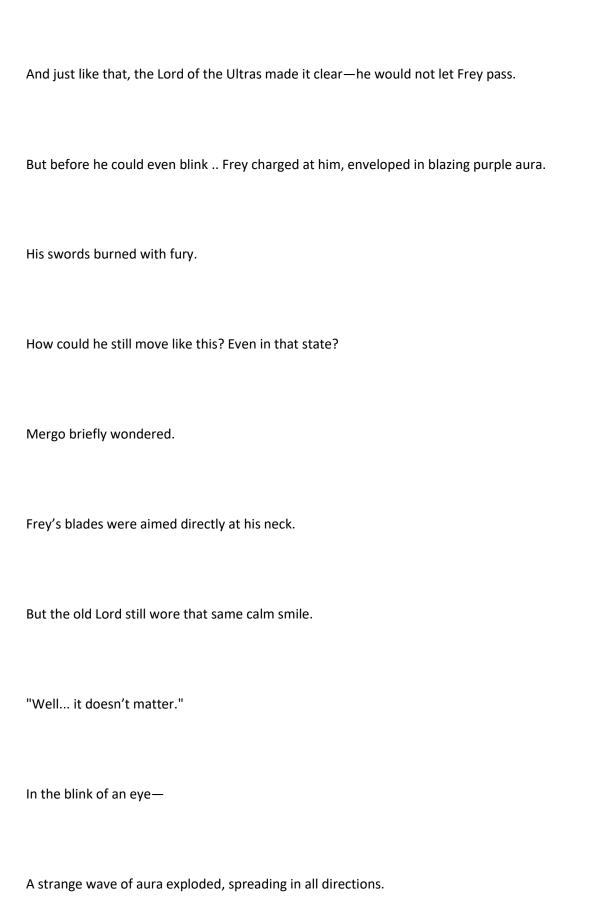
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Chapter 391: Frey starlight vs Mergo (1)
Life was never fair.
No matter how hard you tried, no matter how much you sacrificed to reach something
In the end, you'd crash against the painful truth, realizing your failure.
Even after defeating an army of over a thousand Ultras, with the ogre Lawrence at their head, Frey now found himself standing before a monster far more terrifying
Mergo, the Lord of the Ultras, said to be the strongest among them.
Here, atop a blood-soaked battlefield, surrounded by scattered corpses
Bodies that had become nothing more than a feast for the crows
The two stood face to face over a crimson pool, tainted with black.
Frey Starlight vs Mergo.

The Lord of the Ultras had just asked him a question
"Who are you?"
Who is this young man who annihilated such overwhelming numbers alone?
What is the secret of the Victoriad's hero, the one who climbed from the bottom to reach what no one else had?
Those questions haunted Mergo as he tried to assess the boy standing before him.
But Frey didn't respond.
He couldn't bring himself to.
His feet, sunken in the pool of blood, made it feel like he stood in a swamp—
Even walking felt like dragging a mountain.

His armor had been discarded long ago, leaving his upper body bare, soaked in blood, There was no part of him left unscathed.
Just standing was a challenge.
His blood-soaked eyes could barely see anymore.
His swords once an extension of his body felt heavy now.
Each step drained what little strength he had left.
And now, he was facing one of the strongest Lords of the Ultras.
The smell of blood.
The exhaustion.
The dead.



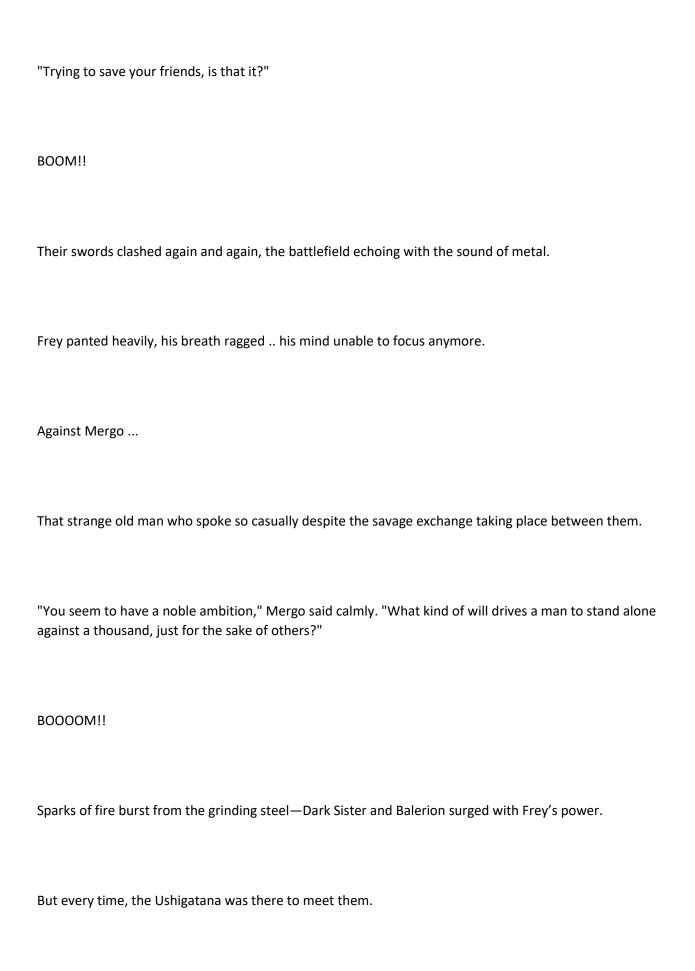




Frey had been a heartbeat away from slicing Mergo's neck But in the very next moment, the old man was already behind him.
"Even if you were in perfect condition the outcome wouldn't have changed."
At that instant—
Blood exploded from Frey's arm.
His right hand, along with the Dark Sister, had been severed.
Mergo was too fast.
So fast, Frey hadn't even seen or felt the strike until his hand was gone.
The old Lord had intended to end it quickly.
But what he didn't expect—

Was Frey grabbing his severed hand before it hit the ground and forcing it back into place.
In less than a second, an impossible scene unfolded Flesh fused with flesh, and a violet light surged from the wound, reattaching the limb as if it had never been lost.
And as soon as it was restored
Black flames ignited from Frey's swords.
A roaring storm of aura erupted from his blades, surging toward Mergo.
The latter blocked it easily But his expression shifted to seriousness.
That bloody monster had come at him again, relentless.
His severed hand had returned.
As if nothing had ever happened.

"Interesting," Mergo muttered.
Their blades clashed—Frey's twin swords against the Ushigatana.
Mergo fought without any difficulty, blocking every strike, exchanging rapid blows.
Legendary blades rang out, steel against steel, in a violent rhythm Between Frey, who attacked like a madman,
And Mergo, who parried everything with terrifying ease.
"Why do you fight with such ferocity, boy?"
BOOM!
Both moved at blinding speed.
Mergo kept retreating, while Frey chased after him with relentless fury, trying to land a strike But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't touch him.



Their hands became weapons of mass destruction, carving through the air, leaving trails of clashing aura behind them.
BOOOM!!!
Again and again, they collided—
Each trying to overpower the other.
Face-to-face.
An old man smiling
And a blood-soaked youth who looked more monster than man.
"You intend to push through no matter the cost, don't you?" Mergo said.
"You believe that if you give everything—absolutely everything—you might succeed."

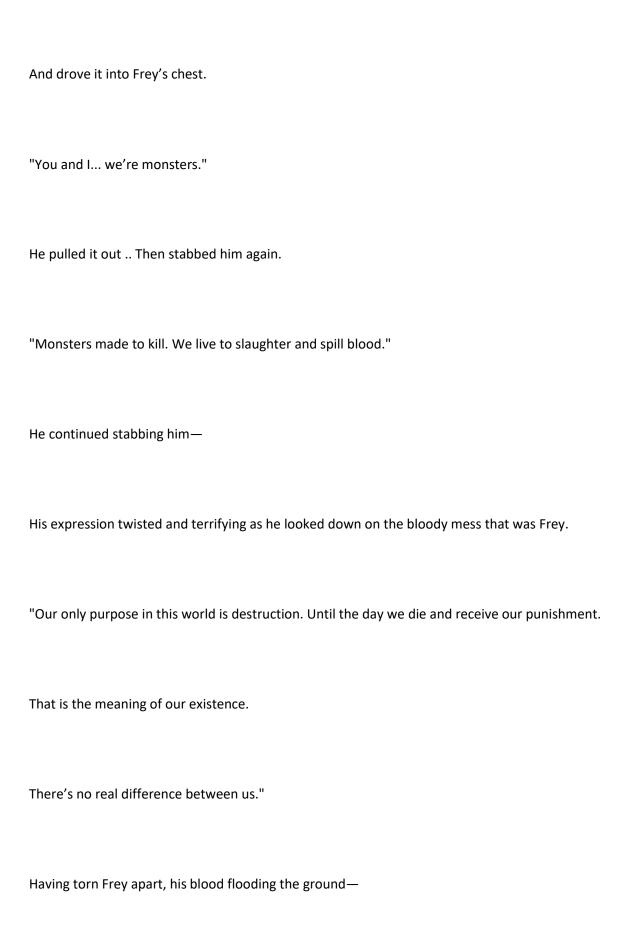
Still smiling, Mergo slowly opened his dark eyes, revealing a terrifying glow beneath.
"How naïve you are, Frey Starlight."
SLAASH!!
From out of nowhere, Mergo unleashed dozens of slashes, ripping into Frey's skin and exploding blood in every direction.
But he didn't stop.
He continued the merciless onslaught.
"Do you see yourself as some kind of hero, Frey Starlight?"
With one mighty strike, Mergo sent Frey flying Then blinked behind him in an instant and tore through him again.
"You're wrong, boy.



With brutal speed, Mergo struck Frey down to the ground and stomped on his chest with crushing force.
Lying beneath his boot, Frey's body was torn apart, deep wounds carved into him from head to toe.
He glared up with bloodshot eyes—
As Mergo leaned in, pressing down harder.
"Just like you have something to fight for
Each one of them did too."
The corpses littering the field weren't savage Ultras.
They were soldiers of the Highblood—men who had lived with honor and kindness.
"You think you have the right to judge them?

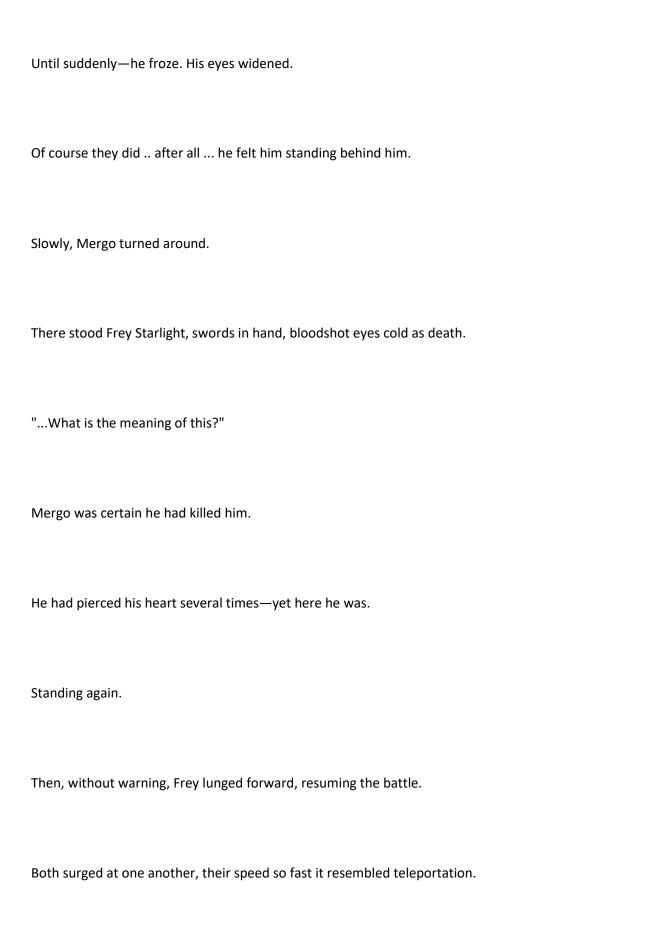
To kill them so you can save your friends?
Absurd."
Mergo ground his heel harder into Frey's chest.
"Look at them, Frey Starlight!!
You killed them!
You killed them all!!"
His voice boomed with rage as he pressed down.
"Each of them had a story waiting to be told And you severed their threads before they could even begin."
"Whether blessed or damned
They died with dreams still clinging to their bones."

