

VILLAIN 431

Chapter 431: The Weight of Cosmic Knowledge (1)

— Frey Starlight's Pov —

I could barely describe those few fleeting moments before I put the mask on once more.

They were some of the rare moments when emotions overlapped and tangled together inside me.

Fear of an ancient will slumbering within that metallic thing, and a slow-growing anxiety gnawing at my heart ..

Then came longing and hope, pushing me to act quickly, knowing now that the answer to saving Danzo lay within it.

And in that moment, under the watchful gaze of the Engineer .. who couldn't stop himself from observing this step I had finally decided to take ..

I placed the Nameless mask on my face once again.

Gazing at the world through the cold slits of that mask...

At first, nothing changed. But before long, my entire perspective shifted.

"What... is this?!"

The words slipped from my lips unconsciously, and I stumbled back until my back hit the wall.

It was an indescribable feeling, as if all that information came flooding back into my mind one after another...

Like someone stabbing a giant needle into my back and injecting torrents of knowledge straight into my body.

It was exactly as that damned Engineer had said.

Thanks to the Shadow Adaptation, my mind could now withstand the mask.

I always knew the Shadow Adaptation allowed me to adapt to my enemies, and it had helped me in countless battles so far, but I had truly believed it was limited to martial arts .. nothing more, nothing less.

Who would have thought that the true scope of this ability extended far beyond the battlefield itself, adapting me to any phenomenon I might face in life?

"What a terrifying ability..."

I muttered without realizing it.

The Engineer said the Shadow Adaptation belonged to the path of the Law of Chaos, a tremendous power even by the standards of those who dwell in the heights.

Didn't that mean it was the only way I could break free from my predetermined fate .. shattering this wheel of destiny that kept dragging me along in its current?

After all, the future foreseen by beings like the Engineer and Agaroth could only be broken by something like this... a power akin to their own.

Fully grasping that truth, the value of the shadow adaptation multiplied within my heart, and I finally understood its true worth.

I genuinely wanted to see what this ability could achieve when it reached the seventh level.

I couldn't imagine it .. but I knew it would be something truly colossal.

Then, in those few moments of thought, detached from reality, I felt a strange saturation.

As if the mask had finished transmitting all its information into my mind.

And then, as if by magic, my consciousness was swept away ... completely severed from the real world.

Thrown into a sea of darkness...

The scene kept shifting until I suddenly found myself standing in a completely different place than where I had been just moments ago.

That's when weakness overtook me, and I collapsed to my knees before the sight that unfolded before my eyes.

And after a few brief moments ..

Despair finally consumed me.

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The moment he put on the mask, Frey froze in place, unable to move.

He looked like a soulless statue .. his black armor, the Nameless mask, and that white hair of his.

The Engineer found himself staring at him for some time, the faint blue light flickering within his cold eyes.

The Engineer had always hidden his face, revealing only his icy gaze.

Rarely did those eyes show any trace of emotion, no matter what circumstances he had endured through his long life.

But this... this was one of those rare moments that stirred even a man weathered by the passage of ages.

When he looked at him, it felt like he was witnessing the culmination of bitter struggles and relentless efforts that had torn his body apart, scattering his soul across countless places, leaving him with his fair share of suffering and despair—depths of pain that Frey could never even begin to imagine. What did the few short years of Frey's struggle amount to, compared to the millennia the blue-eyed man had endured?

What weight did the fleeting struggles of a mere human carry against a battle that spanned thousands of years?

It wasn't fair to the blue-eyed man. Perhaps no one else was insane enough to keep pursuing such a mad plan—one that he himself had drawn long ago.

But, cruelly enough...

Just seeing Frey wearing that mask made the Engineer feel satisfied—as if all he had done until now hadn't been in vain.

After all, Frey had no idea just how much he resembled him now...

That nameless king who once lived in the forgotten ages, carving his name into the annals of legend.

And after staring for a while longer, the Engineer realized he had let his emotions carry him away. He pulled himself back to that familiar cold facade, just as another figure appeared beside him.

A towering dark statue with an angry face.

"Watch him. In case anything happens," the blue-eyed man said curtly, while Angry simply nodded, holding his massive double-headed scythe.

