

VILLAIN 401

Chapter 401: The Shadow and the Puppet

Sansa vs. Adriana — or more accurately, Beatrice's puppet.

The battle had reached its climax.

After unlocking her version of Seris's armor, Sansa quickly realized she couldn't sustain it for long. Unlike Seris's composed ice, her shadows were chaotic — far stronger, but far more draining. The sheer consumption of stamina forced the princess to make one thing clear: she had to end the fight now.

But Beatrice wasn't about to give her that chance.

The witch kept her trapped, bombarding her from all directions with blades, spears, and spells — never leaving the slightest opening.

"You're about to lose... my dearest friend,"

Beatrice sneered, unleashing another ruthless barrage.

In response, Sansa wrapped her shadowy wings around herself, forming a cocoon that held off Beatrice's onslaught.

The defense held, but barely. Her stamina was running dry ... and it was only a matter of time before the barrier cracked.

Realizing this, Sansa's mind raced, analyzing every possible move.

Beatrice was smart. She kept her distance at all times, never letting anyone get close. Even with the boost from her armor, Sansa's enhanced speed and power weren't enough to close the gap so easily.

"I need a way to erase that distance..."

Under the pitch-black sky, the battlefield was lit only by Beatrice's magical cannons — and in that moment, Sansa remembered something crucial:

In the darkness... her shadows were at their peak.

Recalling her berserk battle against Frey Starlight and Oliver Khan, she swirled her shadows around her and dove toward the ground at full speed.

"Trying to flee? And where do you think you're going?"

Beatrice laughed, redirecting her projectiles downward.

Sansa continued her dive — exposing herself to attacks from above — until she vanished into the earth, swallowed by shadow.

Beatrice blinked.

"Her presence... it's completely gone."

Irritated, she scanned the battlefield. Sansa's aura had disappeared without a trace.

Then her voice echoed from the void:

"This is a gift from the demons you worship so faithfully."

"As long as there's darkness... I can move freely through this battlefield!"

Beatrice's eyes widened as she felt a presence — this time directly above her.

Sansa had reappeared, crouched in the shadows of a high ridge above the gate.

Without hesitation, a colossal hand of darkness formed around her arm. She hurled it down toward Beatrice, aiming to crush her.

"Annoying trick..."

With a flick of her staff, Beatrice conjured a massive shield above her head. The hand slammed down with brutal force — but her barrier held firm.

"Your cheap tricks won't work on me."

But as she spoke...

Every cannon and weapon she had summoned was suddenly shattered — one by one — by shadowy blades erupting from every corner of the darkness.

As long as shadows existed...

Sansa could strike from anywhere.

It was the same terrifying power that once shook even the highest Imperial generals.

Beatrice recognized it instantly.

"A knockoff of the Shadow King's power... how pathetic."

"And this silly imitation will be your downfall!"

Sansa surged forward, forming another colossal hand — this time around her left arm.

She combined both hands into a massive spiraling drill of shadows and launched it downward. The drill spun violently, breaking through Beatrice's barrier with sheer force.

"I was closer to you than anyone else. I was your only real friend... and yet I failed to see what you were hiding behind that shy, innocent face."

As the drill spun, more and more shadowy blades erupted across the battlefield — Sansa pressing harder.

She had always prided herself on her ability to read people better than anyone else. But with Adriana, she had failed.

If she had realized sooner, maybe they could've prevented the catastrophe that followed.

But she hadn't. Despite distrusting nearly everyone...

She let her guard down for the one girl who had pretended to be meek and kind.

And now... she was paying the price.

"It's too late to undo what's been done ... but I will kill you here and now!"

Gathering every last ounce of strength, Sansa surged forward to finish it — to carve through Adriana's defenses and end her.

But Beatrice had one more card to play.

With a whisper of magic, a radiant circle of light wrapped around her like armor ... a divine shield that stopped every last blade of shadow cold.

"Your powers are truly formidable. After all, they're derived from the Shadow of the King... but ..."

With a wicked grin, Beatrice raised her right index finger toward the sky.

"Your shadows are far too weak, Sansa. You can't even wield your own power properly. How disgraceful."

A small ember of flame appeared at the tip of her finger. Within seconds, it grew into a blazing miniature sun that illuminated the battlefield with violent brilliance.

"Burn them for me."

The searing light drove away all the shadows that blanketed the battlefield.

"If this were truly the King's Shadow, a paltry light like this wouldn't erase it. But you... you're just a cheap imitation, Sansa. Kihihhi."

The comparison itself was unfair.

The true King's Shadow required the power of the Lord of Light himself to be countered — not the might of a mere puppet.

The gap was immense.

Now, with all the darkness wiped away, Beatrice pointed her hand directly at Sansa.

"Goodbye."

She unleashed a beam of devastating aura that swallowed Sansa whole, tearing through the ground beneath her with explosive force.

It was overwhelming ... and Beatrice was certain it would be enough.

But the truth quickly proved otherwise.

She only realized something was wrong when a sword made of shadow pierced through her abdomen ... Sansa had reappeared within the very beam meant to destroy her, having withstood its force using what remained of her armor.

Half of her shadow armor had already disintegrated. Her body was bloodied and broken.

Yet she had finally closed the distance.

Her blade now embedded deep within Beatrice's stomach.

"I finally reached you..."

Sansa gasped for breath, face to face with the witch, her shadow blade lodged deep.

It should have been a critical strike — fatal, even.

But Beatrice showed no pain. She smiled.

"Well done, Sansa."

Genuinely praising her, the witch raised her hand once more ... and fired another devastating beam of aura at point-blank range, blasting Sansa violently toward the ground.

Screaming in pain, the princess crashed, her body breaking on impact. Her shadows dispersed completely.

She lay on the ground — bleeding, heaving — as Beatrice slowly pulled the shadow blade from her stomach.

"What a pity. But this body... isn't like the others."

Despite the red blood it spilled, Adriana's body was nothing but a vessel — a puppet.

It couldn't be killed by a wound like that.

And that realization dawned on Sansa... far too late.

As she struggled on the ground, Beatrice descended slowly from the sky. The artificial sun above faded, restoring the battlefield to its natural darkness.

"You fought well, Sansa. I didn't expect you to land a hit at all. A shame it ends here."

Raising her finger again, Beatrice summoned fire once more, surrounding herself with a corona of destruction ... ready to erase Sansa once and for all.

"You were nothing more than a defective product of an experimental demon seed. You failed your mission... and clung to life by stealing power from demons. A failed experiment like you should've died long ago."

Preparing to unleash the final blow, Beatrice smiled cruelly.

"I'll clean up this filth myself."

Faced with the power poised to end her existence, Sansa slowly closed her eyes.

She spoke her last words quietly.

"Yes... I should have died a long time ago."

Since the day she was kidnapped in the distant past...

Since the fight against Oliver and Frey...

"But I survived. And I'll keep surviving."

At that moment — just before Beatrice could unleash her final attack — blood splattered once again.

Dozens of shadow tendrils erupted from Beatrice's own shadow, piercing through her and lifting her violently into the air.

Sansa, barely able to stand, rose to her feet — panting — as she gazed at Adriana's impaled body.

"At last... I've weakened you enough."

She spoke with difficulty, her words heavy, as Beatrice stared down at her in disbelief.

"How?!" she cried.

"How did you place your shadows there?!"

It didn't make sense.

Sansa had exhausted her strength. Beatrice had been far too vigilant to let her plant shadows inside her without noticing.

And yet...

The princess smiled faintly.

"I have a wretched brother... who never stopped trying to sink his filthy hands into my life. He sent pawns after me one by one... until I saw everyone around me as a potential enemy."

Since childhood, Sansa had learned to distrust everyone who got too close ... all because of Aegon, who had tried to kill her more than once.

So ever since she gained the power of shadows — and since the incident where Veyrith attacked her long ago — she had developed a secret technique:

Sansa hid portions of her power in the shadows of those closest to her. Not just to harm them... but to protect them as well.

"I planted my shadows inside your shadow a long time ago..."

"Though I never expected I'd end up using them against you... Adriana."

Suspended in the sky, her body pierced by dozens of shadowy spikes, Beatrice nodded with a smile.

"I see... So that's why I didn't sense them until the end. You hid them long ago. Clever move."

Despite the gaping wounds tearing through her puppet's flesh, she spoke with nonchalance .. as if pain were beneath her.

Seeing this, Sansa instinctively became wary. Beatrice, meanwhile, sighed in mild annoyance.

"Ah, dear me... I really need to stop lowering my guard the moment I think the battle's over. That's the second time this happened to my precious doll."

Beatrice's casual remark triggered something in Sansa's mind.

"Dolls?" she asked with a frown.

The witch simply returned to her usual smile.

"This body's done for. It's going to die soon. Let's call it a draw... Sansa."

"What are you talking about? And what do you mean by 'dolls'?"

Sansa pressed for answers, but Beatrice ignored her, chuckling wickedly instead.

At that moment — right in front of the gate — the ground beneath Sansa's feet suddenly lit up.

Beatrice had activated one of the magical traps she had set earlier in the battlefield, along with the Red Gate trap.

Seeing the light, Sansa immediately tried to flee.

But it was too late.

"I'm sorry, Sansa. But you weren't the only one who saved their trump card for the end."

As Beatrice spoke...

A thin beam of light emerged from thin air.

A simple pillar of light .. yet it pierced straight through Sansa's chest without mercy, leaving a gaping, bloody hole over twenty centimeters wide.

The beam shot through her entire body, exiting her back and leaving an empty cavity that revealed the sky beyond.

Sansa's eyes lost their spark almost instantly. Blood poured endlessly from the wound as her body crumpled to the ground.

At the same time, Adriana's body also collapsed ... the shadows that sustained her puppet vanishing along with Sansa's fading life.

Their lifeless bodies lay side by side, both staring blankly at the empty night sky, their blood pooling beneath them.

It was the final note in a brutal battle ... between a cunning witch and a princess who fought until the very end.

Sansa Valerion vs Adriana.

This round ended in a draw .. and the death of both.

Chapter 402: Who am I ?