"How many children will grow up without their fathers because of you?"
"How many men striving for success had that very dream ripped from them?"
"Some were basking in the warmth of family
And you ended it.
Some were learning to embrace solitude
And you erased their existence."
"You killed them with your own hands, Frey Starlight.
So what kind of selfish arrogance makes you believe you're worthy To even think about saving anyone else?"
Mergo grabbed the hilt of his Ushigatana—





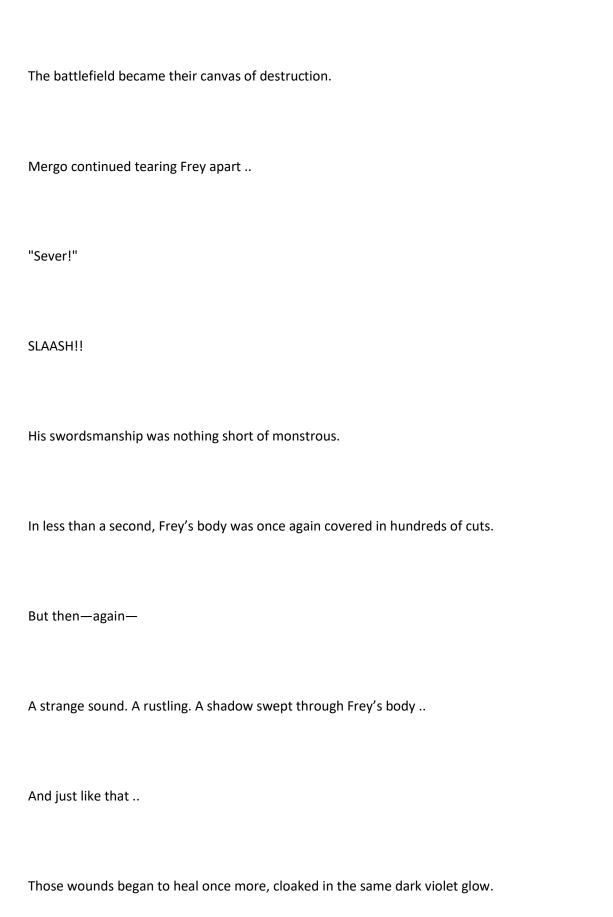
That
That was what truly made him snap.
"Now then where did that beast sever Lawrence's head?"
Mergo stepped deeper into the sea of blood, one step at a time, searching for his subordinate.
"That boy possesses the highest purity among us all—and regeneration that rivals even the strongest demons. He'll survive even if only a fragment of him remains."
Lawrence was nothing more than a fifteen-year-old child, with barely any experience.
He was more like a beast that fought purely on instinct And that instinct, despite his raw power, wasn't enough.
Mergo had no intention of letting him die so easily.
Unbothered, he kept searching



A flurry of strikes echoed across the bloodstained land.
Mergo couldn't understand it
Most of Frey's wounds had already healed.
"What are you?"
Frey attacked faster than before, relentlessly, trying to land a fatal blow.
But Mergo was still far quicker.
He bent space around him, teleporting freely—effortlessly avoiding everything—
And appeared behind Frey with a smile.
"crevice."

SLAASH!!!

In less than a second, more than a hundred cutting marks exploded across Frey's body A brutal technique using the Ushigatana's unique spatial mastery.
Blood gushed out violently.
Then
The wounds caught fire in a dark violet glow
And healed.
Mergo's eyes twitched in disbelief.
Frey dashed toward him again, and their chaotic speed duel resumed.
Both had become blurs—too fast to follow.
Slashing and countering .



"Hahaha! Are you some kind of zombie?!"
They clashed again.
And again.
But then—Mergo noticed something.
"He's getting faster?"
With each passing second Frey's speed increased.
"Crevice!!"
Mergo unleashed hundreds of slashes in an instant.
That was the power of the Ushigatana:

A sword that could attack from every direction with invisible cuts in the blink of an eye.
It was the same attack that had destroyed Frey's body again and again.
But this time
Something changed.
Just before the slashes could connect—
A dark aura erupted from Frey, and he moved.
Weaving through them with an unnatural precision Dodging invisible attacks that no one should be able to see.
Somehow
Frey avoided the unavoidable.
Mergo laughed madly.

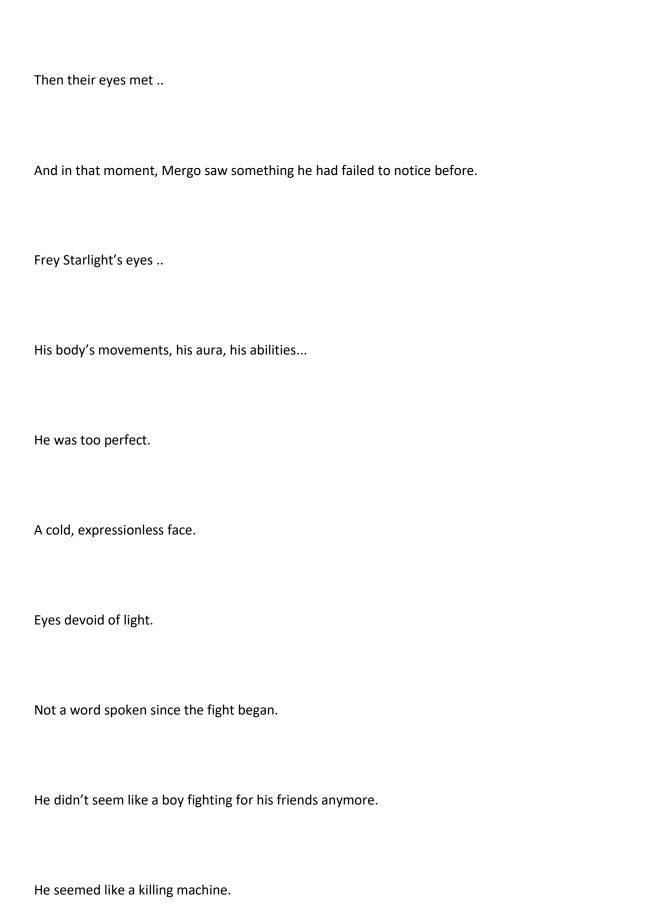
"You can see them, Frey Starlight!!"
His hand moved with blinding speed, unleashing another flurry of attacks.
"You can see my sword!!"
This time, Mergo went all out—unleashing his full power.
With a single swing, he released 100 invisible crescent blades.
Then with a second—200 more.
Then a third.
Then a fourth.
And a fifth.

By the tenth swing thousands of slashes rained down like a storm, covering the entire battlefield.
The corpses, the ground, the mountains, even the air itself—
Everything was torn apart.
And especially
Frey Starlight.
Though he managed to dodge some
The sheer volume of slashes was too overwhelming.
His body was shredded.
Torn to pieces like meat on a butcher's slab
Mergo's invisible blades showed no mercy.

Then—less than a second later—
That same dark aura ignited again, wrapping around Frey's mangled form
And healing him.
He stood again.
Mergo narrowed his eyes.
"Again that strange power"
Mergo spoke in confusion, watching the young man whose regeneration now mirrored that of Lawrence.
And once again The battle resumed.
Mergo unleashed another barrage of cutting attacks, but Frey began dodging them with increasing efficiency and greater speed.

"He's seeing my attacks and adapting to them every single time."
As their clash continued, a realization dawned on Mergo.
"He's adjusting to them."
That strange dark glow—
That combat style unlike anything he'd ever seen before
Mergo now understood that his opponent was anything but ordinary.
[Shadow Adaptation: 3/7]
Against a monster like Mergo, ranked SS+ The true power of the Shadow Adaptation was finally beginning to show.
A terrifying ability that made Frey resistant to nearly everything his enemies threw at him And when paired with his uncanny regeneration, it created a force Mergo could no longer dismiss.

Frey had become a question mark.
An anomaly Mergo had so far handled with ease Yet now, Frey's speed and strength had grown at such an alarming rate that reaching Mergo was no longer a matter of if, but when.
"This can't be happening"
An eighteen-year-old boy
Wielding two blazing swords imbued with strange powers.
Looked more terrifying than the demons Mergo had once faced.
It defied reason.
Frey had shattered every limit, far surpassing what should be possible.
Their blades continued clashing amid a battlefield consumed by flames. The devastation from their collisions scarred the very land.

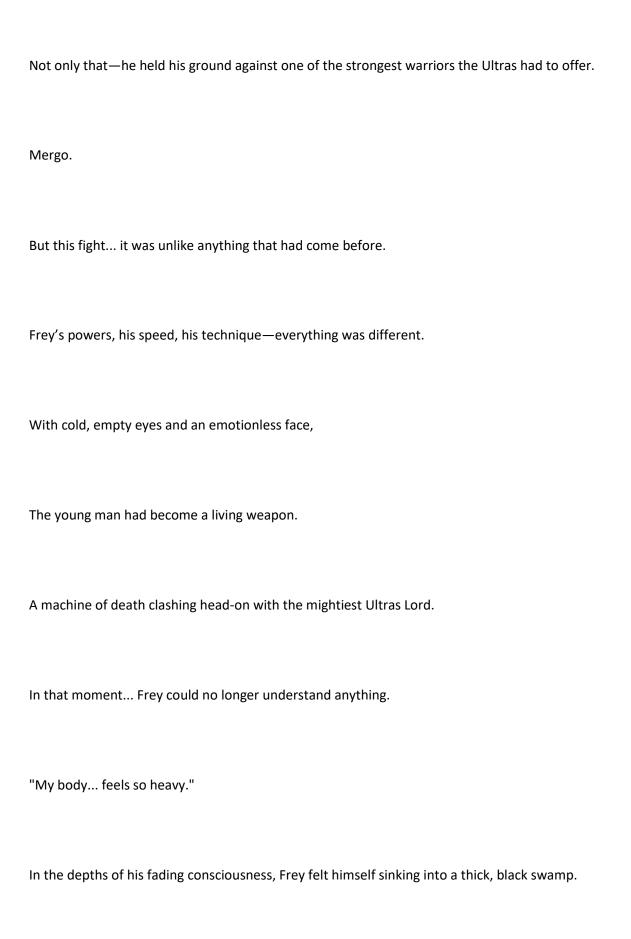


An automaton.	
Not the same human who had once fought with conviction and emotion	
But something else entirely.	
Their auras exploded again as they pushed against each other, and Mergo lau	ghed out loud.
"You what are you?"	
Was he still fighting Frey Starlight?	
Or had that cold sword become something entirely different?	
Frey didn't answer.	
He just kept fighting—harder than before.	

Regenerating again and again.
That dark violet light overtaking his face.
His silence was louder than words.
Mergo had been right all along
That boy wasn't human anymore.
He was a monster.
A true monster who had finally found his way to this battlefield.
After all, it was impossible for someone who had just fought a thousand men
To then fight like this with such power—
Such cold fury.

"What the hell are you?! Frey Starlight!!"
Mergo roared, launching himself forward with full strength, unleashing everything he had.
The battle erupted into an entirely new realm of destruction.
The mangled corpses around them were desecrated even further—collateral damage from a fight between beasts.
Mergo vs. Frey Starlight.
A terrifying clash between a young man and an old warrior Both wielding blades for similar reasons
But standing on opposite sides of a world that had forced them to fight.
This was the peak of the elite class's struggle
And a brutal reminder

That their suffering was far from over.
Chapter 393: The Peak of the Witch's Game
The final round of the Witch's Game had reached its peak.
Devastating battles erupted across the land, leaving behind trails of destruction and bloodshed blood of both the invading Elite Class and the native Ultras.
But among all the chaos, one battle stood above the rest in brutality and power:
Frey Starlight vs Mergo.
Their battlefield was none other than the sea of corpses Frey had carved through not long ago.
A frantic, chaotic clash—so fast-paced that it resembled teleportation.
Two monsters locked in a death match, each trying to tear the other apart.
Somehow, Frey managed to survive.



A sea of darkness slowly consuming his soul.
In that place, his mind was blank, paralyzed Unable to move, as if drugged into submission.
Drunk on fatigue and grief, Frey couldn't remember a thing.
It felt like a dream.
A nightmare he had been forced to live through until now.
And the nightmare wasn't over.
Even in that state, the third-person perspective of the system allowed him to glimpse what his friends were enduring.
And his eyes, more than anyone, settled on Danzo.
His comrade.

A fighter who had given more to this life than anyone else.
The man who stood by his side without ever expecting anything in return.
Someone Frey had called a true friend
Now dying slowly tortured by Gvardiol.
"I have to keep fighting"
Frey's lips moved with effort.
His body was shattered, bloodied, exhausted.
He had already given everything
Fought with every last drop of strength.
There wasn't a single part of him left unscathed.

But life was cruel.
Mergo was too strong for him to face in such a condition.
He had fought.
And lost.
He knew this.
But he refused to give in.
"I have to stand again."
He didn't want to watch it anymore.
Had suffered enough.

He didn't want to live while others died right before his eyes.

He knew he wouldn't be allowed to die—
Those above wouldn't permit it.
He was still needed
A crucial piece in a plan far greater than his understanding.
And that was the most terrifying part.
Unable to die,
Forced to live on, Frey found himself watching as he slowly lost himself, again and again.
The trauma he endured
It was pushing him further and further.

Slowly but surely
Frey Starlight was becoming the monster everyone had feared.
"I don't want this"
To live and watch himself transform into a soulless beast
A killing machine born for a purpose he never chose.
Frey didn't want that to happen.
He tried to rise again.
To fight harder.
With more power.
With more rage.

To give everything he had left
To reach them
To save them.
He tried to defy fate.
To resist its pull with everything he had.
But reality was cruel.
And slowly, Frey's consciousness drifted into darkness.
As if dozens of shadowy threads wrapped around him, Binding him in place
He realized he had lost.
But the truth was far different from what he believed in those final moments.