Then, in less than a second, the Engineer vanished, returning to what he had been doing from the start .. continuing to build the sect, which by now had grown to a terrifying size, nearly rivaling the imperial capital of Belgrad, and was on the verge of surpassing it.

No one knew what the Engineer was constructing in that place...

But one thing was certain—it was something dark beyond imagination.

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— Back to Frey Starlight —

This time, Frey found himself plunging into a whole new kind of despair.

"What in the Creator of Hell is this?!"

The Nameless mask had already finished transferring all of its knowledge into Frey's mind.

But fully comprehending that knowledge was simply impossible for him, so the mask visualized it in a way that allowed him to access it whenever he wished.

And this... is what led Frey to his current predicament.

Standing in the middle of a vast, illusory world, he found himself inside an enormous library .. its towering shelves pierced the sky above.

When Frey looked up toward the heavens, all he could see were endless books, blocking the sky entirely.

Then, taking a few hesitant steps forward and gazing downward...

He saw an abyss of books stretching below him, its depths unfathomable.

It was like standing inside a colossal skyscraper, with floors both above and below ground.

Except here, the floors were infinite in both directions—upward and downward.

This was what it meant to possess knowledge as vast as the universe itself.

"Am I seriously supposed to find the answer somewhere in this damned, endless sea of books?!"

The more he looked at this bizarre library...

The deeper despair took root in his heart, mixed with growing frustration at what he saw.

He had no clue where to start searching if he wanted to find the solution to save Danzo.

Perhaps the answer he sought was hidden inside one of those books.

But which one was it?

Was it close by?

Far away?

At the top?

At the bottom?

The longer he stared, the clearer it became just how hopeless this task truly was.

"This all depends entirely on luck..."

Among millions of books, he might find the one he sought on the very first shelf. Or... it could be buried at the very last.

Either way, he had only about twenty days left.

And that wasn't nearly enough to cover even a tenth of this monstrous library.

His chances were painfully slim, and with every second that passed, his despair deepened.

But Frey didn't sit idle. He immediately rushed forward, grabbing book after book, reading their contents as quickly as he could.

Chapter 432: The Weight of Cosmic Knowledge (2)

There were no titles on the covers of those dark volumes, and the information inside wouldn't appear until he opened them and flipped through their pages one by one.

Which meant he had no choice but to go through them all if he wanted to find what he was looking for.

But no matter how many books he opened, every single one spoke of the same subject.

After hours upon hours of nonstop reading, Frey finally slammed a book shut and shouted in frustration:

"What's with all this damned teleportation and space manipulation?!"

Even after spending so much time searching...

It was always the same subject, over and over again.

Frey tried changing floors, hoping to escape it, but no matter where he went, he found himself facing the same thing.

On the first floor...

The tenth floor...

The fiftieth floor...

The knowledge about teleportation kept showing up wherever he went, almost as if someone was deliberately toying with him.

Sure, teleportation was a powerful ability—but for Frey, who was searching for a way to save his friend, it was nothing more than a waste of precious time.

Forced to learn and memorize all this information...

Frey suddenly remembered the vision he once saw of Nameless back in London.

Back then, he clearly witnessed how teleportation and space manipulation were the very first things Nameless sought to master in his life.

All for the sake of escaping his planet during the demon invasion.

The teleportation ability belonged to the mysterious Law of Space, and Nameless had managed to create a powerful technique in that complex field all on his own.

Now, wearing the mask of that enigmatic man, Frey found himself wondering as he flipped through yet another book:

"Am I really going to be forced to relive everything that man experienced in his lifetime... in order?"

If that was true, then it was nothing short of a nightmare for Frey.

And so, the hours passed, one after another.

Frey couldn't remember the last time he had consumed this much information in a single sitting. Eventually, it felt like his head was about to explode.

Even though his mind automatically absorbed every bit of knowledge that crossed his eyes, he had barely scratched the surface of this ocean of information.

The answer he was searching for drifted further and further from his reach.

And realizing the bitter truth of his own naivety...

Frey crashed headfirst into harsh reality once again.

After all, how could he possibly replicate that man's knowledge so easily?