Most of the battles had now come to an end.

Only a few remained before the curtain would fall on this final round.

Somewhere in the vast battlefield...

Draxler sat atop a jagged rock, his sword plunged beside him into the ground.

Running a hand through his orange hair, Beatrice's chosen knight sighed in boredom as he surveyed the ruined wasteland before him.

"That bastard... he really ran off."

After a long, intense battle, Ghost Umbra had proven to be a serious threat .. one Draxler considered a worthy opponent.

But just as their fight reached its peak...

Ghost had vanished, slipping away with a powerful, unexpected strike that sliced through Draxler's right side.

The knight wiped the blood from his wound and tasted it.

"He really got me... that Ghost Umbra."

Sheathing his blade, Draxler turned and walked away from the battlefield.

"I'll remember your name, kid."

He had no intention of chasing Ghost further ... not after sensing the monstrous aura radiating from another nearby clash.

Even a warrior of the Ultras knew when to back away from something truly monstrous.

Meanwhile...

Far from Draxler's position, Ghost Umbra clung to a cliffside, his body covered in deep, gaping wounds.

Clutching the pair of dark daggers he'd brought from London, he forced himself to keep moving, staggering with each step.

"That man... he was strong. Too strong."

It was the first time Ghost had encountered a warrior like Draxler.

His strength had continued to rise throughout the fight .. nearly reaching SS rank by the end.

"If I'd kept fighting, I would've died."

Even after landing a blow with his spatial-cutting technique...

Ghost had only managed to slice through Draxler's right side.

Knowing he couldn't win, the silent killer had withdrawn ... turning his focus instead to what mattered more.

Finding his friends.

He was so badly wounded that dizziness overtook him from the sheer amount of blood he had lost.

Assassins like him were never meant for prolonged direct combat. Though Ghost was undeniably powerful... he knew his limits all too well.

"I need to find the others—fast."

He kept repeating the words like a mantra, forcing himself to move forward, step by step, unaware of his surroundings.

After a few minutes of dragging himself through the desolate terrain...

Ghost finally emerged into an open field—one that offered a wide view of the ruined wasteland ahead.

But the moment he stepped into that clearing, he froze.

Eyes wide. Mouth agape.

The only sounds he could hear were the shrill cries of crows and the haunting screech of the wind.

The stench of blood stifled his nose .. and for someone so accustomed to death, even he found it unbearable.

Before him...

The land was torn and scorched, as if ripped apart by gods. Giant craters dotted the battlefield like open wounds.

And scattered across them were broken corpses ... shredded, mangled, soaked in blood so thick it pooled into a crimson lake.

There was nothing left in that place... but death.

Hundreds... no, possibly over a thousand.

"What kind of battle could've left this behind? Who the hell fought here?!"

Ghost muttered unconsciously, staggering forward in disbelief, trying to process what lay before him.

Then he stopped.

Frozen in place.

He saw one man... walking slowly away from the bloody mire, body drenched in red.

At first, he didn't recognize him.

But then he saw the twin dark swords at the man's side.

And it all clicked.

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—Frey Starlight's Pov—

I had lost all sense of reality.

Drowned once again in darkness.

My consciousness was hollow .. numb, unable to grasp anything around me.

I remember fighting with everything I had... dragging this battered body across the battlefield.

I fought. And fought. And fought.

I ran like a madman... swung my blades like a dying beast...

I tried. But I lost.

I lost to Mergo.

That's the last memory I had... before the darkness swallowed me whole.

I was supposed to be dead.

But I knew that couldn't be true.

They wouldn't let me die so easily.

I knew...

I knew this world wouldn't let me go that easily.

And so, I waited.

Waited for the darkness to spit me back out into reality.

I felt it wrapping around me... tight and cold... like it was hugging me.

"Ah... how I wish I could sleep."

I wanted to drift away... to escape into dreams and forget everything.

But I wasn't lucky enough for that.

Because only seconds later... the darkness gave way.

And the light returned.

I opened my eyes again...

To a familiar scene.

The ruined battlefield.

The taste of blood — both sweet and bitter — still fresh in my mouth.

My body was in shambles, as usual.

But my opponent was nowhere to be seen.

In fact... the battlefield itself felt long abandoned.

"Is it over?"

Where was Mergo? How much time had passed?

What happened to my friends?

A storm of questions flooded my mind, one after another.

Despite the injuries, I felt something strange .. my body could still push far beyond its limits.

It was as if my strength hadn't faded at all.

And then... as I stumbled in confusion...

I felt it.

That cold touch against my face.

I lifted my hand instinctively... reaching for it...

That cold, black metal.

Behind me, lay a thousand corpses.

At my feet, a sea of blood stretched endlessly.

And there I stood .. unaware that I had been wearing that mask the entire time.

Silently, I removed it from my face.

And there it was... the Nameless Mask.

I didn't feel pain like last time.

No.

My mind was strangely calm.

And yet, all I could do... was stare at the mask with a blank expression.

The bitterness in my mouth grew heavier and heavier.

And I didn't even know... what I had done.

That's when the question left my lips..

"Who am I?"

Who... am I?

Then suddenly...

A voice called out to me. One I knew well.

"Frey!!"

From a distance ... limping, bloodied, barely standing...

It was Ghost.

Chapter 403: The Final Mission (1)

– Frey Starlight's Pov –

"Ghost..."

My assassin friend appeared before me.. battered, bruised, and in a terrible state himself.

But seeing him brought a fleeting sense of relief to my heart, a fragile joy laced with worry, as I was still clueless about what had happened to the others...

"I knew you wouldn't die, Frey."

Relief washed over Ghost's face as well, revealing an expression he rarely showed anyone.

"I won't die, my friend. Be certain of that."

In this vast universe, I'm the last person they should be worried about when it comes to survival.

Ghost was glad to see me, but his eyes lingered on the field of corpses behind me. That's when he finally asked, puzzled—

"Was this your doing?"

With the Nameless mask now hidden, I didn't even glance at the carnage behind me. I simply looked forward.

"I repelled one of their armies here. It bought us some time... but we need to move. More will be coming soon."

With Ghost here, I'd finally found a lead to the others .. thanks to the witch's mark still with him.

"Let's move. We have to find them before it's too late!"

After drifting in a mental void, I'd finally regained my grasp on reality ... remembering what happened, and why I fought so fiercely.

My comrades... especially Danzo.

They all faced terrifying enemies, and were closer to death than ever before.

Ghost shared my thoughts, so we didn't waste a single moment. We took off immediately, guided by the witch's mark still faintly glowing on him.

At the same time, I opened the system interface .. finally deciding to use the Third-Person pov, a feature I'd hesitated to activate until now, afraid of the harsh truths it might reveal.

With my heart pounding, I stared anxiously at the system window as it lit up in front of me with a cold blue glow.

Host Name: Frey Starlight (Dual Soul)

Class: Swordsman

Talent: SS

Current Rank: A

Strength: A-

Speed: A+

Agility: A

Endurance: S

Aura: SSS

Magic: –

[Swordsmanship – Level 6] (Limit broken. User can now reach Level 7)

Inherent Talents: {Swordsmanship}, {Aura Manipulation}, {Poison Resistance}

Combat Style: Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow

Skills:

– Hawk Eyes (Grade A)

– Ghost Steps (Grade A)

– seduction (Grade D)

– Ascension (Grade S)

– Ignition (Grade SS)

Abilities:

– Shadow Adaptation: 3/7

Stage 1: Adaptation to all combat styles, allowing user to counterattack any opponent.

Stage 2: Adaptation to all types of physical damage, granting the ability to regenerate from any wound.

Stage 3: ???

Anti-magic – Level 2

Current Achievement Points: 0

Main Mission: Survive the Pursuit (10,000 Achievement Points)

Final Mission: ???

As always, the system displayed my stats... my power had increased drastically since the last time I saw it.

But I didn't care about any of that. My focus was solely on the "Affinity" tab.

There, three names blinked in red:

– Danzo Smasher

– Sansa Valerion

– Snow Lionheart

I used the Third-Person Perspective on all three, over and over again—but no matter how hard I tried, all I found was darkness.

Each time I activated the skill on one of them, the screen would immediately go black. I couldn't see anything. I couldn't reach them.

That cursed darkness only deepened my anxiety, and slowly, the dreadful thoughts began to eat away at me...

It had already been so long since I fought that army... and since I faced Mergo...

Enough time had passed for every battle to be over.

Which meant... everything had likely already ended.

Then what was the meaning of that darkness?

Were they simply unconscious? Or...?

The more the worst-case scenario began to take shape in my mind, the more painful the pressure in my head became.

Clenching my fists tightly, I charged forward, pushing Ghost to pick up the pace.

"We need to find them... as fast as possible!"

Ignoring the fatigue that dragged at my bloodied body, I forced myself to keep going—demanding more, giving more.

All along the way, I kept trying to use the Third-Person Perspective on them.

But no matter how many times I tried...

That cursed darkness never went away.

And that only made my anxiety worse.

I feared what I would find at the end of this road .. scattered corpses, limbs, blood... nothing more.

Just the thought of it nearly shattered me. So what would actually happen if those fears turned into reality?

"Don't die..."

The words slipped from my mouth without conscious thought.

Ghost heard them. He knew exactly what I was thinking.

He rushed ahead of me with renewed speed, following the faint trace of the witch's mark.

"We'll find them, Frey. They're strong. They won't die so easily."

That's what he said.

But I knew... he didn't truly believe it either.

Maybe it was just his way of comforting me.

But it didn't change anything.

With all my senses honed on what lay ahead, I realized we'd entered a tunnel carved deep into one of the larger mountains.

As I examined the surroundings more closely, I recognized them—they looked eerily similar to the battlefield where I'd last seen Danzo fighting.

A spark of hope ignited within the pit of black despair consuming me.

"Ghost! Are you sure the mark is leading us here?!"

In response to my urgency, Ghost raised his hand and showed the faintly glowing witch's mark.

"Yes. One of them is definitely here."

His confirmation stoked the hope within me even more.

If the mark was still active... that meant Danzo was still alive.