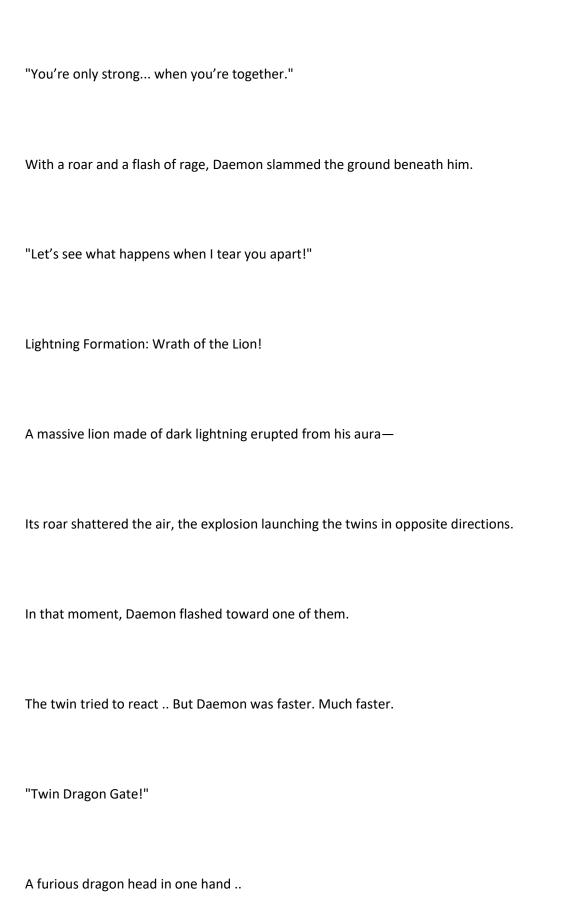
Even as his mind fell into dreams—
His body stood.
Still fighting.
With more rage.
More power.
More speed.
Just as he had wanted.
That body kept fighting until the very end
For the dream its owner couldn't realize.

And Frey never knew
That he had already become the monster.
Frey Starlight vs Mergo.
No doubt—This was the hardest battle yet.

Each member of the Elite Class had their own struggles
Their own battles to survive ever since they were swallowed by the red gate.
Scattered and isolated, every one of them found themselves forced to fight for their lives.

Among them
A high-speed battle broke out in a remote mountainous region, far from the others.
Daemon Valerion, clad in his golden dragon armor, charged forward at blinding speed.
Two men pursued him relentlessly
Twin brothers, identical in face and form, each wielding a curved blade.
They struck again and again with terrifying precision, their swords humming with deadly intent.
Daemon found himself facing two of the Ultras' elite both easily A+ rank fighters.
Their technique far outclassed his.
But his Golden Dragon Armor amplified his physical abilities to the point of becoming a one-man force of destruction.



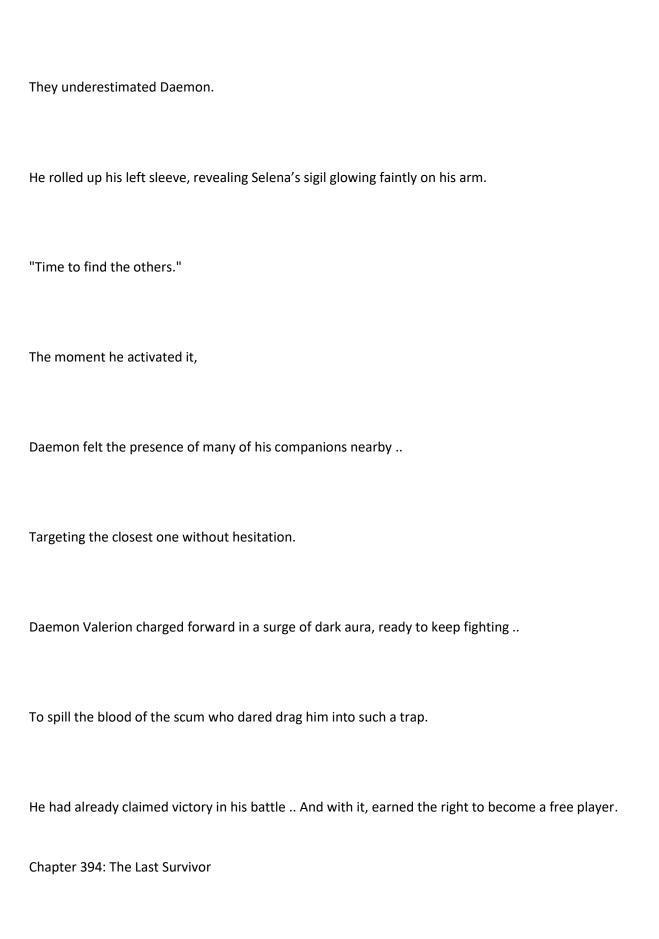


A mocking one in the other.
Both constructed of seething black lightning, They clamped down on the twin with brutal force, detonating upon impact.
The man screamed, confident he could withstand the attack.
But Daemon's dragons tore through his body like wet paper, Shattering his dual swords.
"Even with the resilience of an A+ rank fighter he did this to me with one strike?!"
Staggered and bleeding,
The man stared in disbelief at the golden warrior approaching with a crackling fist.
"Did you think being A+ rank made you untouchable?"
Daemon's punch drove through his chest like a bolt of divine punishment

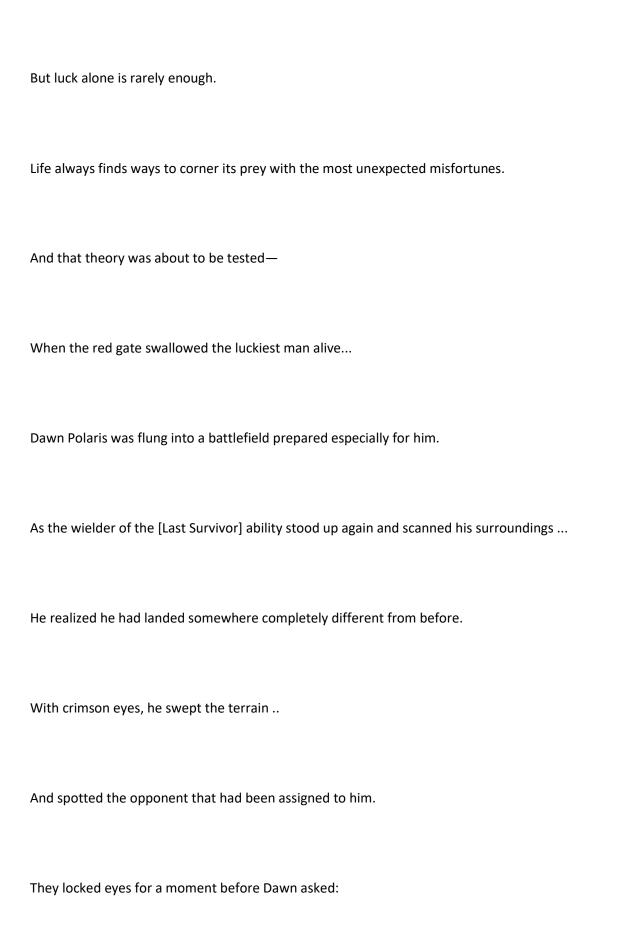


Daemon's fists overwhelmed his opponent.
"He's exactly where he belongs."
Breaking both of his swords,
Daemon pummeled the twin into the ground with fists of thunder.
A living punching bag, The man could only scream and cough blood under the relentless onslaught.
"The only place fit for Ultras is hell!"
Daemon spat as he battered him senseless.
"Filth like you shouldn't walk this earth. You belong buried beneath it!"
"You're nothing but filthy beasts—mistakes that should've never been born!"



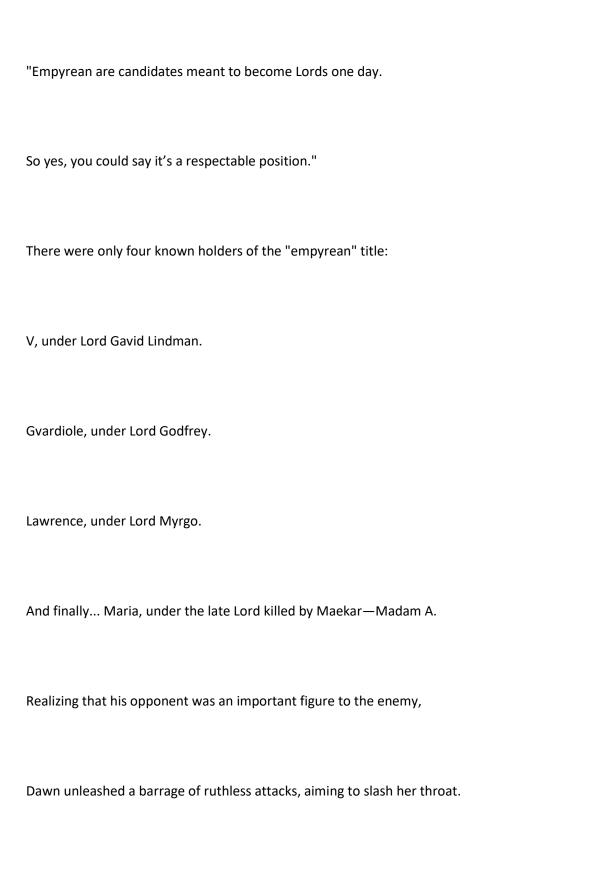


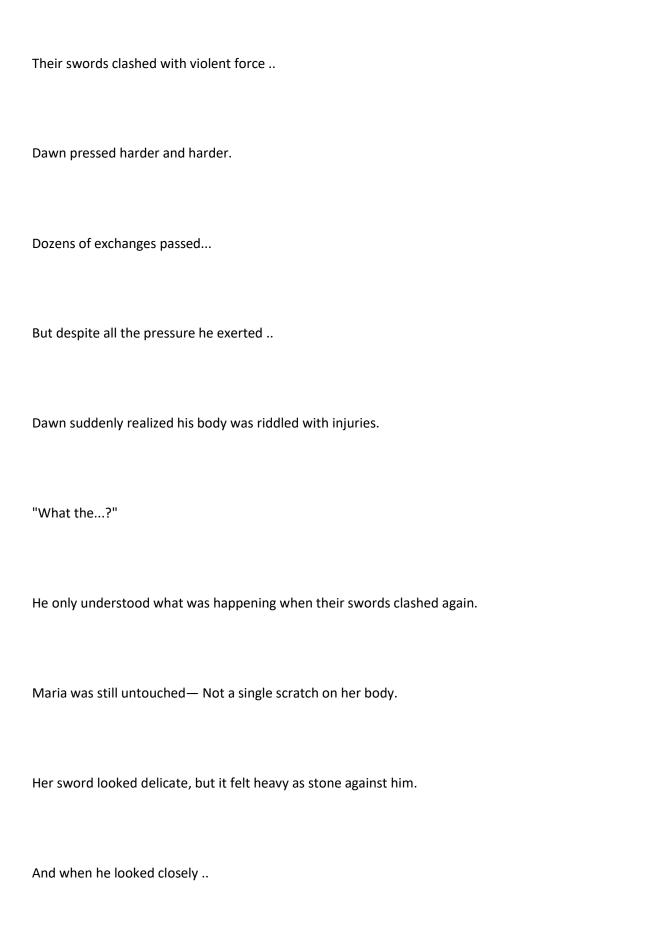
Many forces decide the fate of mankind in this world.
Among them, power is the most obvious
For the strong always have the highest chance of survival, no matter where they are.
In a ruthless world governed by the law of the jungle, Strength alone often separates life from death.
But sometimes
Other forces intervene from nowhere.
One such force—acknowledged by some, denied by others—
Is luck.
Time and time again, the weak survive not through strength, but by sheer chance
Lucky enough to escape the worst outcomes by a hair's breadth.