It was simply impossible .. even if he spent his entire life flipping through those books.

That knowledge had taken Nameless an unimaginably long time to gather.

Nameless was immortal, unaffected by the passage of time, which meant the years he devoted to learning were limitless.

Unlike Frey, a mere human, who now had no more than twenty days at best to meet the deadline.

All he needed was a single piece of information ... one answer capable of saving his friend.

But that answer was lost within this endless sea of books.

It was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Frey continued to stumble through that world in vain, endlessly learning about teleportation .. a subject he had no interest in whatsoever.

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When Frey finally moved again in the real world, the darkness of the sky had long faded, replaced by the light of the distant midday sun.

But it was already the third day.

As Frey opened his eyes, tearing the mask from his face...

Dark circles had formed beneath his eyes, and exhaustion racked his body as though he'd been fighting for days without rest.

As his senses slowly adjusted to reality...

The first thing his eyes saw were the dark buildings of the sect, and the figures of Angry and the Engineer.

Which only fueled the anger swelling within his chest.

"So, you've discovered the truth," the Engineer said coldly.

"So you knew all along."

Frey forced himself to stand, struggling against the mental exhaustion as he stepped toward the Engineer.

"How the hell am I supposed to find the answer I'm looking for in all that filth?!"

The worst part was that he was forced to learn in the order the library dictated, not in the order he wanted.

The Engineer simply shook his head, shining a light on Frey's ignorance.

"I told you .. the knowledge you seek is there. But finding it... that's entirely up to you."

Hearing this, Frey realized the Engineer had known this would happen from the very start.

"You could've just told me that from the beginning, damn you! How am I supposed to find what I need when all I ever get from that place is teleportation and spatial manipulation nonsense?!"

It was completely absurd. Despite spending several days inside...

The only thing he came away with was knowledge of teleportation.

"You'll have to learn how to reach what you want by yourself. That imaginary world you saw was merely something your mind created to make the search easier. Whether you succeed or fail is entirely on you."

Frey already understood what the Engineer meant.

The library wasn't real ... it was an imaginary space within his mind, like a storage file containing all the knowledge he had yet to absorb.

But even knowing all that, he still couldn't find the answer.

Annoyed by the entire ordeal, Frey stood back up.

"How the hell did that bastard pull it off again?"

He muttered bitterly, before a violet light engulfed his body, wrapping him in a strange stellar aura.

Then, in the blink of an eye...

Frey vanished completely before the stunned gaze of the Engineer, whose eyes widened in shock, unable to process what he had just witnessed.

Frey's presence had disappeared entirely.

And at that very moment...

They both felt him reappear behind them, causing the Engineer and Angry to spin around instantly.

At the same time, a deafening crash erupted behind them as Frey collided with the wall of one of the dark buildings.

Amidst the rubble and dust, Frey slowly got up, clutching his head.

"Damn it... I messed up the destination coordinates..."

Though he looked frustrated by what had just happened...

It didn't erase the shock on the blue-eyed man's face.

"There's no doubt about it..."

He spoke without thinking.

Even though it was far weaker ... so weak it wasn't even worth comparing...

That was still Nameless's spatial manipulation.

'In just a few days... he's already managed to grasp an ability like that?'

His progress was ridiculously fast .. beyond anything the Engineer had anticipated.

But Frey didn't care about any of that.

After experiencing it firsthand, he quickly lost interest and placed the mask back on his face.

"I don't have much time left..."

Every second that passed was precious—irreplaceable for Frey, who had a goal he was determined to reach, no matter the cost.

Ignoring the crushing exhaustion, he dove back into that imaginary world once more.

And there he was again, standing within the mysterious library.

He had already read countless books, and yet countless more remained, waiting for him.

Fully aware of this, Frey resumed his endless search, roaming back and forth, trying to grasp the ancient knowledge that had long been lost to the ages.

At that moment...

Frey had no idea that his every move was being watched by those unseen eyes.

Eyes that observed him from one of the upper floors of the endless library...

Every motion, every step Frey took .. none of it escaped that distant gaze.

From behind the slits of a dark mask, he simply watched in silence, while Frey remained completely unaware of his presence.