Somewhere, deep within these dark caves, he was still breathing.

Knowing that, I couldn't hold back anymore.

"Which way is it pointing?!"

I shouted, and Ghost hesitated for a moment before pointing toward a solid wall of stone.

This entire mountain was a maze of intersecting tunnels .. if we kept taking turns and searching blindly, we'd never make it in time.

Understanding that, I drew both swords and unleashed my aura once more.

With a single wave of dark aura, I blasted through the stone wall ... carving our path by force.

"Let's go!"

I kept tearing through the rock without pause, forging a new path straight through the mountain, with Ghost close behind, guiding me toward the correct direction.

"At this rate, the whole place might collapse on us, Frey!"

Ghost warned, worried we'd be buried alive.

But I didn't care.

"We'll make our own way out if we have to. We just need to reach him... now!"

I had already given everything I had. I had fought until my body could barely move, until my breath ran dry.

So please... Danzo...

Please...

Hold on. Don't die.

That was my only wish.

...

...

...

– Danzo Smasher’s Pov –

My name is Danzo.

I’m not a complicated guy. Not special, either.

If you asked me, I’d say I’m just... average.

My mother loved strong men. That’s why she married my father, who to me always represented what strength truly meant.

As for me .. I was just a kid who loved his mother.

She admired my father’s strength, so from a young age...

I trained hard. I wanted to be strong too—strong enough to impress her.

Maybe in this world, she was the only person I ever truly wanted recognition from.

But she died too early...

She didn’t give me enough time to earn that recognition.

My father was strong .. but even his strength couldn't stop her from dying.

That's when I started asking myself:

What kind of strength would I need to survive in a world like this?

And the answer was clear.

A lot.

More than I ever imagined. Enough to overcome everything.

So I trained. I trained again and again.

After my mother's death, my father raised me on his own. He gave me everything he could. I was grateful.

He taught me values.

He taught me what it meant to be a man—one who doesn't betray his friends, one who keeps his word no matter what...

One who never gives up, no matter how many obstacles life throws in his way.

All those values... they shaped the man I am today.

Even when I hit the wall of talent, I never stopped. I kept moving forward.

I built my strength from nothing—every ounce of it was mine alone.

It was something I forged with my own hands, something I've always taken pride in.

But that very strength... the strength I built my entire life... ended up betraying me.

That's when I realized ... I was still inside the battlefield.

When I barely opened my blood-soaked eyes, I found that same colossal dark fist descending upon me again, crushing my body bit by bit.

"...Ah. That's right."

I remembered now.

I was still in the middle of a fight.

Still battling that monster known as Gvardiol.

Against a monster like that—I lost completely.

The Silver Dragon Shield was shattered.

As for my body... I didn't want to look at it. No .. I couldn't look at it anymore.

At the end of the battle, I saw Gvardiol tear open my chest by force.

The pain was... unbearable. So much so that I passed out more than once.

And still—I didn't die.

Did my resilience buy me a few extra minutes?

But the pain... it was too much.

Bones shattered. Chest torn open. The world turned black.

I lost.

Completely.

Those memories of my mother... and my father... that flooded my mind earlier ..

Was this what they call a person's final moments?

The moment your life flashes before your eyes?

Did that mean... I was dying?

Was this the end?

I genuinely wondered—especially once the pain vanished all of a sudden.

That's when I realized...

I had lost all sensation.

This world had always been cruel.

And now, it had forced me to face a wall so high—the wall of talent—that I became completely powerless before a monster like Gvardiol.

With bleeding eyes, I stared into the void.

Accepting it.

I was really going to die.

I waited for the end in silence. I had nothing left to give.

I had used everything—and I couldn't even scratch him.

And so, I sat there in quiet resignation, awaiting the end... with a bitter smile on my face.

I kept staring into the distance.

To be honest... I truly wished someone—anyone—would appear out of nowhere and save me from this misery.

I never thought I'd become so weak... that I'd start wishing for help.

But here I was.

I had slammed into the wall of reality.

Still, that selfish hope would never come true. No matter how long I waited, the truth remained ...

I was completely alone here.

I had no choice but to close my eyes... as everything faded into black.

"...Ah. Father's going to be so disappointed."

Father... my friends...

I'm sorry.

Chapter 404: The Final Mission (2)

A lot of time had passed.

The individual battles were all over—some won, some lost.

Some survived. Others... didn't.

Frey and Ghost ...

After tearing through the mountain range like madmen...

It had taken them several long minutes to finally arrive.

With every second that passed, Frey could feel his heart pounding harder and faster as they closed in.

Frey—the man whose emotions had been long buried, whose heart had turned cold—was now more anxious than ever.

Because they were nearing someone who still had the power to stir those long-forgotten feelings inside him.

Danzo.

He was a man who gave so much... and never asked for anything in return.

One of the very few people Frey truly cared about.

"Danzo..."

The wait didn't last long.

Both Frey and Ghost finally reached the battlefield.

But the enemy was nowhere to be seen.

Instead, all they found was a devastated cavern .. crushed and ruined by the battle that had taken place within.

And at the very end of that cavern...

Inside a massive crater carved into the stone wall...

There lay a familiar figure.

A young man they knew all too well...

Frey's Hawk Eyes allowed him to see clearly, even from a distance.

Danzo—his body broken, mercilessly torn apart by Gvardiol.

His chest ripped open, his face covered in blood...

His armor shattered into fragments...

And blood spilled everywhere...

That was him.

Their friend.

Both Frey and Ghost dashed toward him like madmen.

Their faces twisted in fear and panic.

They gently held onto him—unable to accept the brutal reality before them.

He was in a terrible state.

So mangled that some of the wounds had exposed bone.

Frey felt fury surge through him... but it was drowned out by something far stronger ...

Fear.

"Danzo..."

He said his name with a trembling voice.

And then, in that moment ..

Ghost, who had been checking their friend's broken body, suddenly shouted:

"He's breathing!"

"...What?" Frey asked, stunned.

Ghost repeated himself, louder this time:

"He's breathing, Frey! He's alive!!"

It took Frey a few seconds to process the words.

Danzo... was alive.

Ghost immediately began treating him as best he could, while Frey placed his hand over Danzo's blood-soaked chest.

And then... he heard it.

A faint heartbeat.

A sound that brought him back to life.

"He's alive!"

Disbelieving, Frey and Ghost clung to their friend like madmen.

"He's alive!!!"

"We need to help him..."

Frey's voice cracked with emotion, his mind too shaken to think clearly as tears welled in his eyes.

Channeling his SSS ranked Aura through his palm, he placed it over Danzo's chest, trying to circulate aura into his friend's broken body...

But the moment he did ..

Frey's face darkened.

"...The aura channels. The core... it's all shattered."

And then, he realized ..

Danzo was paralyzed.

He'd never fight again. He wouldn't even walk.

But he was alive.

Frey's mind burned.

What had happened?

How had his friend survived?

Did the enemy spare him? Leave him crippled instead of killing him?

If that were true... then it was a cruel mercy.

Still, Frey didn't care.

What mattered more than anything... Was that Danzo was still breathing.

Yet, no matter how hard he tried...

Frey couldn't shake the unease gnawing at his heart.

Something didn't feel right.

Gvardiol...

Would he really spare their friend?

Frey wanted to believe it.

But the ominous feeling swelling in his chest kept growing... faster... louder...

Staring at his unconscious friend, Frey failed to notice the system notification that had been blinking beside him for some time now.

And then—after a few more seconds—he finally saw it.

The system kept flashing insistently, demanding his attention.

Frey knew something had happened.

He had no choice but to comply.

Slowly... he opened the system interface again.

Everything was the same.

Except one thing.

With wide eyes and a heart threatening to explode inside his chest...

Frey read the words displayed before him.

"...The final mission?"

It had appeared again.

The mission that had been marked only by question marks ever since he won the Victoriad...

was now back.

...

Main Mission:

Survive the Pursuit (10,000 Achievement Points)

Final Mission:

Save... or kill Danzo.

Reward: 15,000 Achievement Points, Skill: Screenshot (SS Rank)

Failure Penalty: Death of all main characters.

Time Limit: One month

Mission Description:

— A complete Demon Seed has been implanted in Danzo Smasher. You must act before it activates and unleashes the monster slumbering within.

...

...

...

While Ghost was busy tending to Danzo's wounds, Frey kept rereading the mission description over and over.

The final mission—long shrouded in mystery—had finally revealed itself.

And Frey felt the entire world shake around him. His eyes locked onto one term:

"Complete Demon Seed."

Complete...

Frey understood what that meant.

Unlike Sansa, who he barely saved—because the seed inside her had only been a prototype—

The final, complete seed... had no cure.

He wrote the story. He knew that better than anyone.

There was no healing a complete Demon Seed. Because the cure didn't exist.

Not even the power of the Lord of Light could save Danzo. The full seed fuses directly with the body.

There was only one way to deal with it.

And it was right there in the mission.

Save... or kill.

...or kill.

Kill Danzo.

The system had been brutally clear.

Frey nearly lost his mind.

With a trembling body, he realized the grim reality before him.

"You're asking me to kill the person I fought so hard to save...?"

Even thinking about it left him hollow.

But he didn't let himself spiral too far.

"No... The system didn't tell me to kill him."

Its words were precise.

Save... or kill.

Which meant... there had to be a way to save him.

"There has to be one..."

And if there was .. then it could only come from the system.

Ignoring both Ghost and Danzo, Frey frantically tore through the system interface like a madman.

"The system must know the answer. It has to... I probably just need a massive amount of Achievement Points. Yes... it has to be that."

Clinging to hope with everything he had left,

he activated the Writer's Authority—desperate to know the answer.

"How can I destroy the complete Demon Seed without killing the vessel?"

He asked with a clenched heart, banking everything on the system.

And it replied instantly.

Frey expected the usual answer .. that he lacked the required points.

But that wasn't what he got.

Instead...

...

– This question cannot be answered using Achievement Points.

Such inquiries require the use of the System Inquiry ability.

"System Inquiry!?"

Frey Starlight immediately remembered the ability.