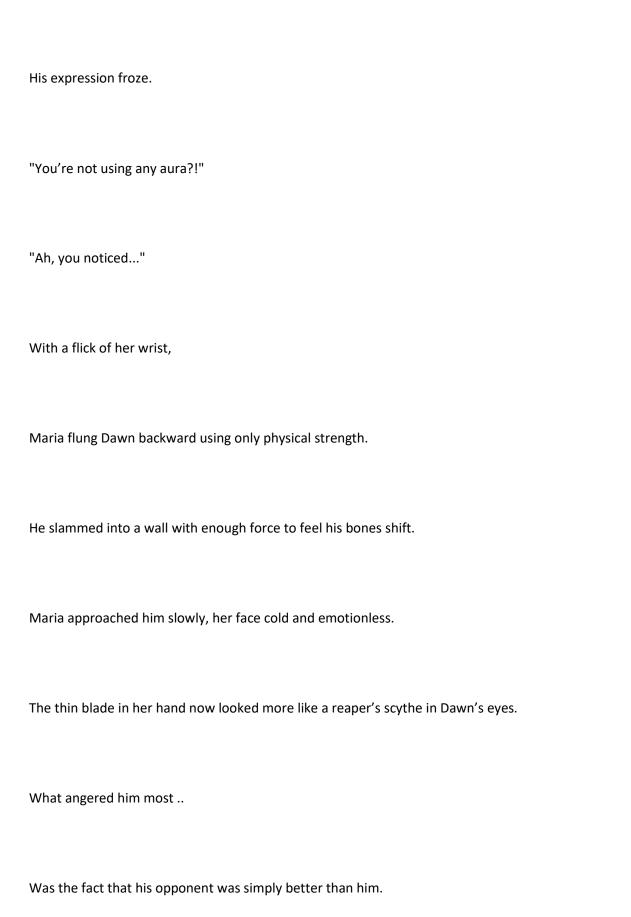




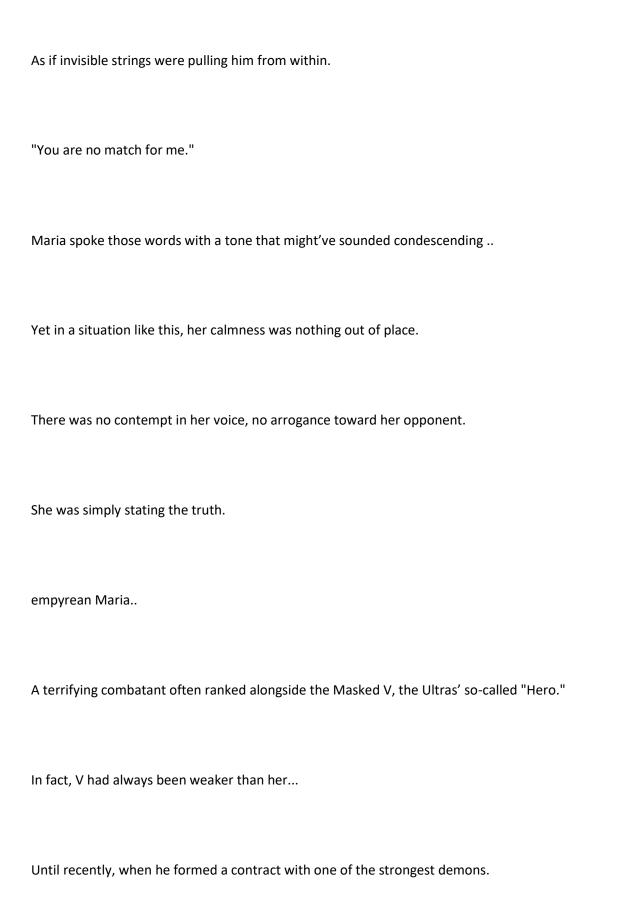
Unsheathing her sword, she calmly stepped forward.
"I'm sorry, but I have to kill you."
Without warning, she vanished
Appearing right in front of him.
Dawn instinctively unsheathed his sword and ignited its edge with fire.
And without hesitation
The two began to duel.
Their swordplay was masterful.
"empyrean That's a pretty high rank among the Ultras, if I'm not mistaken."
Dawn spoke as he attacked with blazing aura, Pressuring Maria with skilled and aggressive strikes—Which she deflected easily, without using any aura at all.



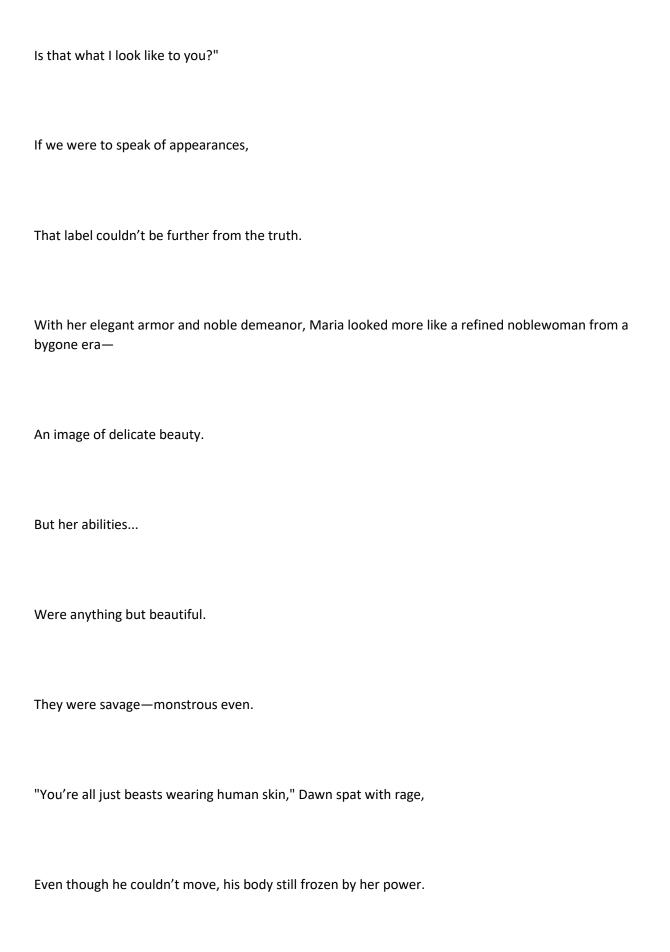


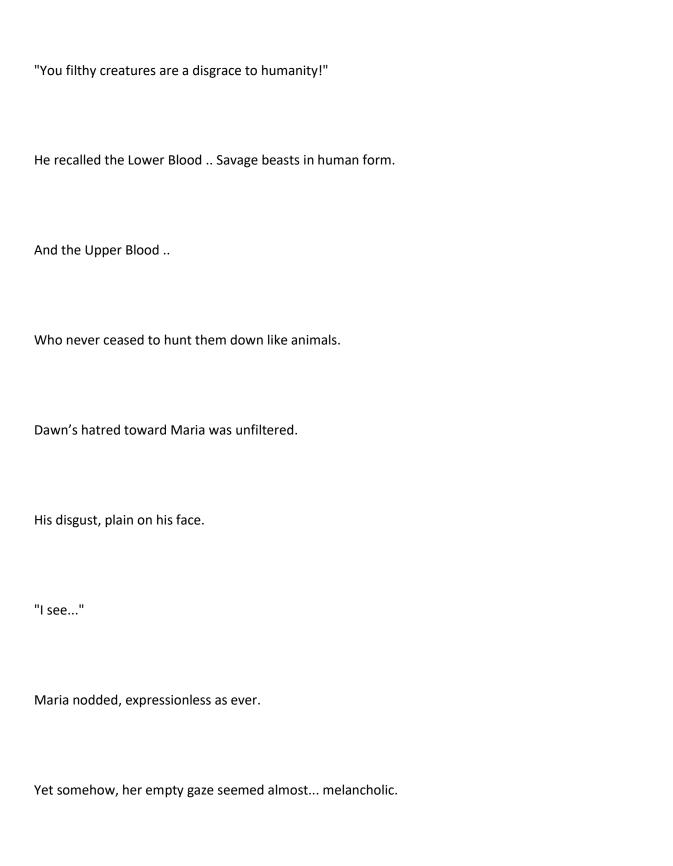


Skilled beyond measure.
Physically stronger than he was.
And she had defeated him Without even using aura.
As she stood before him, Dawn tried to leap up again
But froze in place the moment Maria moved her free hand in a strange, flowing motion.
The moment she did
A mysterious force bound him in midair.
He couldn't move an inch.
Raising her arms slowly, Dawn was lifted up alongside them



With swordsmanship far beyond Dawn's,
A physical prowess that betrayed her fragile appearance, And strange abilities he couldn't comprehend
Maria was, without a doubt, one of the most dangerous talents the enemy side possessed.
Realizing this, Dawn let out a bitter laugh.
"Damn monster"
That insult finally broke through her still expression.
Maria narrowed her crimson eyes—
The first shift in her gaze since the battle began.
"A monster, huh?





That look ignited even more fury within Dawn's heart.
"Just kill me already," he growled,
"I don't want to waste another second staring at something so vile."
He knew he had lost.
He was powerless.
And so, he no longer cared.
Maria slowly lowered him to the ground, until he was back in front of her.
Standing there, she gently brought her blade to his neck.
"As you wish.
I'll grant you the death you asked for."

She was just about to swing.
A swift, clean beheading.
No pain.
No cruelty.
But in that very moment
Time itself froze.
A violent crash shattered the silence
As a bolt of howling black lightning struck the earth directly above her.
Maria leapt back instinctively
Blocking the attack at the last second.

Dawn dropped to the ground—free once again.
"What the hell are you doing, Dawn Polaris?!"
The voice thundered with fury.
Daemon Valerion had entered the battlefield Cloaked in dark lightning and clad in the Golden Dragon Armor.
"You can't even handle one damned whore, you useless bastard?!"
Charging forward with a roar of thunder,
He launched himself straight at Maria—
His black lightning-infused fist crashing toward her face.
But she deflected it.

Effortlessly.
Their attacks collided Neither giving ground.
Their strength was perfectly matched.
A frail girl Holding her own against a juggernaut wearing divine armor.
Realizing this, Daemon Valerion's expression turned deadly serious.
This was no ordinary opponent.
This was—
Empyrean Maria.
Chapter 395: Maria (1)
After the first clash between them,

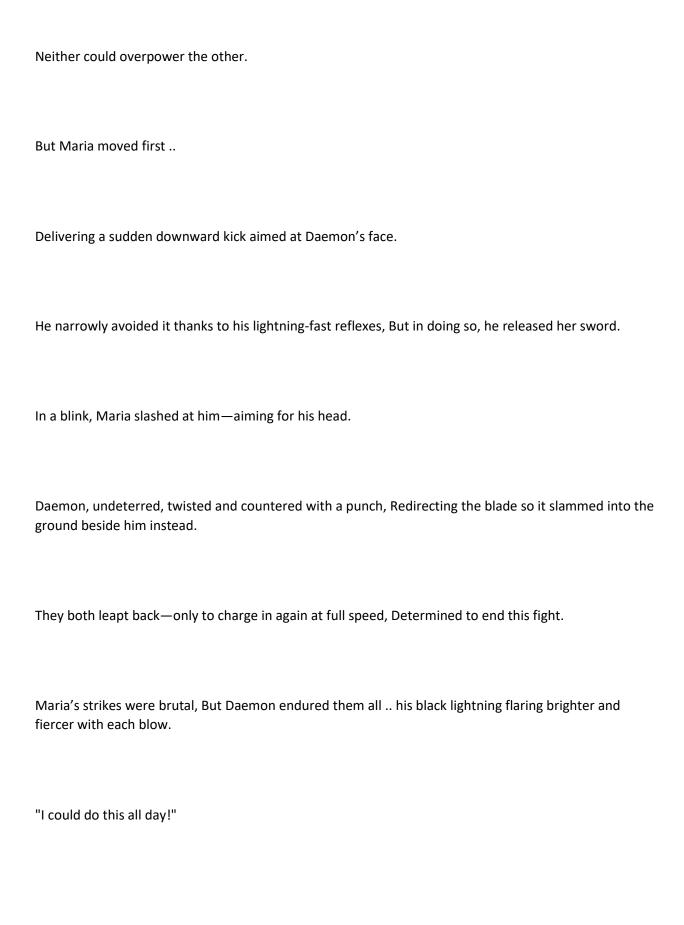
Daemon Valerion and Maria both stepped back, facing each other again.
They locked eyes, silently gauging each other's strength.
The explosive power radiating from Daemon was impossible to miss
Especially with the Golden Dragon Armor amplifying it several times over.
There was no doubt he was one of the strongest elite students.
Maria could see that clearly, especially through the ominous black lightning coursing through him.
She saw it But Daemon didn't.
No matter how hard he focused on the pale-skinned girl before him, Channeling all his senses to assess her strength
He felt nothing.
Absolutely nothing.

It was as if she were a normal human—
No aura, no pressure, no signs of power.
Yet she had blocked him so easily just moments ago.
Taking a deep breath,
Daemon returned to his stance, eyes narrowing.
"Let's see what you've really got!"
He stomped the ground with force,
Then shot forward in a flash of black lightning.
The distance between them vanished in an instant He hurled a punch at her with everything he had.

But just before his fist could connect,
Maria tilted her body at an impossible angle, dodging at the last second.
Daemon didn't stop.
He unleashed a flurry of punches—so fast that streaks of dark aura trailed behind him like cracks in the air.
Each blow tore the earth apart,
But none of them landed.
Maria weaved between his strikes with flawless agility, Dodging each one by mere hairsbreadths.
"That level of agility how the hell"
After slipping past all his attacks,
Maria countered with a razor-fast horizontal slash aimed at Daemon's right flank.

He blocked it with his armored right hand,
But the impact felt like being hit by a speeding truck.
Even though he endured it, The raw physical force coming from that fragile-looking body made no sense.
Still, Daemon wasn't one to fall behind.
Clutching her sword with his right hand and locking it in place, He raised his left hand, gathering a monstrous amount of aura
Until the snarling head of a dragon formed over his fist.
The furious beast opened its maw toward Maria, ready to devour her with a devastating blast.
But with her blade restrained,
Maria responded with a simple punch from her free hand straight toward the dragon's face.