Though both of them gazed upon the world through the same cold openings of that mask...

What they saw was vastly different.

For Frey, the future was still clouded in uncertainty, filled with countless unanswered questions as he continued to stumble in the darkness below .. running blindly down a tunnel lit by nothing but a faint, fragile thread of hope.

Always trying to reach the other side, just as he always had.

Chapter 433: Perfect Affection (1)

— Frey Starlight's Pov —

Four more days passed in the blink of an eye.

This marked the ninth day I hadn't slept since escaping from the Ultras Continent.

The dark circles beneath my eyes grew worse by the hour, deepening as I spent all my time buried in these complicated books, flipping through their endless pages one after another.

I was never much of a reader, but I found myself unable to stop, desperately searching for a way to save Danzo.

But time was far too short.

It showed me no mercy.

And so far, all I'd found was an endless stream of information about teleportation and spatial manipulation.

Teleportation was supposed to be an ordinary ability, governed by the laws of space. But somehow, Nameless had turned it into a world-breaking power.

He could appear anywhere in the universe, at any time, instantly. That was just one of his incredible abilities.

"No wonder he was able to teleport from planet to planet..."

That was something I'd learned after combing through all these dense books, books that spoke of Nameless' history.

How many world-breaking abilities had he possessed?

In this world, Agaroth held the most if we were speaking strictly in terms of numbers.

But Nameless had owned quite a few himself.

Both of them stood at the pinnacle of the world's power.

Closing yet another book, I gazed at the countless shelves still waiting for me.

"Endless..."

Nameless had spent thousands of years gathering this knowledge, taking advantage of his immortal, ageless existence.

What did I hope to accomplish in the few days I had left?

As despair gradually crept in, I found myself stumbling through my thoughts, lost and aimless.

"I told you already. Everything you see in that imaginary world is just an illusion your mind created.

You simply have to let what you seek float to you."

Sitting in one of the dimly lit buildings, the Engineer leaned against a wall as he spoke.

Blue Eyes, as always.

I scowled automatically.

"You say that like it's the easiest thing in the world. I've been trying for days, damn it."

I cursed again without thinking.

Honestly...

It felt like I'd returned to the madness of my early days in this place, more than two years ago.

Staying here wasn't doing my mental health any favors.

"If you keep doing what you're doing now, you'll never find your answer."

"And why do you care whether I succeed or fail? Wouldn't it suit you better if Danzo died and I lost more of my emotions?

You know... so I'd end up like your damned king?"

"..."

I tried provoking him, but the Engineer remained still, his expression unreadable.

Come to think of it .. here we were, under the same roof, surrounded by the same walls.

I never imagined I'd spend this much time with him ..

My hatred for him used to make me attack him on sight. But those feelings had started to calm, especially now that I'd gotten some answers to my questions... and uncovered new ones that still needed answering.

To be honest, I was starting to feel a bit curious about this man ..

"I saw in the mask's memories... Nameless kept saving all of you, preventing your deaths time and time again. You're just one of the people he saved, aren't you?"

The Engineer nodded.

"That's right."

"Then what's your name? What were you before he saved you? I'm curious."

Before Nameless placed his soul into his current vessel, the Engineer must've lived a long life, reaching a very high level of power.

I couldn't help but feel some curiosity about his past.

But he simply shook his head.

"I abandoned my name and identity long ago. That's what it means to be part of the Nameless Sect."

Staring at his scarred, worn-out hand,

Blue Eyes spoke quietly.

"Now, I'm only the Engineer."

Hearing that, I looked at him, unsure what to say.

Seriously? He was proud of a name like that?

Wasn't I the one who called him that on a whim?

"I should've just called you Son of a Bitch instead of wasting my breath with this crap."

I said flatly as I scrolled through the system interface.

I had gained a new ability ..teleportation.

But the system still held countless unknowns.

Like those three items:

The mask, the shield, and the sword.

They were known as the Fragments of the Lost Self, and I had only recovered one of them so far.

Remembering all that, I decided to ask about them too.

But, as expected, the Engineer shook his head.

"I won't answer."

"As expected of you..."

I sighed softly, still able to hear the chaotic sounds of construction echoing through the air.