The reward he earned from completing the first final mission .. his victory at the Victoriad.

System Inquiry allowed him to ask the Engineer one question, and the blue-eyed man would be forced to answer.

But right then...

Frey remembered.

He had already used it.

He wasted it—asking how he could return to his original world.

He'd spent it.

Realizing that...

He stared at the line that appeared beneath the interface:

– You were warned –

The moment he read it...

He recalled what the Engineer had told him that day.

He warned him...

Not to use the System Inquiry hastily.

That the future held too many unpredictable variables.

He said it word for word:

"You'll regret it... you'll regret using it now."

But Frey didn't listen. He used it anyway.

He thought the Engineer meant he'd regret learning that he couldn't go home.

But the truth was far crueler.

Frey, with a dark expression and terrifying eyes ..

Clutched his face in rage, finally understanding.

"...He knew. He knew this was going to happen from the beginning."

Staring at his unconscious friend, whose fate now rested entirely in his hands ..

Frey realized that despite everything...

Despite all the choices,

all the fights,

all the battles,

all the desperate struggle for freedom ..

It was all for nothing.

In the end...

Frey was still walking the path the blue-eyed man had laid for him.

Everything... had been for nothing.

His mind was in turmoil.

Despite all he had done...

He was still dancing in the palm of the Engineer's hand.

Everything had become meaningless.

He could no longer save Danzo.

The only way to end it now... was to kill him.

To kill his friend.

"You will regret it."

That single phrase ..spoken by the Engineer long ago .. echoed in Frey's mind.

"You will regret it."

Hell hadn't even begun yet.

This... was just the beginning.

"You will regret it."

Regret deeper than anything.

Frey Starlight ..

Bound by threads of fate, knotted tightly around his soul, found himself forced to keep walking this path.

Forced to kill his friend.

The same friend he had risked everything to save.

Between a dying Danzo...

and the rest of his comrades, whose fates were still unknown...

and the destiny imposed upon him, a road he was shackled to against his will—

Frey Starlight broke.

He collapsed beside his fallen friend,

no longer knowing what he was supposed to do.

Shattered, beneath Ghost's confused gaze,

who couldn't understand what had just happened.

But Frey's expression said it all.

It told the story of a man who had suffered so much...

that he no longer knew how to go on.

It was painful.

Unbearably painful.

Chapter 405: Last Stand (1)

– Frey Starlight's POV –

This chase was nearing its end.

Standing there, I looked at Danzo, unconscious, while Ghost poured every ounce of his medical knowledge into treating him as best he could.

The deeper he examined Danzo's body, the more he realized the extent of the damage.

He was injured so severely that Ghost struggled to even locate a single intact part.

Bruises, fractures, and trauma covered every inch of his body. His aura core had been shattered, along with every single pathway that carried it.

Some areas were worse than others .. his legs, in particular, were nearly destroyed.

Ghost had probably already figured it out.

Danzo was paralyzed.

But still alive.

Meanwhile...

I stood motionless, watching it all unfold as if time had slowed.

Every second dragged on, heavier than the one before, as my mind spiraled toward a dead end.

What's the solution?

What was I supposed to do?

The question echoed relentlessly in my head as I found myself surrounded from every direction.

Save, or kill Danzo.

That phrase repeated in my mind again and again.

In just those few short minutes, I had already gone through dozens of potential outcomes .. desperately trying to find a way out.

But no matter how I twisted it, no matter how many angles I explored...

My mind always brought me back to the same conclusion.

I can't save him.

I knew it better than anyone—because I understood exactly what a complete Demon Seed truly meant.

Unlike its prototype, the full seed fuses entirely with the host's body, turning them into a demon.

In other words, it can't be removed.

The only way to deal with it... is to kill the host.

I knew that.

But I couldn't bring myself to accept it.

'Why... why in all the hells would they implant something this rare inside Danzo?!'

A surge of fury boiled within me, tangled with pain and disbelief.

Gvardiol.

That bastard did this.

Was this part of his plan from the start?

To place this trap inside one of us? But who even is he? And why Danzo?

Why—of all people—did it have to be him?

I've been through so much in this world. Killing strangers isn't something that fazes me anymore.

But not him...

Quietly, I sat down on the ground, utterly drained.

Muttering the bitter truth under my breath, over and over:

"You're telling me I have to kill him?"

With these very hands...

Kill the person I went through hell and back to save?

Am I really fated to be chained to this cursed path until the end?

I've fought. I've struggled. I gave everything.

I didn't leave a single stone unturned.

I ran like a madman through every possible road, thinking I was choosing my own destiny...

But no.

All this time—I've been dancing in the palm of his hand.

In the end, I've landed exactly where he wanted me.

From the very beginning... I was never truly free.

Even when I gave up ... when I tried to end it all and die .. he didn't let me.

No matter what I chose, it always led to their desired outcome.

And now here I am...

Being forced to kill Danzo.

Kill him...

Staring down at his battered face, unconscious and broken...

I just couldn't accept it.

And yet, I couldn't find an answer either.

I collapsed, unable to move forward, unable to think.

My mind simply shut down ..overwhelmed by the unscalable wall of fate that had robbed me of every choice.

Powerless, I had no idea what to do anymore.

Drowning in despair.

I was like a fallen star, drifting alone through the vast void of existence... swept away by the current of fate.

"Frey!!"

Ghost's voice was the only thing that dragged me back to reality.

Looking at him with an empty, blank face...

I saw my friend staring at me in confusion.

"What's wrong with you?"

"Huh?"

I responded faintly, not even aware of my surroundings. Ghost clearly couldn't comprehend what I was going through.

"I've called your name several times. You just sat there staring into space. Pull yourself together, man."

He had Danzo slung over his back and motioned with his head.

"We're not out of this yet. We still have to find the others."

Until then .. I need you at your best!"

Despite his usual cold demeanor, Ghost had shown more emotion than ever.

Steadying myself, I rose once more .. fully aware that this wasn't over yet.

"You're right... sorry. I just lost it for a moment."

It was far too soon to collapse... or surrender to despair.

There were still others out there I needed to worry about. Besides, the final quest had given me a one-month deadline.

I shouldn't rush to conclusions or assume the worst.

There had to be a way.

And I'd find it ... no matter the cost.

But before that...

"I'll carry him. You lead the way to the others."

Taking Danzo from Ghost, I slung my injured friend over my back after equipping the new armor Ghost had given me.

And the moment I lifted him... I realized just how light Danzo had become.

In this state, he was a shadow of the friend I once knew. A miserable, broken shell.

But I didn't let those thoughts consume me.

Pushing all other emotions aside, I focused solely on survival .. and saving whoever could still be saved.

Until then, nothing else mattered.

"Let's go."

With the same speed we'd arrived, we dashed out of the cave at full sprint.

Using the witch's mark, Ghost led the way toward the others .. somewhere amidst the remnants of the battlefield.

...

...

...

"Damn it..."

Soaring through the air amidst a trail of blazing flame, Phoenix cursed under his breath, holding Seris in his arms.

She had already lost consciousness .. worn out from her battle with Baylor Moonlight, and drained by the raw power she'd unleashed from a body that wasn't ready for it.

But that wasn't what made Phoenix curse.

His heightened senses had always been reliable when it came to sensing incoming danger.

And this time was no different.

Although the one-on-one fights had ended... the witch's game wasn't over.

The Ultras armies were still closing in .. surrounding them from all sides.

They had gained a little time when Frey Starlight single-handedly held off one of the advancing forces.

But that... was just the vanguard.

Now, the real storm was coming.

An overwhelming number of enemies were marching in fast.

Among them were powerful warriors .. even Hollows who had once faced off against Maekar's army.

Realizing the scale of the threat heading their way...

Phoenix Sunlight found himself unable to make a decision.

He had always trusted in his strength.

But now, he couldn't even guarantee the safety of those under his care.

Especially not the girl he held in his arms.

Ever since it was revealed that the red portal was a trap .. they had no way back home.

Suddenly aware of where he was, Phoenix realized he had instinctively returned to the site of the red gate while trying to locate the other students through the witch's mark.

And without warning, he dove toward the location.

The area was in ruins—a clear sign that a fierce battle had taken place.

But Phoenix couldn't detect any active marks nearby, which meant the student who'd been here was either gone... or dead.

Descending to the ground, still carrying Seris...

His eyes widened the moment he noticed something.

A chill ran down his spine.

Gently laying Seris on the ground, Phoenix rushed over to the two lifeless bodies nearby.

The first belonged to Adriana ... the shy girl who had traveled with them.

She was lying in a pool of blood, riddled with countless holes across her mangled body.

But Phoenix couldn't look away from the second figure sprawled beside her.

It was none other than Princess Sansa Valerion.

Dropping to his knees beside her, he stared blankly, unable to process the sight.

Her body had already gone cold.

The blood had clotted and dried. Her skin had turned pale—unnaturally so, as if drained of all color.

Her eyes were still wide open, lifeless and glassy as they stared up at the empty sky.

On her chest...

A gaping, blood-soaked crater marked where she had been struck.

A brutal attack had caved in her torso and obliterated her internal organs.

It was precise—merciless—designed to destroy her heart and everything around it.

With trembling fingers...

Phoenix gently closed her eyes.

His face twisted with pain as he clenched his teeth.

She had died in the worst way imaginable .. right next to Adriana.

Sansa's condition was so awful... he had barely recognized her at first.

What kind of battle could've left her like this?

So pale...

Her once-golden hair now bleached white, tinged with ashen gray...

Then, without warning...

Four more figures suddenly appeared at the scene, brought there by the witch's mark.

Aegon Valerion's group had finally arrived .. at the very place where the earlier battles had begun.

Daemon, Dawn, and Selena were with him, each in varying condition.

Chapter 406: Last Stand (2)

"Phoenix..."

Aegon looked toward him, then to Seris, and finally to the corpses of both the princess and Adriana.

He pieced together what had happened in an instant.

"...So my foolish sister is finally dead, huh?"

The prince walked forward calmly, while the others followed, examining the fallen.

All except for Daemon, who silently kept his distance.