Unlike Daemon's flashy, aura-infused technique, Her punch held no aura—just raw, pure strength.
Ordinarily, a bare hand should have been obliterated on contact.
But it wasn't.
The moment their powers collided,
A massive shockwave exploded across the battlefield.
From afar, Dawn watched in disbelief—
That girl's punch had stopped Daemon Valerion's full-force attack.
There they stood—fist against fist—
At the center of a crater of destruction.



With a thunderous roar, Daemon unleashed even more lightning aura
Gaining a slight edge as Maria was finally forced onto the defensive.
Since his defeat in the Victoriad at the hands of Frey Starlight, Daemon had come to a painful realization
His biggest weakness was stamina.
He couldn't maintain black lightning for long, As it rapidly drained his body.
But after that fight, The proud lion of House Valerion trained relentlessly,
Pushing his endurance to insane levels.
With the help of the Golden Dragon Armor,
He was able to absorb aura more efficiently And drastically extend the time he could sustain black lightning.

The result?
He had become a much stronger warrior than ever before.
"I don't know what kind of Monster you and that weird body of yours are—"
He pressed harder,
While Maria focused solely on defense.
"But you're not winning this!!"
After a barrage of rapid-fire punches
For just a moment, Daemon broke through.
A devastating blow smashed into Maria's abdomen And the black lightning detonated inside her body.
She was launched backward, Rolling violently across the ground until she crashed into a wall, reducing it to rubble.

The sheer force behind Daemon's punch could have torn through steel.	
Step by step, Clad in the power of the Golden Dragon, Daemon walked toward her	
The black lightning crackling louder and fiercer with every second.	
He had truly intended to kill her.	
Maria, on the other hand, was lying on the ground, her black hat covering her face.	
To any onlooker, she would've seemed utterly defeated.	
Even Daemon himself believed it—his last attack had hit her with full force.	
Yet, Maria didn't show any sign of distress.	
She spoke indifferently as she slowly rose to her feet.	



And how could he not?
For the first time since the battle began, he finally felt her aura.
"I thought she was relying solely on physical strength"
He realized now that he was mistaken.
The overwhelming surge of aura coming from her made that very clear.
"Appearances can be deceiving and the truth far more terrifying than you imagine."
With chilling composure, Maria swung her sword, unleashing a massive crimson arc straight at Daemon.
The attack moved so fast that Daemon barely had time to raise his shield.
But the moment it struck, A wave of searing pain tore through him—his golden armor denting and cracking on impact.
One strike.

That was all it took to damage his near-indestructible armor.
Daemon clenched his jaw.
He had clearly underestimated her.
Focusing his aura into the armor, The cracks and dents began to mend
A trait of the Golden Dragon Armor, modeled after the Emperor's own Fume Knight Armor.
It possessed partial regeneration abilities—making it a devastating relic of war.
Reigniting his aura, Daemon launched himself at Maria again.
"I'll kill you with these hands!!"
His attacks came with explosive force

But as he charged, Maria countered with another terrifying stab, releasing a blood beam like a bullet straight through the air.
Daemon dodged—barely.
Only to find Maria right in front of him.
"We both want each other dead so let's end this quickly."
She spoke with the same cold tone.
Daemon roared in reply
"Then come at me!!"
Their speed skyrocketed.
Fists and sword clashed dozens of times in the blink of an eye.
But this time there was something different.

Maria's strikes now carried blood-infused aura unlike anything Daemon had seen before.
Her crimson aura intertwined with his black lightning
Sometimes even overpowering it.
Daemon gritted his teeth.
'Where the hell was all this blood coming from?'
He pushed himself further, Forcing his body past its limits just to bring down the girl in front of him.
But Maria was unrelenting
With a body of steel, movements of silk, and an aura of death.
She was practically untouchable.

Yet none of it mattered to Daemon.	
"I'd rather die than lose to a damn demon-worshipping freak!!"	
With a furious scream, Dragon heads formed once again over both his fists,	
Ready to strike	
But Maria met him head-on, Her blade now surrounded by even more crimson	aura.
For the first time, emotion flickered across her pale face.	
"I was born in blood	
Lived in blood	
Killed in blood	
And I continue still."	

Slash!!
With a precise strike, Maria carved another deep fissure into Daemon's armor.
"Just as you were born into the Empire and lived a life of honor I was born among the Ultras, and lived my entire life in blood.
What makes you think, even for a moment, that you're fit to judge me?"
Her sword gleamed blood-red, But was caught mid-swing by Daemon's darkened fist.
"Spare me the nonsense!"
With explosive force, Daemon's aura transformed into the massive maw of a lion
Roaring in Maria's face.
"You made your choice the whole filthy lot of you.

You chose this cursed life, so don't come crying now, after everything your hands have done!!"
His black lightning flared
But crimson tendrils of blood wrapped around it, Maria parrying the blast with ease.
"And what 'choice' are you talking about, exactly?
The one our ancestors made centuries ago?"
BOOM!
Sword and fist collided once more, Shaking the battlefield.
Daemon howled:
"No your choice!!
What's happening now is proof enough!"

Though the betrayal that sparked this war began generations ago, The current Ultras had committed their own horrors
The recent abductions the Witch's Game all undeniable.
But for the first time since the battle began,
Maria laughed.
Chapter 396: Maria (2)
She actually laughed—at Daemon's reasoning.
With blood-soaked strikes launched at terrifying speed, she overwhelmed him with ruthless precision.
"I was born and orphaned in the war against the Empire seventeen years ago. Demon's blood was injected into my body at age six. And by ten, I had already become a contracted Highblood."
The humans of the Ultras Continent were nothing more than test subjects to the demons.
Every single one of them had been forcibly injected with demonic blood—no exceptions.

Most of those who underwent the procedure turned into mindless beasts, living like animals. They were known as the Lesser Blood.
But those who survived the injection and adapted to the demonic blood
They were the Greater Blood humans who lived their lives like anyone else.
The contract and the blood bound them eternally, making any act of rebellion against their demon master nearly impossible.
"What choice are you even talking about?"
BOOM!
Maria unleashed an even more explosive surge of power Her blade faster, sharper, deadlier.
"From the very beginning, it took the Empire only minutes to declare us guilty.
Tainted.

Doomed to die.
They cast us aside and branded us monsters.
Not even human anymore—just the same as the demons."
Between humans born in the Empire and others born among the Ultras
The difference wasn't in species, but in blood
And that made all the difference.
"I told you to stop spouting that nonsense!!"
Daemon roared, pressing forward with full force, Ignoring the cracks spreading across his golden armor
Trying to breach Maria's unrelenting defense.

"You had your chances! And you threw them all away!
The gates were sealed years ago! No demons can reach this place anymore
So why do you keep raising your swords against us?
You're nothing but lying degenerates!"
And in the face of that outburst
Maria laughed.
For the second time.
"The gates were sealed?
Is that what you really believe, Empire warrior?"
BOOOM!!

Her aura exploded like never before as she stabbed her own elbow
Unleashing a greater torrent of blood than ever before.
Her power surged.
"You fool.
If you think for even a moment that a flimsy human seal could keep demons away forever
Then you've truly been living in a dream."
The world was vast far beyond what Daemon could imagine.
And Maria made that clear.
"Wake up.

There's no such thing as safety."
She declared it outright
The gates were already open.
Daemon's eyes narrowed in disbelief.
But Maria didn't care.
"Don't misunderstand, Empire warrior.
We don't need your pity.
We don't want your help.
We chose to fight this war on our own terms a long time ago."
Her attacks accelerated—again—

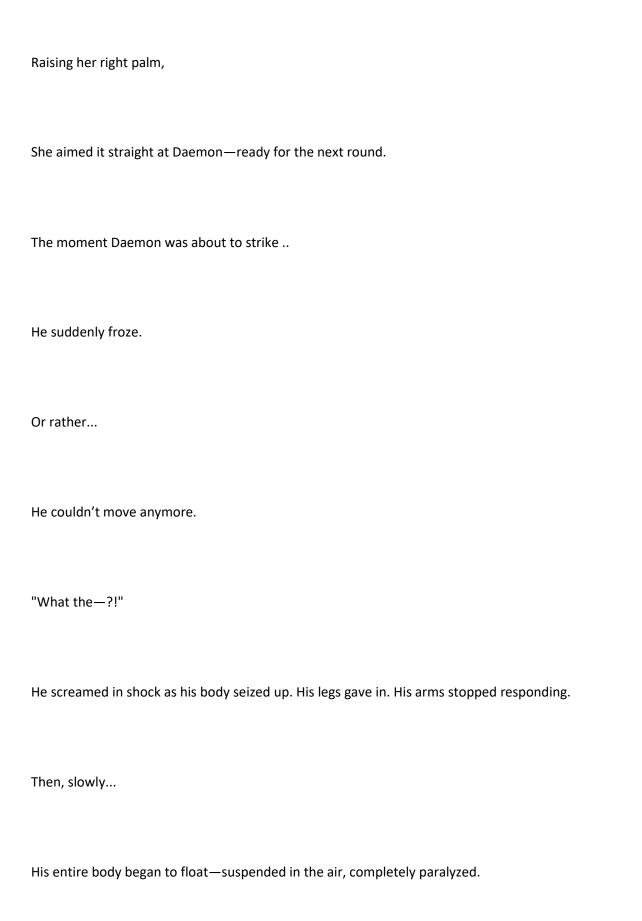
Strike after strike crashing into the Golden Dragon Armor, piling up visible damage.
"But don't think for a second that you and your kind have any right to judge us.
Our fate is our own.
We lived in blood—and we'll continue to live that way."
With those words, Maria unleashed a crimson cocoon that completely surrounded Daemon.
Though he managed to block it using his explosive lightning aura,
Her strikes were too fast—too precise.
She had him cornered.
Daemon fought back for as long as he could But eventually, he reached his limit.
He realized it the moment a sharp pain ripped through him

His right leg.
With a blood-soaked slash, Maria severed Daemon's leg Her relentless strikes having focused with cunning precision on one single point.
The loss threw him off balance.
He crashed to the ground—
And before he could react, Maria stood over him, her blade against his throat.
"This is the end."
She said it plainly.
Daemon stared up at the sword looming above him, Its edge growing before his eyes.
In that moment, for the first time



With another thunderous scream,
Daemon funneled every ounce of strength into his armor—responding to his will.
The armor pulsed.
Then
A golden prosthetic leg formed over his missing limb, shaped entirely from the Fume Knight armor.
Daemon stood tall again—on two legs.
"I don't care about your damned logic.
Or your hollow words."
Panting heavily, He forced the lightning from his body again.
"All I know is this—

I will kill you here, no matter the cost."
His resolve was terrifying.
Even half-dead, Daemon Valerion stood ready to fight again.
But Maria wasn't moved.
Because she too had something unshakable within her.
"The same goes for me.
I told you from the beginning—
I have to kill you.
And that's exactly what I'll do."





The technique had strict conditions.
But in Daemon's case—he had already lost too much blood.
He no longer had the strength to resist her.
"This is the end."
Using their own blood against them, Maria immobilized both Daemon and Dawn,
Intending to finish them off swiftly.
Daemon cursed furiously, trying to summon more power
But nothing worked.
He could do nothing but watch as the woman who had defeated both him and Dawn prepared to deliver the final blow.

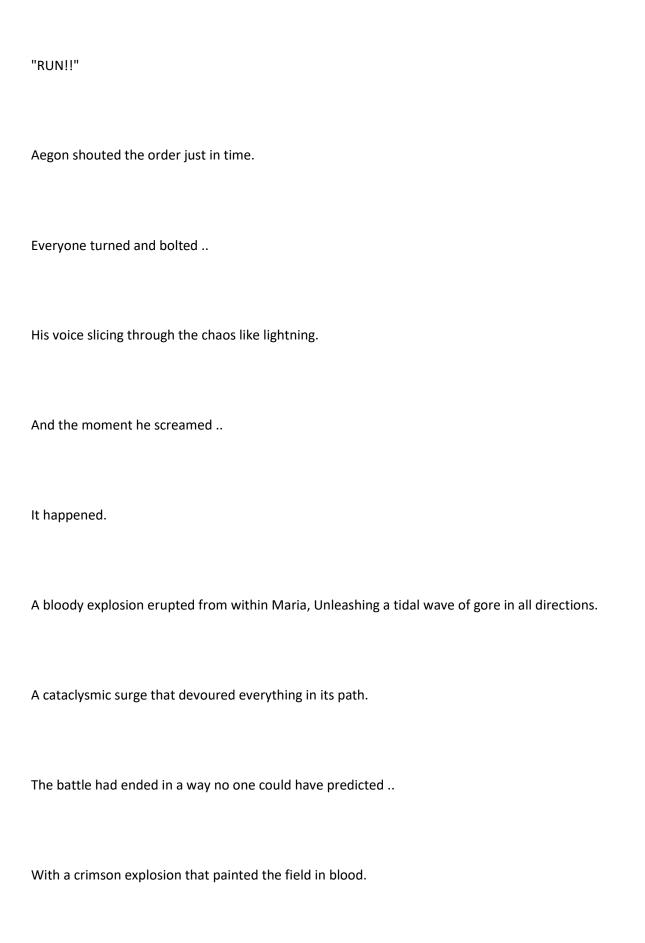
But just as she was about to sever their necks
She froze.
A new voice echoed across the battlefield.
"Well, well what do we have here?"
A young man appeared above the ruined arena, Looking down at them with his usual lazy grin.
"You seem to be struggling, cousin."
"Aegon!"
Daemon shouted.
Maria frowned, narrowing her eyes at the approaching duo
Aegon Valerion and Selena Hemsworth.