"Are you trying to start a war with everything you're building here?"

The Shadow Sect had grown terrifyingly large by now .. large enough to house all the residents of Belgrad's capital if needed.

And yet, I still couldn't understand his true intentions.

As always, he gave no answer.

"Just leave and go back to your construction work."

I gestured for him to leave me alone, then placed the mask on my face once again.

Thus began another round of exhaustive searching...

But once again, it was futile.

After absorbing so much information, my body weakened instinctively. My mind could no longer endure the flood of knowledge pouring into it.

The dark circles under my eyes were darker than ever, and a sharp headache gripped me, followed by a crushing wave of fatigue.

But no matter how hard I tried to sleep, my eyes refused to close.

"What the hell is wrong with this damned insomnia?"

Sitting atop one of the skyscrapers the Engineer had built, I gazed quietly at the sky, trying to find a moment of rest.

But the headache refused to let up.

"I want to leave this depressing place."

Staying here wasn't doing my deteriorating mental state any favors.

Apparently, the Engineer overheard that, prompting him to step in.

"You can leave anytime you want, using the teleportation ability you gained here."

He spoke bluntly, and I frowned in response.

"What are you talking about? I can barely teleport short distances without crashing into whatever's around me. How do you expect me to pull it off across such a vast distance?"

True, my control over teleportation had improved—but achieving something like that in such a short time was still impossible.

But the Engineer, as always, had a solution.

"You can teleport to places where people who hold a high affection score toward you are located. If you use the third-person perspective, you'll see exactly where they are."

He pointed out something crucial.

Hearing that, I realized how obvious it was.

"You're right..."

Even though I was still a beginner, combining it with my other abilities would make teleporting that far possible.

"But I can't just leave yet. There are still many answers I want from you," I said, doubtful. The Engineer answered immediately.

"Then leave a marker here and save its coordinates. The marker won't last forever, but it will give you enough time to return later."

Again.

He was right.

He'd just given me the perfect way to leave and return later.

But I couldn't help wondering... what exactly was Blue Eyes after?

"What are you really trying to achieve?"

I asked unconsciously, prompting him to repeat his usual answer like a broken record.

"I won't answer."

"Forget it, then."

I waved him off and opened my system interface.

That Engineer was hopeless.

And then, checking the newly updated Affection System, I scanned through everyone, wondering who I should teleport to right now.

Uriel Platini: 50 points.

Danzo Smasher: 50 points.

Snow Lionheart: 50 points.

Ghost Umbra: 50 points.

Ada Starlight: 99 points.

Sansa Valerion: 100 points (Maxed Out).

Chapter 434: Perfect Affection (2)

The moment I saw those stats, Sansa's name caught my eye, sending a chill down my spine.

"100 points?!"

I blurted out unconsciously.

This was the first time I had ever seen such an absurdly high number.

Even my sister Ada had stopped at 99 points.

But somehow, Sansa had surpassed even that.

I opened her profile description .. and regretted it instantly.

Sansa Valerion: 100 Points.

— Sansa sees you as the most important person in her life. As long as you are alive, she will keep living. If you die, she will die as well. The 99-point barrier was broken when the host unknowingly fulfilled Sansa Valerion's hidden desire.

— As a result, the host has obtained the love of the princess. However, be warned .. one can never predict a demon.

Abilities unlocked at max affection:

You can temporarily control Sansa's body through the third-person perspective.

You can communicate telepathically with her and make her aware of your presence.

You can fully read her thoughts.

Staring at those newly unlocked abilities, I couldn't help but let out a sigh.

"100 points..."

I never imagined such feelings could ever form between me and Sansa.

That number—100—was terrifying in its own way, but I pushed it aside for now.

I needed to focus on the task at hand and leave that mess for later.

Using the third-person perspective, I checked on each of them one by one, searching for the right person to teleport to.

Ada was in what seemed like a large meeting with several people, so going to her wasn't an option.

I decided to avoid the princess for now as well.

And I couldn't teleport to Danzo's location either .. suddenly appearing inside the Silver Dragon's base would only cause trouble.

Turns out Snow was with Danzo at the moment too, so he was out as well.