Dawn and Selena showed clear signs of sorrow for the comrades they had lost.

The only one who survived that battle was Seris—and even she was barely hanging on.

Staring down at his sister's lifeless form, Aegon Valerion showed no reaction.

He didn't flinch. He didn't look away.

Instead, he lifted his eyes toward the distant horizon.

And after just a few seconds... he let out a sigh and wore his usual smile once more.

"So, Phoenix... what now? What's your next move?"

Up until now, every decision they'd made had led to disaster.

And now?

What choice could they possibly make when an entire army was closing in on them?

The portal had been placed, quite absurdly, at the very center of the continent's western side ..

The exact place Beatrice had commanded all her forces to converge upon from the beginning.

As if she knew the final act would unfold there.

The Ultras armies crushed the earth beneath them, marching in from every direction.

The elite students were completely surrounded.

Phoenix and the few who remained standing stared into the distance—at the final enemy they had no choice but to face.

Thousands of soldiers...

All of them against a handful of elite students who had barely survived their individual battles.

The enemy continued to draw closer, and the tremors of their advance sent a chill down every spine.

Then, the others began arriving—one by one.

Lara Croft came first, barely carrying Snow on her back. Then Frey and Ghost—the last to make it.

As they looked at one another, their expressions were a storm of mixed emotions...

Especially when they saw the state of Snow and Danzo...

And Frey—alive, against all odds.

But there was no time to process any of that.

The earth beneath them was still trembling—unceasing—warning them of an enemy they could not possibly withstand.

Among all of them, Frey walked forward, his face darkened beyond recognition.

He passed Snow Lionheart, unconscious after his body had been consumed by dark flames...

Then paused beside the body of Sansa Valerion, the princess.

She looked so different now from the last time he had seen her... so empty, so drained of life.

Frey said nothing. His face remained unchanged.

But his eyes... they said everything.

Beneath that calm facade, something was building inside him.

Something ready to explode.

Only Ghost, standing just behind him, could see it.

As for the elite class, they stood frozen in place, staring at the colossal army that had surrounded them.

"What do we do now?"

Lara Croft, gripped by fear, gave voice to the question that haunted them all.

Terror and hopelessness had seized them...

Until Phoenix stepped forward—and unleashed his blazing aura.

Flames erupted around him, drawing every eye.

"Everyone, group up here. Don't engage. Not until the end. Wait until I open a path for you."

He stepped forward, fully prepared to fight.

"Our only chance of survival... is to break through one of their weaker flanks and carve a way out. That's our only hope."

It was a simple plan.

The miracle of the Sunlight bloodline would charge in alone—Phoenix would take on the army himself to open a path for Frey and the others to escape.

Even now, he wanted to protect them.

Which made Aegon sigh.

"You're seriously going to face them alone? You'll be dead long before you open any path."

He was stating the obvious.

Phoenix's plan was suicidal.

But Phoenix didn't stop. He increased the pressure with his aura, forcing them all to fall in line with his will.

He spoke with cold finality:

"This is the only way. Don't act on your own."

The Sunlight heir stood as an overwhelming presence—forcing his will upon them.

All but one.

"No."

The voice that answered him carried a weight far greater than Phoenix's.

A chilling voice, resonating with raw power.

The very air around them began to tremble.

Frey Starlight stepped away from Sansa's body and slowly walked toward Phoenix.

His aura surged—equal to Phoenix's own—shocking the Sunlight heir to the core.

He couldn't comprehend what he was seeing...

Frey, drawing both his dark blades, spoke with unwavering resolve:

"I'll fight them."

With a shadowed face, a suffocating killing intent erupted from within Frey, making everyone around him flinch instinctively.

It was the killing intent forged through the slaughter of a thousand enemies .. one after another, without pause.

"I'll kill them all... one by one!"

Frey was determined to spill blood.

After everything he'd been through... after all the horrors and losses that had piled up one after another...

He had finally reached his limit.

Something inside him was on the verge of exploding.

He couldn't remain still anymore.

He wanted to slaughter the bastards who had done this to him.

He wanted to destroy them all, to feed the raging fire that was devouring him from the inside... to forget ...even just for a while .. all the grief that had shattered him.

He wanted to return to that state... the one from when he killed a thousand men before.

And now, that suffocating aura of death radiated off him like a storm.

This was his escape—the only way to flee the cruel reality pressing down on his soul.

If it meant forgetting everything, even temporarily...

Frey was more than ready to kill. As much as it took.

Now he stood face to face with Phoenix, their chests almost colliding.

With an aura equal to Phoenix's, Frey made it clear .. there would be no stopping him. Not this time.

Especially not when he was this strong.

"We'll fight!"

Frey repeated, and at last, Phoenix gave in—realizing that Frey's strength would be a vital force in the coming clash.

"Then we break through together."

Phoenix sighed, accepting the inevitable.

More stepped forward, ready to join the fight, offering their help.

But the one who moved first was someone no one expected.

"Wait!"

Barely standing, leaning on his sacred sword...

Snow rose, using a single arm, his body burned and broken ...but his golden eyes still shone with unwavering light.

"I'm coming too."

His words sent Lara Croft into a panic.

"What are you doing?! Can't you see your condition? You can't even kill an ant like this!"

She yelled in disbelief.

But Snow's gaze remained fixed on Frey Starlight alone.

And Frey understood him immediately.

With swift steps, Frey approached Snow, his hand glowing with an intense violet light.

"Then prepare yourself."

Placing his hand over Snow's chest, Frey injected SSS-ranked Aura directly into his friend's body, reigniting his strength from within.

Snow channeled that power instantly into his blade, covering himself with the radiance of Holy Light.

Then, without warning, his wounds began to close—one by one—and a new arm began forming where the previous had burned away.

Frey had given him a terrifying surge of Aura, fully replenishing the reserves he had drained in his fight against V.

And yet...

It had barely scratched the surface of the titanic reservoir of aura within Frey.

He then turned to face the others.

"Anyone who wants to fight—step forward!"

Now that Snow was fit to fight again, Frey pointed at the army ahead.

"If you want to survive, then fight for your life!"

Unleashing his Aura, Frey began empowering everyone around him, one after another ..those who willingly stepped forward.

Each of them was shocked by the sheer magnitude of power he shared.

But in the end, that didn't matter.

What mattered... was the enemy standing before them.

With Phoenix at the front, and Frey and Snow by his side...

The elite class advanced, preparing for one last battle against the Ultras army...

An army that had already taken so much from them.

Chapter 407: The Elite vs The Ultras (1)

Positioned at the rear of the Ultra forces encircling the Elite Class...

Maria exhaled slowly, finally feeling her wounds begin to mend after her grueling battle against Daemon and Dawn.

Her power was formidable .. but it came with a troublesome weakness. As an Empyrean, Maria was now unable to continue fighting, which was why she had fallen behind the vanguard.

The final battle was about to erupt at any moment, and when it did, the last surviving students of the Elite Class—the most gifted generation in imperial history—would be slaughtered.

Their deaths would be a devastating blow to the enemy, as these young talents had demonstrated frightening potential.

And yet, Maria felt nothing. If anything, the whole situation struck her as profoundly tragic.

How far humanity had fallen... to the point where humans were forced to kill humans, over and over again.

"You look like hell, dear Maria."

A familiar voice pulled her from her thoughts, slurred with that same drunkard's grin she remembered too well.

"Lord Mergo..."

She said his name unconsciously, eyes widening in shock at the sight before her.

The Lord of the Dark Hive... Mergo .. stood before her barefoot, his frail body battered and bruised, one hand resting on the hilt of his sword and the other clutching the severed head of Lawrence.

"What happened to you?!"

Maria stared in disbelief at the elder's wounds, dried blood crusted around gashes that looked fresh, as if carved by a cursed blade.

"Why haven't you healed yourself?"

She asked, baffled. Someone of his infernal power should've been able to recover easily. But Mergo merely shook his head.

"It's not that I don't want to... I simply can't."

Clutching his fractured chest, Mergo let out a crooked smile as he recalled the fierce battle.

"The wounds that sword left on me refuse to heal. It's like he cursed me with every slash. All I can do now is stop them from getting worse."

Maria frowned instinctively. It was hard to imagine someone as powerful as Mergo suffering like this at the hands of a single opponent.

"Who did this to you?"

As soon as she asked, his face came to Mergo's mind.

"A monster with inhuman strength. A fighter like none I've ever seen. Heh... His power kept climbing, until I had no choice but to flee in the end."

Still carrying Lawrence's head, Mergo began walking alongside the Ultra army, Maria at his side.

"You're telling me one of the Elite students did this to you?!"

It made no sense... and yet it was the truth.

"Maybe we were wrong, Maria."

Mergo muttered, eyes locked on the distant battlefield where the climax was about to unfold.

"Maybe what we're looking for lies on the other side."

His words were cryptic, but Maria found herself following in silence, frowning deeply.

"Do you truly believe that?"

Drawing his blade, Mergo gave her a confident smirk.

"The next battle will give us the answer."

The elder sighed as he raised Lawrence's severed head.

"Now then, what should I do with this troublesome brat?"

"Is he dead?"

"Of course not. Cutting off his head won't kill him. But it'll stop him from regenerating so easily..."

With a wave of his hand, Mergo opened a dimensional rift and tossed Lawrence's head inside.

"I'll deal with him later. But for now..."

At that moment, the Ultras army stopped advancing .. they had reached the center.

Everyone braced themselves for the final act.

It was time to end it.

...

...

...

The Ultras forces had reached the center at last, encircling the Elite Class from all directions.

Within the ranks of their main force stood several prominent figures...

Gavid Lindman marched at the front. Lords of the Ultras, like the furious Godfrey—still enraged from his last fight against Phoenix—followed closely behind.

Others, like Gvardiol, and even the Hollow Evelyn ..who had yet to reappear .. were also present.

One could say that nearly every major fighter of the Ultras continent was gathered here. The empire's chances of survival were practically zero.

"We ended up playing that stupid witch's game," Gavid Lindman growled, his voice bitter with rage.
"When we should've done this from the start."