Right on time, the unexpected reinforcements arrived.
Selena fired her magic without hesitation, forcing Maria to retreat.
Her spell shattered the Blood Bind, freeing both Daemon and Dawn.
" Empyrean Maria, is it?
I've heard plenty about you."
Drawing his sword, Aegon stepped forward.
"Let's see what you're really made of."
The battle flipped in an instant.
From a one-sided slaughter

To four against one.
By sheer "coincidence," Selena's witch mark had led them straight here.
Maria blinked slowly, taking in her surroundings.
"Is this just bad luck Or something else entirely?"
It started with Daemon arriving the moment she'd defeated Dawn
Then Aegon right after she beat Daemon.
Everyone was being pulled to this exact spot.
Only this one.
Other elite students had witch marks too—
They could have gone anywhere.

But they all came to her.
That's when Maria glanced at Dawn, lying behind them.
A bitter smile crept onto her lips.
"So that's it"
Who would've thought.
She'd end up against a boy with unnatural luck, Luck that defied the laws of life itself.
The Last Survivor.
No matter what happens—he always survives.
Even if others needed help more
Everything had been drawn to him.

Now, surrounded by enemies—
Especially Aegon, whose presence she couldn't even read
Maria realized her odds were nonexistent.
Clutching her sword
She drove the blade straight into her own chest, Right in front of everyone's horrified eyes.
"It was a good fight."
She yanked the blade out, blood gleaming ominously on the edge.
Then raised it skyward
As a crimson glow exploded from her entire body.



Chapter 397: Battles of Life and Death (1)

The entire battlefield shifted the moment Maria drove that slender sword into her own chest.

With a gentle smile on her face, she realized there was no way she could win a fight against four people—especially not with Prince Aegon Valerion among them.

So, she chose to end it.

From within her fragile frame, an overwhelming torrent of blood surged out .. far too much to belong to a single person.

It spread across the battlefield like a ruptured dam, soaking everything and everyone in its path.

Then, without warning, the crimson tide ignited.

At Maria's signal, the blood detonated, red flames engulfing the entire area in a massive explosion.

It was a suicidal strike from the Empyrean who had been completely cornered. Even though she had already defeated Dawn, and then Daemon afterward, the Last Survivor's ability had already done its work.

A mysterious power that defied the world's Five Unbreakable Laws.

Faced with such a power, Maria had no choice—victory was simply out of reach.

Even if she had managed to defeat all four somehow... a fifth or a sixth might have appeared.

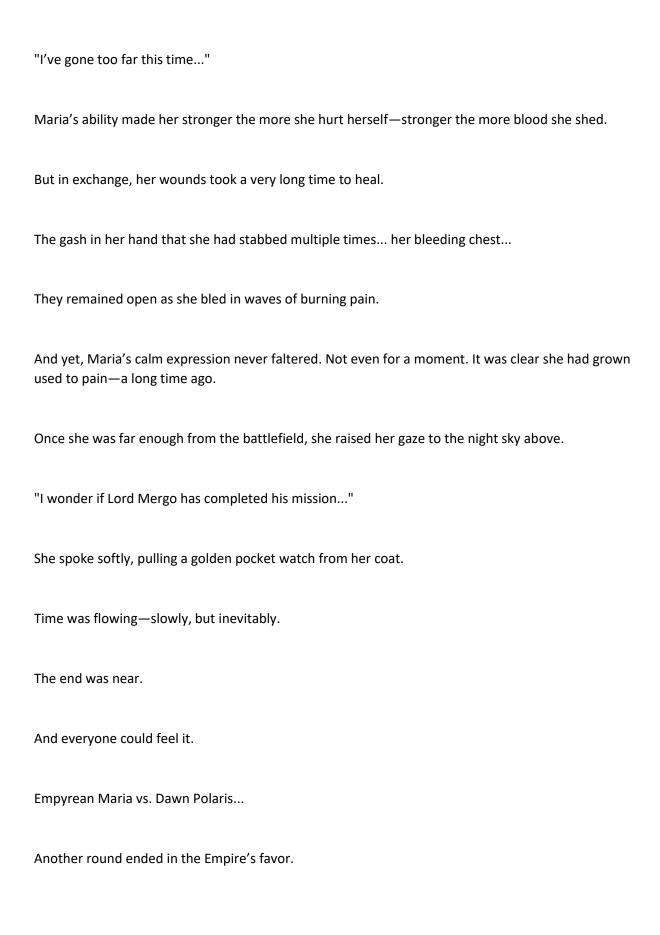
Dawn would always receive whatever he needed to survive. It wasn't fair to the others, but it was his fate.

A burden he had to carry until the final breath of his life.
The Blood Blossom Bomb.
That was the name of the technique Maria had unleashed, leveling the entire area, while the others fled to avoid being caught in the blast radius.
But at the very last second, Selena intervened—just in time—casting a thin yet formidable barrier around herself and her allies.
Her magic was swift, and she managed to construct a shield strong enough to repel the wave of blood-fueled destruction.
Standing within the square-shaped barrier, everyone stared at the blood that continued to pour down like a storm.
"Where is all this blood even coming from?!"
Selena shouted in frustration, struggling to hold the barrier intact.
But there was no answer.
Maria and her strange powers remained an enigma.
A few seconds passed. Eventually, the tide of blood calmed and dried across the scorched ground, revealing the battlefield once more.
But Maria was nowhere to be found.
She had vanished from sight.

"She wasn't trying to kill us," Aegon said as he slid his sword into its sheath. "She was carving herself an escape route. Not bad." On the other side, Daemon Valerion removed his armor, though he kept it wrapped around what remained of his right leg—because that foot was never coming back. The look of fury on Daemon's face was impossible to miss. No one dared approach him. Even though he hadn't technically lost, and had been ready to keep fighting, Maria had managed to completely immobilize him and remove him from the battle. That, to him, was no different from defeat. He would've died, if not for the prince's and Selena's intervention. "Damn it!!" Daemon roared, punching the ground beneath him with burning rage. They had survived, but the taste it left in his mouth was bitter beyond words. "Let's move," Aegon said calmly. "We're done here." He began walking, and the others followed. "But... where to?" Dawn asked, uncertain. After realizing that the gate they had pinned their hopes on was nothing but a trap, they were lost

again—back to square one.

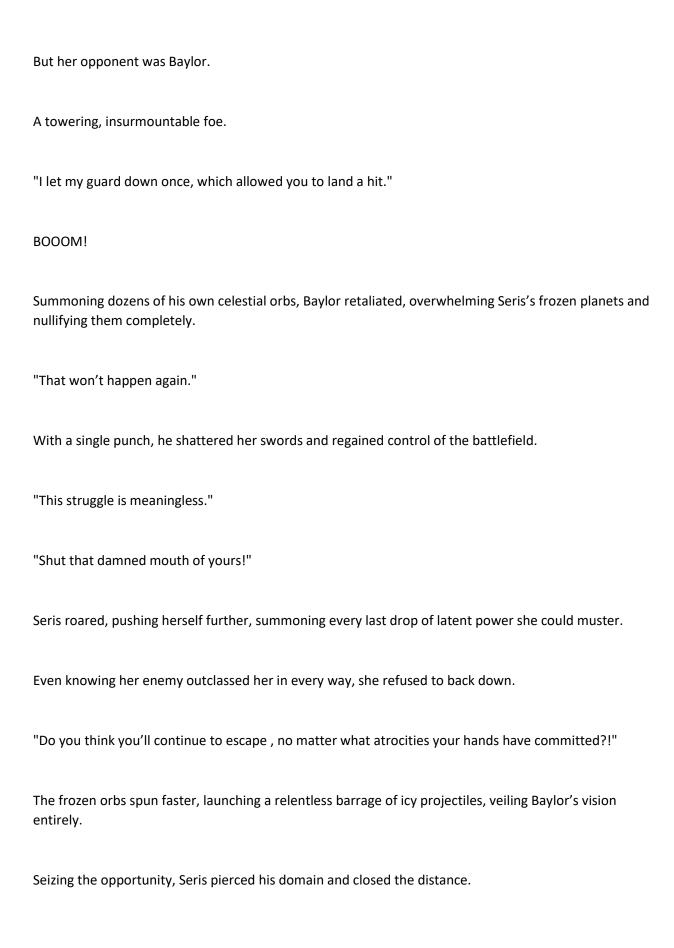
Only this time, it felt even worse.
Yet Aegon Valerion didn't seem the least bit concerned.
"We'll find the others first," he replied. "This battle won't last much longer we've already reached the end."
Whether it was the Empire or the Ultras, the hunt was nearly over.
But the outcome was still uncertain.
And so, the four of them set out—on a journey to regroup with the rest of their scattered comrades, each of whom was fighting their own deadly war.
···
···
"Haaah"
Maria's breath came out as red-tinged mist in the cold air.
She walked slowly, one hand pressed to her chest, the other gripping the wall for balance.
Her black coat and once-elegant white outfit were drenched in blood.



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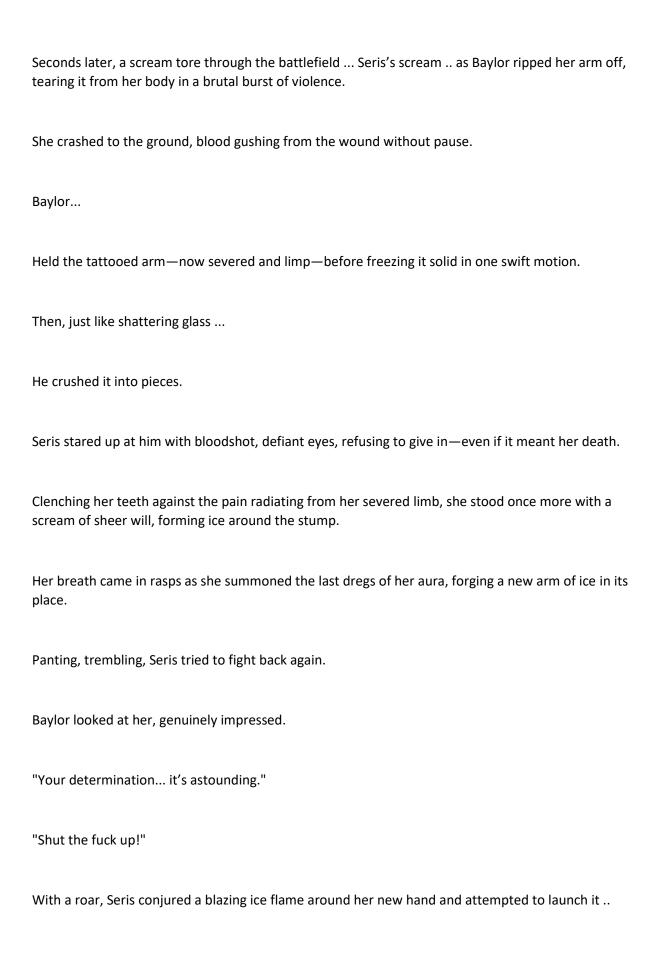
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While Maria was locked in combat with the others, a far more violent battle erupted elsewhere—one of pure vengeance.
Seris Moonlight unleashed her full might against Baylor Moonlight.
The icy flower tattoos covering her right arm were the same ones that had once appeared in the distant past, when she had lost control.
But this time, Seris wielded her power with complete intent. The marks stopped advancing once they reached her shoulder—limiting the awakening to one arm only.
"This is my current limit"
After countless days of relentless training, she had barely managed to reach this point.
"The Ice Flower ability burns through aura at an insane rate but in return, it grants overwhelming power."
Fully aware of this cost, Seris threw everything she had at Baylor Moonlight.
With a flick of her hand, six celestial orbs materialized. But these weren't ordinary orbs.
They were massive spheres—planets, in a sense—infused with the frigid aura of her Ice Flower, each brimming with destructive force.

Serpents hissed around her, conjured by her aura, all lunging at Baylor with wrath.
Seris herself charged in, sword drawn, clad in a crystalline shield of frost.
She was all in.
Every ounce of strength she had forged through pain and trainingshe used it in a single goal: to kill this man.
"So that shard of ice has taught you to control your power," Baylor muttered, finally growing serious. "Even if you're barely able to withstand it."
Suddenly, the six planetary orbs fired icy beams of devastating scale.
Baylor endured them with his body, dodging the serpents and clashing directly with Seris in brutal close-quarters combat.
The tattoos on Seris's arm glowed more intensely with every blow she struck.
"You won't be able to defeat me, Seris. The difference in rank between us is far too great."
With his bare hands, Baylor crushed the white serpents one after another, blocking the orbs' constant bombardment.
"I'll admit it—you're strong. Reaching this level at your age is nothing short of a miracle."
Seris's aura output far exceeded the S rank threshold—something considered impossible for someone of her age.

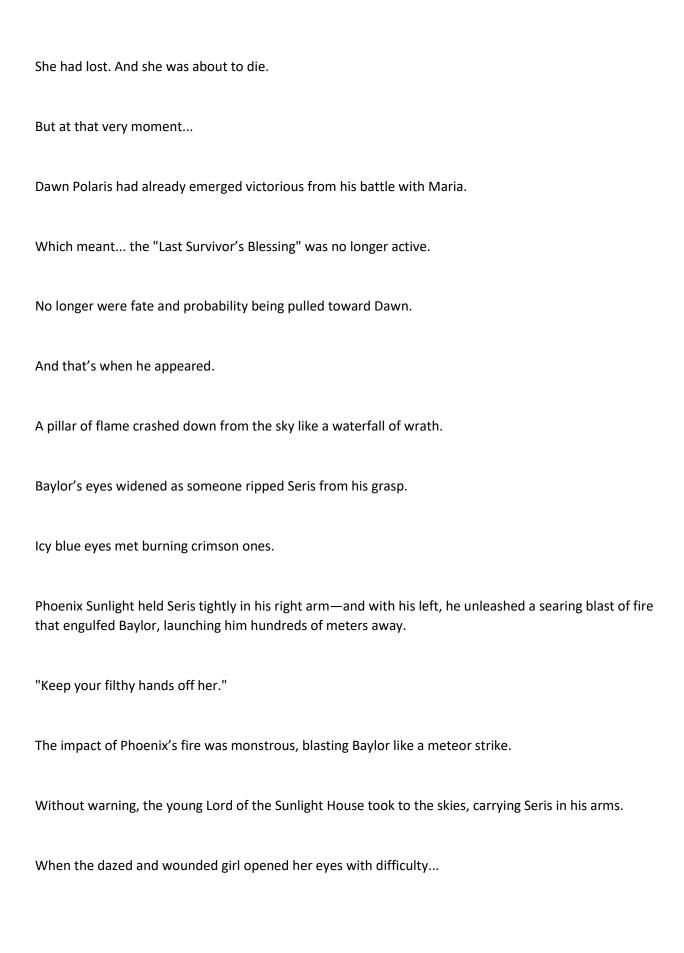


"The souls of those you killed in the past... one day, they'll coil around your neck to announce your end!" She slammed her marked hand against his chest—ready to finish it. Baylor's eyes widened in shock as her aura exploded at point-blank range. Seris bore the pain, unleashing the most powerful technique she had ever created—her final hope to end the man who had taken so much from her. "Ice Formation... Supreme art: Inverted Butterfly Wings!!" The enhanced ice aura erupted in Baylor's face, consuming him in its entirety. The power surged outward in a blinding storm, and from within it, massive wings of frost bloomed shaped like the wings of a giant butterfly—encasing Seris at the center. She had poured everything into that one attack. The strain was so immense, her tattoos began bleeding from her arm. But it was worth it. That was a finishing move .. powerful enough to kill even an SS-ranked Awakened. The mountainous terrain where the battle took place had become a field of frozen death. Frost mist veiled everything, obscuring vision with a chilling fog. Seris couldn't tell if her attack had succeeded—but she knew she had reached her limit.





But Baylor was faster.
He appeared in front of her in a flash, and blood spilled once more.
With a blade made of his own power, he drove it into her chest without mercy, flipping her world upside down.
"I told you, all your desperate efforts are meaningless. You cannot defeat me."
With calm cruelty, Baylor slowly pulled the blade out, then whispered beside her ear:
"This world remembers only the victors. There is no place for the cries of the defeated."
"The winner writes the rules. The winner decides who is right and who is wrong who deserves to live, and who must die."
Grabbing her by the throat, Baylor snarled:
"I am the victor, Seris. I am the one who survived! You fought for some ideal—tried to take revenge on me—and where did that bring you? To death!"
"You are the loser, Seris Moonlight. And in this world, there is no place for losers."
Coldly, he began tightening his grip around her neck. Seris writhed in agony.
And it was true.
Just as Baylor said



She saw herself cradled in his embrace.
She recognized him—but he wasn't the same Phoenix she knew.
His once auburn hair now blazed like wildfire, and glowing red auras burned around his eyes.
His very presence radiated such heat that Seris, despite her freezing constitution, found herself sweating uncontrollably.
"Professor Phoenix"
"Don't speak. You're badly hurt."
Flying at full speed, he rushed them both away from the battlefield.
"Let's focus on getting out of here first."
In his ultimate awakened form, Phoenix was like a shooting star a burning comet ripping through the sky.
"How did you find me so quickly?" Seris asked, trying to freeze the gaping wound in her chest.
She had been ready to die only moments ago—until Phoenix appeared like a miracle and pulled her back.
His answer came brief, focused on the path ahead.
"I managed to repel one of their Lords and then I moved right away to search for you. I felt your aura the moment you unleashed your final attack."

With a faint smile, Phoenix praised Seris.
"You've done well to survive this far. Leave the rest to me."
The young Lord of the Sunlight House was incredibly fast.
Even though he'd found himself up against Godfrey, one of the Ultras Lords equal to his level, he had still managed to drive him back—soaring like a blazing comet to rescue his students.
He wasn't considered the greatest talent of his family for nothing.
But that didn't mean the battle was over.
Because just as they began to gain some distance from the battlefield
The ground trembled.
A monstrous presence stomped toward them, shaking the earth with each step.
Lord Godfrey had returned—charging with sheer fury, his golden armor shattered, half his face charred black by Phoenix's devastating flames.
Yet even now, he held onto his twin daggers, eyes locked onto the enemy who had humiliated him.
"This bastard he just won't stay down," Phoenix muttered.
NACIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NA NASIANA NASIA
Without hesitation, he turned around—still holding Seris in one arm—and raised his free hand toward the sky.

His hand ignited, and within seconds, his flames had engulfed the heavens.
Godfrey, roaring like a beast, leapt into the air, cloaked in a terrifying violet aura.
He was a monster born for war, lacking in intellect but overflowing with killing intent.
Yet Phoenix showed no fear—completely unmoved by the lethal aura crashing toward him.
He wasn't the most experienced. He wasn't even a good leader.
But on the battlefield—he was a true monster.
A warrior who had never lost a single fight in his life.
"Eternal Flame Style: Eternal Blaze – Grand Phoenix Inferno!"
His fire surged and twisted, forming a colossal phoenix wreathed in divine flames.
The phoenix let out a deafening screech, illuminating the night sky before it dove straight toward Godfrey in a blazing fury.
Despite his massive size, Godfrey looked like an insect before that heavenly beast.
And then—without warning—
The fire consumed him.
All of him.

The earth around him, the sky above—everything was scorched in a sea of flame.
Phoenix's fire was so intense, it could melt metal and burn flesh straight off the bone.
Godfrey found himself trapped in that hell, flailing, burning alive while Phoenix calmly soared higher, leaving him behind.
He didn't bother watching his enemy writhe.
He had already done what needed to be done.
Still, the flames of the Eternal Blaze raged on, devouring Godfrey over and over again.
No matter how hard he fought, he couldn't escape.
And death drew closer with each second
Until
A wall of ice crashed down from above, smothering the inferno in one clean sweep.
Baylor had arrived—just in time.
Freezing the Eternal Blaze with every ounce of his power, he sighed while watching Phoenix fly off into the distance.
"That damned Phoenix he's grown far stronger than the last time I saw him."

He wasn't called the brightest prodigy of his generation for nothing.
"Get up, Godfrey. We're not done here."
Expressionless, Baylor began walking toward the direction their enemies had fled, while the scorched and half-burned Godfrey dragged himself behind him.
"They may have escaped for now, but they have nowhere to go. Our armies are already surrounding the region."
Wherever they run, the enemy will always be waiting ahead.
"This isn't over yet."
Chapter 399: Snow Lionheart vs V The Witch's Game Was Nearing Its End.
Anyone who had witnessed the brutal battles unfolding could sense it.
The Elite Class—after securing victory in many of their individual duels—had gained a bit of breathing room, unaware that a massive army had once been lying in wait.
And it was Frey Starlight alone who held that army at bay facing Mergo in a hidden battle no one else even knew had taken place.
But what Frey did was not victory. It was merely a delay buying them time.
The thousand soldiers he faced were only the vanguard, the frontlines of just one region.
There were still three other regions, each dispatching an army of equal—or greater—strength.

And they were coming... for him and his friends.

Led by the remaining Ultras and Hollow, these armies crept closer to the center, slowly encircling Frey and the others who had earned only a few precious minutes with their final desperate stand.

Among all the elite students, Frey's closest friends were still locked in battle with their opponents.

And perhaps the fiercest fight of all was the one between Snow Lionheart, the Empire's champion...

...and the masked warrior V, the Ultras' greatest hope.

But this was no battle between heroes.

It was a clash of monsters, raging wildly against one another.

Snow had invoked his War King Form, a state that drove him into a bloodthirsty frenzy.

While V unleashed a transformation of his own—The Berserker Form—a jet-black armor spiraling around him as his eyes turned pure white, hollow and insane.

Their screams shook the earth, echoing alongside the violent clashes between Moonlight Edge and Vermithor.

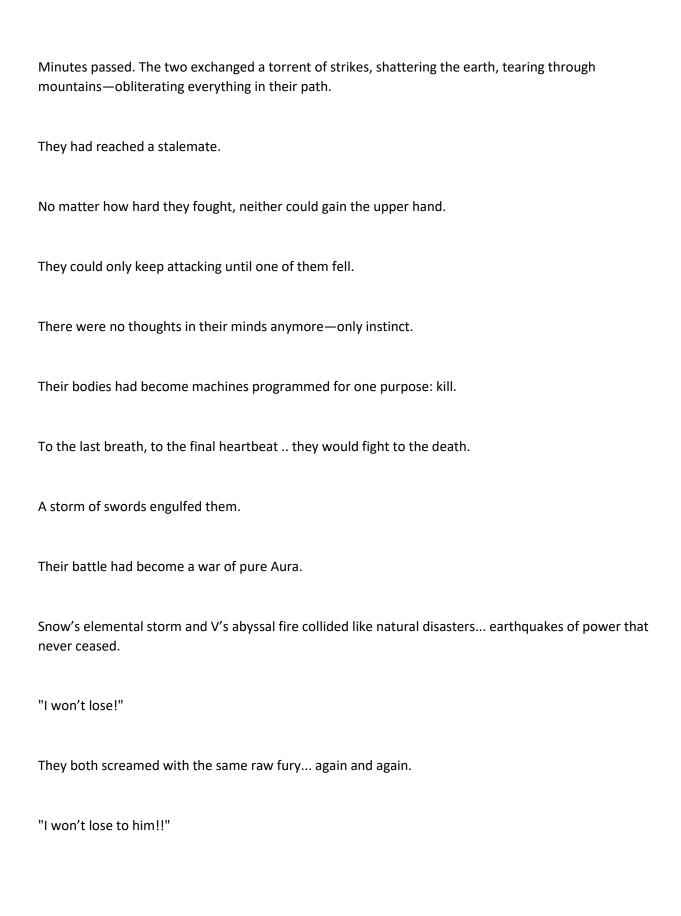
To withstand V's black flames, Snow was forced to wield every element at his disposal.

Even so, the fight remained barely balanced.

V's fire was unlike anything else—it burned everything, even Aura itself.

Add to that the Moonlight Edge's strange Aura, capable of erasing all other energies
And V's offensive power became something beyond comprehension.
If not for Snow's War King Form and the Vermithor reinforcing his body, he wouldn't have lasted a second.
He was far stronger than the last time they fought—yet still unable to overcome V.
The very idea infuriated him.
So, with all his might, he began tearing through the flames using his masterful technique.
"The Fourth Sword: The World-Severer!"
Empowered by Stellar Aura, Snow sliced through the dark fire, sending a wave of pure energy that split it in two.
Knowing it wasn't enough, he used the technique again. And again. And again.
Over and over, World-Severer roared through the battlefield, slowly gaining ground against the undying inferno.
But V didn't stand idle.
The moment Snow pushed forward, the masked warrior rushed him, gathering the scattered black flames into a giant flaming skull—its maw opening wide to devour him whole.
"You won't beat me!"

V's offense was monstrous, even if his defense was weak.
But the jet-black armor coiling around him covered that weakness, making him almost impossible to injure.
"Absolute Zero!"
Summoning all his Aura, white fire born from pure frost gathered at the edge of Vermithor.
A massive ice cannon surged forth, colliding with the skull of black fire—both forces swallowing each other whole.
V's flames were stronger, but Snow had bought just enough time to escape the blast using his Void Step.
And then
Activating it again, he reappeared beside V, sword blazing with the most powerful form of Stellar Aura.
Their blades clashed.
Again. And again.
Blow after blow, they fought at insane speed, like demons in human skin.
V's attack power was undeniably stronger—but Snow was far faster.
Harnessing his multitude of elements, he fought with a fluid, adaptive style, granting him a freedom his enemies lacked.
And when combined with his overwhelming War King Form, Snow stood as V's equal.