He had never wanted to waste time on Beatrice's twisted "game." His plan had always been simple: crush Frey and his allies with overwhelming force.

But Beatrice had promised to surrender willingly if they participated in her game.

And so... they played along.

The one-on-one duels were over.

Now came the time for mass slaughter.

"This is going to be fun,"

Gvardiol chuckled, folding his hands as he stared toward the distant gate.

After secretly planting a demon seed inside one of them...

The Empyrean was curious to see how far those young fighters ..barely old enough to be called warriors ..could go.

Especially in a battle like the one about to begin.

All of the Ultras forces stood ready, their armies amassed and waiting.

But the first move didn't come from them ..

It came from the enemy.

Before their very eyes, a blazing pillar of fire rose to the sky, piercing the darkness of night as it ignited the battlefield with overwhelming power.

The flames swelled and surged, taking the form of a colossal phoenix with wings ablaze, screeching madly as it dove toward the Ultras.

Harnessing an astonishing amount of fire aura, Phoenix ignited the skies above, launching the flaming beast without warning straight into one of the weaker flanks of the Ultras army.

He was clever—targeting the vulnerable first.

And in seconds, the giant phoenix swelled in their vision, threatening to incinerate them alive.

"Holy hell."

Gvardiol burst into laughter at the sheer spectacle.

Then, without warning ..

The phoenix exploded.

A violent eruption swallowed a terrifying number of Ultras soldiers, burning them to ashes.

After unleashing one of his most powerful long-range techniques, Phoenix immediately charged in, a blazing inferno wrapped around him, determined to tear through their lines.

Gavid Lindman was the first to respond, drawing his aether blade and lunging toward the young lord of the Sunlight family.

He would not allow him to rampage unchecked.

But just as he moved ..

An earth-shattering explosion erupted behind him.

Gavid spun around instantly, eyes widening at the pillar of violet-black aura shooting into the heavens, ripping through the battlefield with devastating force.

The blast engulfed another wave of Ultras forces.

Startled, Gavid tried to speak ..

Only for another explosion to erupt, this time from a completely different direction.

This one was pure, radiant light.

Matching the first in every way.

Gavid was stunned. He didn't understand it—he knew nothing of Frey's Ignition, nor of Snow's Grand Cosmic Formation.

But it didn't matter.

The battle had begun.

Swords were drawn, spears unleashed, and the warriors of the Ultras surged forward, roaring in fury, charging toward the sources of the explosions.

Snow and Frey stood side by side—then split apart, cutting into the enemy ranks with a terrifying synergy.

From above, Phoenix turned the battlefield into a living hell, raining fire relentlessly.

Behind him, Daemon followed, supporting his assault from the rear.

Together, Frey and his allies carved through the enemy lines, slaying dozens, even hundreds—but they had only touched the edge of the vast army surrounding them.

They had to draw attention. They had to survive.

It was the only way Phoenix could open a path for the others to escape.

Survival meant staying alive for as long as possible.

Tearing through corpses, Frey and Snow fought like madmen, obliterating anyone who got close.

"Kill with one strike, Snow! If they survive to the second, we'll be overwhelmed!"

Frey shouted, wild and relentless.

"I already know that!"

Snow shouted back, the two of them standing back to back before launching in opposite directions—one cloaked in pitch-black aura, the other in radiant light.

They moved like lightning, cutting down enemies one after another.

And as Frey's blades ripped through bodies, something inside him snapped into place .. he entered that same focused state he'd experienced during the battle against the army of a thousand.

Everything else—his grief, his pain—disappeared.

All that remained was the battlefield.

He fought like a demon, slaughtering his foes one by one, driven by fury and an unquenchable thirst for blood.

With his endless aura reserves and a body that defied injury, Frey became a walking catastrophe.

On the other side, Snow Lionheart matched him blow for blow, unleashing his full Warlord Form, commanding all six elemental forces to destroy everything in his path.

Despite being outnumbered, the Elite Class launched a devastating first strike.

"I could do this all day!"

Frey roared, blades flashing, aura howling around him.

Just like before—just like when he endured a thousand enemies...

He was ready to do the same .. stand against the enemy hordes without hesitation.

But the elite's brief advantage didn't last long.

Within seconds, Frey's blade collided with a sword that not only blocked his strike .. but overwhelmed it.

Standing face to face with him ..

Gavid Lindman appeared, his cold gaze burning with murderous intent.

Chapter 408: The Elite vs The Ultras (2)

He recognized his opponent immediately.

Frey didn't hesitate. He kept pushing forward, unleashing a flurry of strikes so intense that his blades seemed to dance in his hands.

Gavid met him blow for blow, matching his speed, deflecting each attack with calm precision.

"The one who crushed the army of a thousand... defeated Lawrence... overwhelmed Mergo... that was you, wasn't it?"

Gavid spoke evenly, revealing his aether blade as their clash intensified, sparks erupting as their weapons collided with ferocious power.

Aura clashed, flames burst from their swords, and they became locked in a cyclone of steel.

"You're strong, no doubt. But is this the power you used to defeat Mergo?"

Slash!

Activating his Phantom Form, Gavid let Frey's blades pass harmlessly through his body .. then slashed cleanly through Frey's chest with his aether blade.

Frey gritted his teeth as blood spurted from the gash.

"Looks like Mergo was drunk again..."

Gavid smirked, effortlessly countering every strike Frey threw at him.

"You're strong .. but you're no match for him."

Frey's swords once again passed through Gavid's phantom-like form, while the aether blade found flesh with brutal ease.

"And you're no match for me either."

Frey could unleash SS rank aura, but Gavid Lindman was already SS+, and wielded one of the legendary blades himself.

The gap between them was massive.

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Mirage!"

Knowing he was outclassed, Frey still refused to back down.

He activated his technique ..creating a thousand illusionary copies that attacked Gavid from every direction.

But all of them phased harmlessly through him.

"It's useless," Gavid said flatly.

The moment Frey's last strike failed, Gavid canceled his Phantom Form and struck back—savagely.

The speed of the aether blade was unreal. Even Frey, proud of his reflexes, barely kept up.

Explosions tore through the ground as their auras collided in a close-range, high-speed duel, sending fiery shockwaves in every direction.

But the advantage was clearly Gavid's.

Wounds piled on Frey's body one after another...

And yet—his pace never slowed.

He kept attacking with the same ferocity, making Gavid realize something about him.

"Regeneration, huh?"

Gavid stepped up the pressure, pouring more power into his strikes, trying to end it in one blow.

"Regenerate all you want. It won't matter when your head is rolling on the ground."

"You talk too much for a noble of the Ultras."

Frey's eyes glowed violet as he kicked his speed into overdrive, dashing in circles around Gavid at blinding pace.

He struck from every direction, aiming at blind spots, looking for an opening in Gavid's Phantom Form.

"Clever," Gavid admitted with a smirk.

"You already know the weakness of my ability."

"But it still won't help."

Despite being attacked from all angles, Gavid's sword moved with unnatural precision, blocking everything without needing to turn intangible.

"There's a wide gap between our ranks, boy."

Breaking through Frey's defense with astonishing speed, Gavid's aether blade clashed violently with both the Dark Sister and Balerion.

Then—with his free hand—he grabbed Frey by the face.

And with terrifying force ..

He slammed Frey's head into the ground, burying it deeper and deeper into the earth.

"It's too dangerous to let you live."

His face dark, his intent deadly, Gavid raised his aether blade high, forming a swirling black vortex above his head like a miniature black hole.

He plunged his sword into it.

Dark aura surged around the blade as he raised it again, preparing to strike Frey down once and for all.

"You die here."

Gavid Lindman had completely overwhelmed Frey.

Even with all the power Frey had recently gained—he stood no chance.

After all, even in his fight with Mergo...

He never truly won.

He had fainted early in that battle .. his body had fought on alone.

But now—he couldn't access that same overwhelming force again.

Which left him at the mercy of Gavid Lindman.

And just as the final strike was about to fall..

Frey's shadow rippled—like a gate opening to another world.

And from its depths ..

Ghost Umbra emerged.

Face-to-face with Gavid, at the critical moment.

The Ultras Lord hadn't sensed Ghost hiding within Frey's shadow .. not yet. But instinctively, he activated his Phantom Form once more, prepared to counter whatever the assassin might throw at him.

Gavid was confident that someone at Ghost's level wouldn't be able to inflict any significant harm.

But the silent killer knew exactly what he was doing. Without hesitation, he slashed his hand toward Gavid's chest ..

And unleashed his strongest attack from the very start.

"Spatial Severance!!"

Using his most powerful and mysterious skill, Ghost sliced through space itself—targeting Gavid while he was still in his intangible form.

Then, without warning ..

A deep, horrific gash appeared across Gavid's chest.

He stared at it in disbelief, his expression frozen in shock, unable to comprehend what had just happened.

Taking full advantage of his enemy's confusion and momentary panic, Ghost acted immediately .. grabbing Frey and pulling him into his shadow before vanishing in a blink.

Gavid had misjudged Ghost's strike as nothing more than a regular attack...

But Spatial Severance didn't simply slice matter—it cut through space itself, hitting everything within its range.

Including his Phantom Form.

Which meant ..

Ghost had succeeded where even Frey had failed, dealing real damage to Gavid Lindman.

Unfortunately, the injury was shallow due to Ghost's lower power level—it wasn't nearly enough to stop Gavid, who instantly gave chase.

The tide of battle shifted violently.

Just like Frey ..

The rest of the elite were now surrounded by Ultras soldiers.

Snow clashed against Evelyn—beside her, the traitor Baylor Moonlight.

Phoenix was forced to fight both Godfrey and Gvardiol at the same time.

The elite class found themselves on the verge of defeat... and barely fifteen minutes had passed since the battles began.

From the start, the difference in power had been overwhelming.

"We're going to be annihilated..."

Lara Croft stood in the rear with Selena, shielding the unconscious Danzo and Seris.

Her voice trembled as she took in the scene .. the battle was hopeless.

The Ultras had surrounded them on all sides, intent on wiping them out completely.