For both Snow and V
They were the pinnacle of the lands they came from.
Victory for one meant dominion for an entire continent over another.
And so—defeat was no longer an option.
No matter how brutally they clashed, no matter how much blood they lost
Neither of them could gain the upper hand.
They were perfectly matched—an even duel that pushed both to their absolute limits, devouring their strength at a dangerous pace.
And both knew it.
The battle was heading toward a dead end.
"Why won't this son of a bitch fall?!"
They thought the same thing at the same time, unleashing even fiercer attacks.
One wielded the Blessing of the Lightbringer, a divine gift that elevated him far above his peers.
The other, a demonic contract with one of the world's most powerful devils, paired with a raw talent that stood at the very peak of all Ultras since their rise.
Monsters like these couldn't be defeated by anything less than monsters of equal caliber.

Minutes passed.
The battlefield turned crimson with their blood, soaking the ground without pause.
Vermithor was filled with divine power—an energy that allowed Snow's body to regenerate after each devastating blow.
V, on the other hand, was accumulating damage, yet the masked warrior never stopped.
At some point, both fighters' vision began to blur. They had unleashed powers that shouldn't exist in beings of their level.
It was clear.
This had to end Now.
Tapping into the last of his demonic strength, V allowed the dark flames to engulf him completely, transforming him into something no longer human.
Like a dam bursting, black fire erupted outward in a wave of annihilation, swallowing the battlefield and extending for kilometers.
Snow immediately leapt into the sky, fleeing the encroaching inferno.
"You're not going anywhere!!"
With a flick of his hand, V commanded the black fire to rise into the heavens—threatening to consume the sky itself.

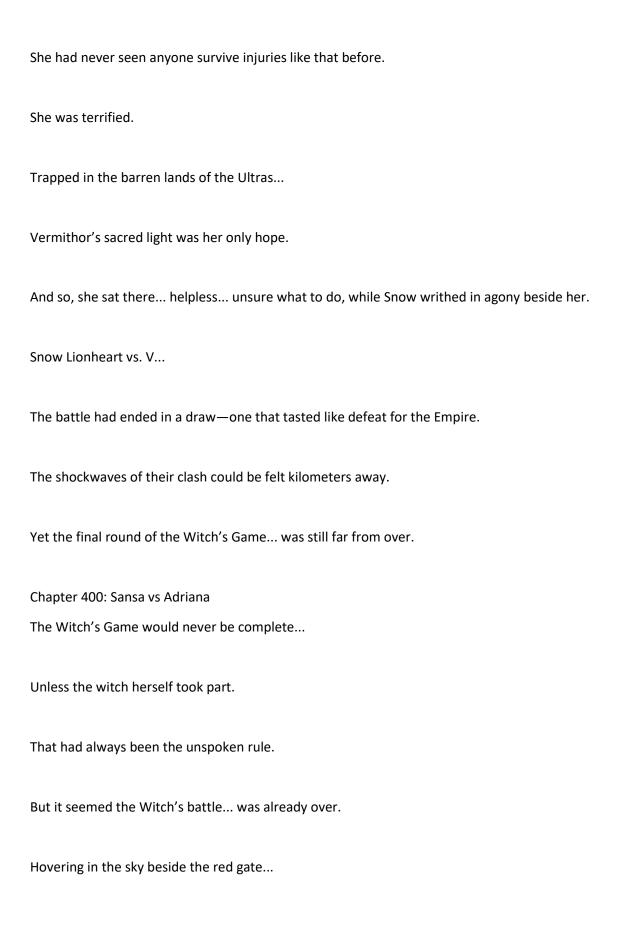


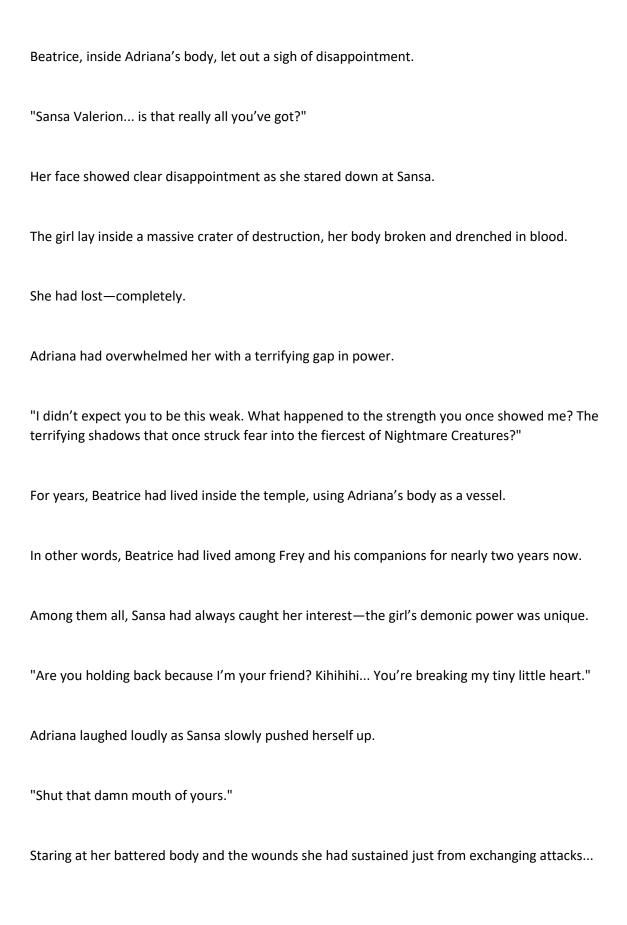
No power remaining to resist.
They had no choice but to endure the incoming destruction.
And so, both of them fell.
Crashing violently to the ground, their bodies shattered by the very attacks they had unleashed.
It was a catastrophic end to a battle that had brought nothing but devastation.
Buried beneath the wreckage
V was the first to move, barely conscious as he threw a shattered scream into the air, gasping for breath.
Agonizing pain wracked his body—Snow's slash had cut clean through him, from shoulder to abdomen, nearly splitting him in two.
He couldn't even stand.
He collapsed instantly, his body writhing in unbearable pain.
The slash wasn't his only wound his entire body had collapsed under the might of Grand Cosmic Formation.
Lying face down, V fought the agony with all he had, searching for his opponent.
It took only a few seconds before he found him.

Snow Lionheart was in no better shape.
His body was charred black, his flesh scorched so thoroughly by the dark flames that his face was barely recognizable.
His injuries were immense, enough to leave him unconscious.
What was even more terrifying was that some of V's dark fire had embedded itself into Snow's left arm, still eating away at him from within.
If not for Vermithor struggling to suppress the corruption, Snow would have already been dead.
The black fire didn't stop even after hitting its target—it still burned, crawling slowly toward Snow's motionless body.
With the last flicker of awareness, V manipulated the lingering flames, directing them toward his enemy.
His broken mask finally gave way, revealing a bloodied grin.
Then came the laugh.
V laughed like a madman before finally passing out.
"Burn in hell."
And with that, he collapsed too.
Even to the end, they had remained equals.
But V's crawling fire

Was about to break the stalemate.
Snow's War King Form had already faded.
He was unconscious.
Defenseless.
And the black flames were about to consume him.
The hero of the Empire was on the verge of death.
But just before the flames could reach him—
A hail of arrows fell from above, bombarding the ground and scattering the black fire, forcing it to shift away.
At the same time, Lara Croft leapt gracefully into the battlefield, rushing straight toward the fallen Snow.
When she reached him, Lara couldn't stop herself from gasping in horror.
Staring down at the scorched, barely recognizable body of Snow Lionheart
She stood frozen in shock.
The black fire was still crawling across his left arm, trying to consume the rest of his body.

Without hesitation, Lara cut off his arm.
"You'll be okay you'll be okay you're not going to die!"
With Snow strapped to her back, she dashed away, weaving through the flames with remarkable agility.
Luckily, she hadn't completely left the battlefield—just far enough to stay clear of their overwhelming attacks. She had watched everything from afar, using her sniper's scope to observe from extreme distances.
She wanted to help.
But in a battle between monsters like V and Snow, her abilities were useless.
"Don't die on me, Snow please don't die in my arms"
Her mind had gone completely blank.
Carrying Vermithar in her hands, with Snow on her back
The only sign of life was the faint pulse she could feel from him. It was the only thing telling her he was still alive.
Once they were far enough from the battlefield
Lara stopped the bleeding from his severed arm and placed the sword back onto his chest.
Vermithor's light began healing him instantly, but his condition was horrifying—his face completely charred beyond recognition.



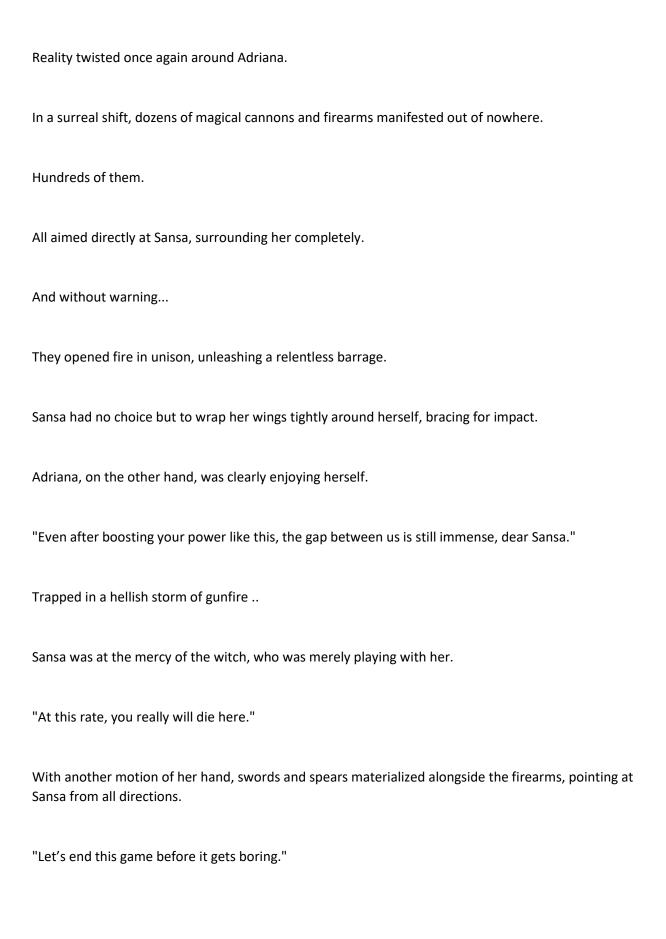


Sansa realized that winning this battle was almost impossible.
'If I could still control my power like before I could have beaten her.'
But that was no longer possible.
The will of the demon seed inside her—the one that once helped her wield that power—was long gone.
Even though Adriana was the weakest of Beatrice's puppets she was still far too powerful for Sansa now.
Knowing this, the princess gritted her teeth and tried once more to summon her strength.
A massive shadow formed beneath her feet.
"Trying again? Sorry, darling but your shadows are too weak."
With a wave of her hand
Adriana summoned dozens of celestial spheres once more, releasing a tremendous pressure that made Sansa flinch instinctively.
"I know I can't fight like that demon did"
That wild and violent combat style was gone—buried somewhere deep inside her.
"But I'm not a demon. I'm human. So I'll fight like a human!"
Gathering her shadow around her



She looked exactly like
"Demon."
Adriana burst out laughing as she watched the dramatic transformation unfold before her eyes.
"You said you'd fight like a human, yet now you take on a form that resembles a demon What a delicious contradiction."
Ignoring her laughter
Sansa stomped the ground with force and shot toward her opponent.
She was eager to test her new power as soon as possible.
Adriana immediately bombarded her with dozens of flaming projectiles using her celestial spheres—but Sansa deflected them effortlessly, her wings wrapping around her in defense.
Then, reaching out her hand toward Adriana
Within seconds, a massive shadowy hand formed and lunged forward, trying to consume the witch entirely.
But the giant hand came to a sudden halt as it slammed into a thin barrier that had manifested just in time. Adriana twirled her staff with a grin.
"Crush her for me."
Responding to her command

A giant foot materialized in the sky and came crashing down on Sansa's head, aiming to flatten her into the earth.
But Sansa, acting on pure instinct, conjured dozens of black tendrils that shot out from her back like magic.
The tendrils instantly wrapped around the descending foot, halting it completely.
And like serpents, they slithered upward, coiling tighter until the entire construct exploded into pieces.
Without pause, Sansa redirected the tendrils to attack Adriana.
But as they closed in
Adriana began teleporting, vanishing and reappearing each time just before impact, effortlessly dodging the attacks as she flew through the air, laughing all the while.
"How wonderful! Your strength has grown so much!"
She continued to taunt and toy with Sansa, who said nothing in return.
The princess pursued her relentlessly, determined to end the fight as fast as possible—especially as she began to feel something odd: the shadows building up inside her body, giving her an unsettling feeling she couldn't ignore.
"Kill her for me."
With a flick of her wrist



With that playful grin on her face, Beatrice, from within Adriana's body, prepared to bring the battle to its conclusion.
Sansa Valerion vs. Adriana
The battle was about to enter its final stage.