At that moment...

She realized there was no escape.

They were utterly trapped.

Everyone in the elite class knew it .. yet still, they fought to their last breath.

In their darkest hour, covered in wounds, soaked in blood .. As death crept closer with every second ..

A blinding beam of light struck the battlefield without warning, shaking the earth as it descended.

Everyone turned to the source of the blast—

And were stunned.

A massive pillar of light had descended from the heavens, glowing intensely in the distance.

"That's..."

Selena's eyes widened ..she was the first to recognize it.

Then suddenly ..

Every member of the elite class heard a voice in their minds—a voice none of them had heard before.

"Run to the gate! All of you!"

It was Millicent.

Her voice was so overwhelming that their bodies moved on instinct .. they all began running toward the beam of light without even thinking.

But the light had landed within the enemy lines .. if they wanted to reach it, they'd have to break through the Ultras.

There was no guarantee that the light was even a way out.

But for some reason ..

They all chose to believe in Millicent's voice.

At the same time the beam appeared ..

Another figure entered the battlefield, cloaked in a veil of dark aura.

"How rude... barging in just when the game was about to end."

Beatrice emerged in her true body, smiling wickedly. She had appeared to deal with the arrogant intruder who dared cast magic inside her domain.

It had taken all of Millicent's strength just to pierce Beatrice's field in the first place—which explained her delay.

And now, even after succeeding ..

Beatrice immediately moved to shut her down.

Aware of this ..

Millicent screamed from the other side:

"Now! We only have one minute before her domain expels us!"

In sync with her words ..

The sky blazed with light, and two overwhelming auras tore into the battlefield at once.

From between them ..

An old man descended, landing directly above Beatrice.

The witch froze, stunned as she stared up at him.

"You..."

She muttered unconsciously, and the old man bellowed:

"I am Sir Alonne Valerion!!!"

Gripping his staff ..

It exploded into a radiant golden sword with a glowing white edge.

Harnessing the Aura of Light ..

The Iron Emperor moved at the speed of light, unleashing a divine slash toward Beatrice.

He was so absurdly fast ..

He sliced the golden witch clean in half in a single blow, shaking the battlefield with the sheer weight of his aura.

The Iron Emperor had descended at last.

Chapter 409: The Elite vs The Ultras (3)

The Old Pact had entered the battlefield.

"I can't hold us here for long .. her Domain will reject us at any moment! Hurry, Alon!"

Millicent's voice echoed across the battlefield, her figure wreathed in a radiant blue starlight aura.

On the other side, Ser Alon Valerion wasted no time. The moment he stepped in, he lunged at Beatrice and cleaved her in half with a dazzling speed.

"I know that, damn it!"

Leaving Beatrice stunned by the sudden blow, Ser Alon followed it up with a massive beam of light, engulfing her completely and turning her into dust.

"Let them see who the Iron Emperor truly is."

With Beatrice wiped out in under three seconds, both Mergo and Gavid Lindman appeared around Ser Alon, surrounding him as they recognized the threat he posed.

Both were SS+ rankers with terrifying strength and speed.

Yet their blades never even grazed Ser Alon, who blinked behind Gavid in a flash, his body still blazing with light.

With an even faster swing, Ser Alon unleashed a blinding, rocket-like strike. Gavid barely had time to react, raising Aether in defense .. only to be hurled hundreds of meters away, crashing violently into a distant mountain.

On the other side, Mergo activated the Ushigatana's power, releasing thousands of invisible slashes in under a second in a desperate attempt to cut the Iron Emperor down.

"Cleave!"

Releasing a thousand strikes, Mergo expected at least some to land...

Only to witness something unthinkable.

Ser Alon Valerion, moving at the speed of light, effortlessly dodged every single slash—appearing right in front of Mergo in less than a second.

"Unlucky for you... I move at light speed."

His sword gleamed with blinding radiance before delivering a devastating strike that sent Mergo crashing into the ground like a meteor.

Floating above the battlefield, Ser Alon sighed after taking down both enemies in under ten seconds.

"I'm getting too old for this kind of fight."

As he gathered more power of light around him, the Iron Emperor's aura flared intensely.

"Let's end this quickly."

This was a power unknown to the new generation.

If Emperor Maekar Valerion fought at lightning speed...

Then the Iron Emperor moved at the speed of light!

"Don't drop your guard, Alon! That witch's still alive!"

Millicent shouted through gritted teeth as she continued her duel with Beatrice.

Their battle was hidden .. only witches of their caliber could even perceive such a clash.

Witches of higher ranks fought by manifesting their Domains within the battlefield.

Once a witch cast her Domain, she could conjure impossible phenomena and bend reality itself.

This was why witches always sought to dominate the battlefield first.

Beatrice had established a tremendously strong Domain. It had taken Millicent considerable time to pierce through it using her stellar magic and open an escape portal .. bringing herself and Ser Alon into the field.

But Beatrice didn't give her a moment to breathe. She pressed in relentlessly, forcing Millicent to remain locked in combat.

Millicent knew she couldn't last long—and she wouldn't be able to cast any more spells due to her focus being entirely consumed by their duel.

On the other hand, Beatrice couldn't act freely either .. which was the only silver lining of the situation.

"Everything rests on you now, Ser Alon!"

"I told you .. I know!"

And Ser Alon didn't waste time.

Meanwhile, the elite students fought with newfound ferocity as hope finally appeared on the horizon.

Phoenix, in particular, was astounding—battling both Godfrey and Gvardiol simultaneously.

He unleashed hellish flames like a walking furnace.

Utilizing his empowered form, he held off two SS rankers at once while incinerating the Ultras forces in the process.

Daemon Valerion had to back off, afraid of being caught in the inferno.

Phoenix Sunlight...

He was a real monster.

With a rocket-powered punch, he sent the giant Godfrey flying, then exchanged fierce blows with Gvardiol.

Gvardiol unleashed his shadows at full power—but Phoenix's flames dispersed them all.

The Lord of Sunlight ramped up his speed, pummeling Gvardiol relentlessly.

Locked in close combat, Gvardiol felt as though he was fighting a moving sun. The heat surrounding Phoenix was terrifying.

As Phoenix grinned at him, Gvardiol understood just how powerful this man was.

"This is... dangerous."

"Trust me .. you haven't seen anything yet."

Grabbing Gvardiol's face with crushing force, Phoenix dragged him across the ground, beating him to a pulp without pause.

"I'll turn this place into a blazing inferno!"

With flames surging endlessly, Phoenix continued to carve a path for the elite class—clearing the way for them to reach the portal.

Millicent's spell hadn't been perfectly accurate .. she had opened the portal behind the Ultrans, lacking the exact coordinates of Frey's location.

Still, the path home had never been closer, which drove everyone to fight with renewed ferocity.

Among them, Frey and Ghost continued mowing down the Ultrans in large numbers, having finally shaken off Gavid's pursuit.

Frey unleashed more and more dark slashes.

But then, he came to a sudden halt, a grimace darkening his face.

"Damn it!"

He cursed harshly, feeling his body begin to stiffen, refusing to move as it should.

It was as if his weight had multiplied several times over.

Even simple movement became a struggle.

"What's wrong, Frey?!"

Ghost, covering his back, kept tearing through enemies but quickly noticed Frey's slowing pace.

Frey himself didn't fully understand what was happening to him, yet he forced his body to swing the twin blades again and again.

"Nothing! Focus on reaching the portal!"

The end was near.

They only needed to secure the path now—thanks to Ser Alon, who manipulated the element of light with perfect mastery, summoning a terrifying number of light swords above the sky.

Then, without warning...

He launched them all down on the Ultrian forces like artillery shells, painting the battlefield with blood.

With the Iron Emperor's arrival, the tide of war shifted once again .. back in the Empire's favor.

Elsewhere, Gavid Lindman finally clawed his way out of the crater Ser Alon had buried him in. For the first time, he smiled ..wide and ominous.

"That old man's stronger than we expected..."

Glaring upward, Gavid drew in a deep breath.

"But they've taken the bait."

He spoke those ominous words ..and unleashed a thunderous war cry that shook the entire battlefield, his voice drowning out the roars of thousands of soldiers and the thunder of explosions.

It was so loud that Frey and his companions felt their eardrums nearly burst.

"To all forces—NOW!"

Gavid's shout resounded with terrifying authority.

It was time to execute the plan.

"Do it!"

The command was vague, yet it brought unease to every imperial soldier who heard it.

"What are they planning?"

Ser Alon Valerion asked through gritted teeth, confusion in his eyes ..but he didn't need long to find out.

Because without warning, the entire Ultrian army turned and sprinted ... toward the portal Millicent had opened herself!

"Break through!!"

Thousands of soldiers charged.

All of them heading for the portal, intending to breach the Empire itself and carry the war into their territory.

Realizing this, Ser Alon clenched his jaw, his body glowing once more.

"You think I'll just stand here and let you do as you please?!"

The Ultrans were planning to use the elite class's escape route as a gateway to invade the Empire .. turning their enemies' plan against them.

But Ser Alon had no intention of letting that happen.

His body radiating with light, he prepared to intercept them.

Yet Gavid Lindman laughed, mocking the Iron Emperor's effort.

"Hold your horses, old man. Your opponent has already arrived."

And in that instant...

Everyone on the battlefield—Ser Alon included—felt the hair on their bodies stand on end, as a suffocating pressure suddenly descended from the sky.

All eyes turned upward.

Ser Alon knew instantly ... the man was already behind him.

Spinning around at the speed of light, he found his opponent had mirrored his movement perfectly.

A rocket-like punch was already flying toward his face.

From the man's fist, serpents of violet lightning erupted, overwhelming Ser Alon's brilliant light.

Overwhelmed by the sheer momentum, the Iron Emperor was launched backward, crashing into the ground .. his body shaken by the force.

"Alon!!"

Millicent screamed, unable to process what she had just witnessed.

Her eyes were fixed on him.

And so were Frey's.

The man who had entered the battlefield had extremely long black hair, blistered grayish skin, and glowing crimson-red eyes.

He didn't look human.

But many recognized him instantly—for he had been the final adversary in the last great war between the Empire and the Ultras.

"No way..."

"Is that...?!"

Shocked voices spread across the battlefield.

Despair returned once again.

And Frey, eyes narrowed, uttered the name...

"Dragoth..."

The strongest leader of the Ultras had finally appeared.

"Impossible...! Didn't Abraham Starlight kill him in the last war?!"

Everyone on the Empire's side asked the same question .. but reality couldn't have been more different from what they believed.

Sitting in the distance, Mergo let out a long sigh as he sat on the ground.

"Freeing you wasn't easy, so don't waste my efforts... Human Demon."

The liberation of Dragoth ..

That was the real reason Mergo hadn't led his army directly, instead leaving it to the young Laurence.

Once Dragoth had been brought back, Mergo returned late, which explained his appearance before Frey only at the end of the battle.

But none of that mattered anymore.

"The Human Demon has returned... though the long imprisonment seems to have affected his mind."

With a playful grin, the drunken old man leaned against a large boulder, watching the battlefield from afar.

"He might be a little insane now."

Right as those words left his mouth ..

Dragoth unleashed a terrifying battle cry, his full dark power erupting as the very air around him trembled.

Peak of SS+ rank.

No, the pinnacle—just one step short of breaking into another realm of power.

That was Dragoth, the Human Demon.

And Ser Alon—having released all his strength—returned to the skies, facing Dragoth head-on.

The Iron Emperor had reached his peak as well.

A catastrophic clash was about to begin.

Chapter 410: The Elite vs The Ultras (4)

Dragoth no longer appeared sane. He looked more like a wild beast.

Staring at Ser Alon, who wielded his golden sword and surrounded himself with radiant light, Dragoth began to hallucinate.

He no longer saw Alon.

He saw a different man ... a figure from his past, who once wielded a black sword and radiated with overwhelming starlight.

The man who had once defeated him.

And with that memory, Dragoth's rage multiplied exponentially.

With a roar, he lunged at Ser Alon, tearing through the skies with terrifying speed.

In response, at light-speed, Ser Alon surged forward, colliding with him as a titanic clash of auras erupted in the heavens.

"What kind of monster are you?!"

He shouted, launching blow after blow.

Alon's sword clashed with Dragoth's fists.

The exchange was blisteringly fast—so fast it left hundreds of afterimages across the sky as they both unleashed shockwaves that shattered the clouds.

The Iron Emperor wielded light.

Dragoth, on the other hand, unleashed a bizarre aura of violet-black lightning that screamed with dark energy.

The battle was utterly devastating.

Each time their deadly strikes collided, any unfortunate soldier below caught in the aftermath was turned into nothing more than bloody pulp.

Ser Alon was incredibly fast—almost inhumanly so.

But even he realized...

This time, time was not on his side.

Not with a monster like Dragoth unleashed.

"This is bad..."

Now locked in combat with Dragoth, Ser Alon knew he could no longer intervene against the Ultrans who had breached the portal.

They had already begun appearing on the other side .. inside the Empire.

Far to the north...

Oliver Khan pushed Ada Starlight behind him and stepped forward, his crimson eyes glowing fiercely as he faced the Ultrans appearing from thin air.

"Get ready... Carmen Starlight."

He spoke coldly, understanding exactly what was happening.

Carmen answered with only a nod before dashing alongside him toward the invading soldiers, ready to stop them.

The plan had been turned completely on its head.

The Witch's Game was reaching the ending Beatrice had orchestrated from the very beginning.

Ser Alon was now locked in battle with Dragoth...

Millicent remained stuck in her fight against Beatrice...

And the elite class had once again found themselves surrounded .. back to square one.

Fierce battles among the high-rankers raged in the sky...

Desperate, brutal fighting continued on the barren lands of the Ultran continent, where the elite students still fought to survive...

And now, a third battle had begun in the north of the Empire, as Ultran troops broke through to the other side.

Everything had descended into chaos.

Pure, overwhelming chaos.

No one had time to think anymore. They were too consumed by the fight.

Blood had become the only thing that mattered.

No plans. No strategies.

Only combat—savage and unforgiving—as a new battle began... one that might end the war altogether.

"Don't give in to them! Fight until the end!!"

Screamed Phoenix wildly as he continued burning everything around him, pushing the Eternal Flame style to its very limits against two SS ranked enemies simultaneously.

Elsewhere, Frey and Ghost kept pushing through the Ultran ranks.

Frey, in particular, tore through dozens at a terrifying pace, desperately trying to reach the other side.

Left and right.

Blood splattered across everything before him...

He had killed countless enemies.

"More..."

He screamed madly as he continued advancing.

"More! I need to kill more of them!!"

Frey was trying to surpass his limits—desperately trying to break free from his restraints.

He wanted to regain control of the situation, no matter the cost.

Ghost supported him from behind.

Snow was fighting elsewhere, somewhere nearby.

Everyone had been pulled into their own battle...

But Frey .. consumed by a terrifying thirst for destruction .. was unleashing more and more of the darkness within him.

Each swing of his sword released a massive black arc, devouring dozens at once.

"More..."

Gritting his teeth, his body had become like a war machine—an unstoppable force of annihilation.

"More!!"

The amount of aura he poured out was growing without end.

His pale skin flushed red, his body pushed to the limit, operating at full capacity.

His attacks were so overwhelming that even Ghost couldn't help but stare in awe, struggling to comprehend how far Frey's strength had gone.

What was truly shocking was that his power kept rising .. refusing to stop.

"Where is all this power coming from?!"

Ghost muttered in fear, sensing the terrifying darkness within him.

But Frey kept killing.

Gavid Lindman. Mergo. Beatrice.

He knew there were enemies out there far stronger than him.

But he couldn't accept that.

He didn't want to remain beneath them .. no matter how deep into the darkness he had to fall.

He wanted to bring it out.

The kind of power that would surpass them all.

Stronger than ever before.

Fiercer than ever before.

That was the kind of strength Frey sought.

And with a deafening roar that shook the battlefield...

He continued annihilating everything in his path.

But just as his power peaked—just as he was on the verge of surpassing his limits—

Everything around him twisted violently.

Without warning...

Right at the climax of his rampage...

Frey collapsed, blood bursting from his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.

The blood wouldn't stop as he dropped to one knee, stunned, unable to comprehend what was happening.

"Frey!"

Driving back the remaining enemies, Ghost rushed to his side in shock.

Frey trembled uncontrollably, trying to stand once more through sheer force of will...

But his body continued to shake, refusing to obey. The blood kept pouring from his face without pause.

Finally...

Frey had reached his limit.

The battle in the Puppet City.

The clash against a thousand Ultraman soldiers.

The fight with Mergo.

The renewed conflict against the Ultraman army.

Even Frey's enhanced body—several times stronger than a normal human—had finally reached its breaking point.

How many times had he unleashed Ignition?

How many wounds had he forced his body to regenerate from?

Frey understood.

This was his limit.

He wasn't simply injured. It was more like a car engine overheating from excessive pressure .. shutting down entirely.

That's what had happened. He had pushed beyond his threshold.

"Move..."

But Frey refused to accept it.

"MOVE, DAMN YOU!!!"

He screamed, refusing to fall.

But it was no use.

And just like that, both Ghost and Frey were pinned down without warning.

Meanwhile...

The struggle continued elsewhere.

Further back, Selena the Witch advanced, facing a large group of enemies entirely alone .. and obliterating them.

Lara Croft stood awestruck by what she saw.

Selena had suddenly revealed a strange combat style Lara had never seen before.

Instead of drawing magic circles in the air or on the ground...

Selena etched them around her body, covering herself in glowing, tattoo-like patterns.

She had turned her own body into a magical conduit, allowing her to cast spells far more powerful than normal.

"Damn it!"

Selena cursed as she continued slaughtering the Ultrans.

This was the power she had hidden .. meant for a future fight against Aegon Valerion.

But now she had no choice. She was forced to defend the rear line by herself.

Just like all the other main heroines who possessed absurdly overwhelming powers ..

Selena was no exception.

But even with her exceptional abilities, it was only a matter of time before she fell.

Elsewhere, more Ultran soldiers continued flooding through the portal...

Only to stop as a blade coated in black lightning sliced through their necks.

Startled by his sudden appearance, the soldiers didn't even have time to react.

He was too fast .. finishing them off before they could lift a finger.

With a heavy sigh, standing at the gate...

Aegon Valerion turned his gaze toward the chaotic battlefield behind him.

"What a mess you've caused, Beatrice..."

His sword still crackled with black lightning, but he no longer seemed interested in fighting.

Glancing one last time at Ser Alon, Aegon chuckled before stepping through the portal and leaving the battlefield.

"I'll leave this place to my grandfather. See you later, everyone."

Just like that ...and in a way no one could quite understand ..

Aegon Valerion passed through every enemy and escaped to the other side of the portal.

Although Ultran soldiers chased after him immediately, it didn't change the fact:

The first student to re-enter the Empire... was Aegon.

The prince made it look easy .. completely ignoring the brutal struggle his comrades were still enduring.

After several exchanges...

The battle between Ser Alon and Dragoth had devolved into chaos.

After throwing punches wildly, Dragoth's fists had been badly damaged by Ser Alon's sword.

At that moment, Dragoth remembered ..

He was a swordsman. Not a brute.

Even in his temporary madness, he remembered that much.

And in the blink of an eye, his wounds healed, and he reached out his hand.

Just then ..

Ser Alon watched in surprise as a sword came flying toward Dragoth at incredible speed from afar.

Without warning, the Human Demon had summoned Moonlight Sword back into his hand.

And just like that... the legendary weapon returned to its original master.

Once he grasped the Moonlight Sword, Dragoth's aura changed completely.

He was still insane...

But he kept uttering one word—again and again—since the battle began.

"Abraham... Abraham... ABRAHAM!!!"

Screaming his name without pause ..

Dragoth charged at Ser Alon in a blind fury, slamming into the Iron Emperor.

The old leader of the Ultrans had gone completely mad...

Haunted by the ghost of a dead man.

It was total chaos.