That left me with...

"Ghost."

He was moving stealthily through the streets of Belgrad, buying random daily necessities and stuffing them into giant black bags, walking quietly through the dark alleys.

I had no idea what Ghost was up to right now, but I decided he'd be my target.

So, without warning ..

I used the teleportation I'd learned from those books.

Vanishing from sight, I left the Shadow Sect behind for now and returned to the Empire.

What should've been a difficult teleportation succeeded with ease, thanks to the support of the third-person perspective.

When I appeared in front of him, I saw shock flash across Ghost's face as he instinctively prepared to attack.

But he quickly calmed down, realizing who had just appeared before him.

"Frey? Where did you come from?!"

He asked, suspicious, while I scratched my head.

Standing together in a deserted alley, with no one else around,

I realized I had chosen the right person—Ghost preferred to remain in the shadows most of the time.

"I guess I've unlocked a new ability .. teleportation and spatial manipulation."

I said, focusing on him.

"What are you doing out here anyway?" I asked, gesturing toward the black bags.

Ghost glanced at me, then at the bags, his eyes revealing a flicker of doubt.

After all, he had no idea how I'd found him despite his high-level stealth.

But eventually, he gave in, accepting that I was far from ordinary.

"Since you've already found me, there's no point hiding it from you."

He spoke calmly, as usual.

"Follow me."

"To where?" I asked quickly, but Ghost offered no further explanation.

And so, the two of us continued through the alleys of the capital, delving deeper and deeper into its shadows.

After a few more minutes of walking, Ghost came to a stop, his eyes fixed on a worn-down wooden house nearby.

"What is it?" I asked, but Ghost motioned for me to stay put as he approached the old house.

He knocked on the door and stood still, waiting for someone to open.

Then, a few seconds later ..

As the door slowly creaked open, Ghost vanished into thin air, leaving the black bags on the ground.

From behind the door,

A woman appeared .. she looked to be in her mid-thirties. Her hair was jet black, and her skin pale and unhealthy.

She lived alone, and life had clearly been hard on her.

But she immediately grabbed the bags Ghost had left, slamming the door shut with force.

It was as if she'd been waiting for this exact moment, hoarding the supplies to survive on her own.

Her reaction made it clear .. this wasn't the first time Ghost had come here.

It meant he'd been taking care of her for a long time.

Those black bags were packed with all the essentials for living, bringing her immeasurable relief.

Watching it all from a distance, I saw Ghost reappear beside me, a complicated expression crossing his face.

I couldn't help but ask:

"Who is she?"

It was a fair question, and Ghost didn't take long to answer ..shocking me in the process.

"She's my mother."

"Your mother?!"

I blurted out again, unable to hide my surprise, as Ghost nodded.

"I don't get it... Isn't the Shadow Court supposed to kill the mothers of all the children inside it?"

Honestly, I'd believed Ghost's mother had died long ago, leaving him only with his father ..

Mist Umbra.

Depriving children of their mothers was the Shadow Court's cruel way of creating strong assassins.

That's why I thought Ghost was no exception.

But he simply shook his head.

"That's just a lie they feed us to make us live in despair."

By making them believe their mothers were dead, the Shadow Court forged assassins shaped by loneliness and pain .. for generations.

But Ghost was far too sharp .. he uncovered the lie on his own.

He even managed to follow the trail that Mist Umbra, his father, used to track his mother, tracing it until he found her still alive.

Yet even though he found her, he couldn't approach her or speak to her.

If he did, the Court—always watching—might kill her without hesitation.

He had barely managed to stay hidden from their sight.

So, Ghost had no choice but to watch her from a distance, helping her however he could...

Hoping, perhaps, that one day he might finally embrace his mother.

"What a cursed system," I muttered without hesitation.

According to Ghost...

Mist Umbra had married many women, searching for the perfect heir.

And that heir was Ghost.

But Mist forced him to stay away from his mother, never letting him get close.

It was a truly miserable situation.

"What if they discover you know where she is?" I asked without thinking.

Ghost shook his head.

"They won't do anything to her as long as I don't speak to her or interact with her."

He spoke with that blank face of his again, quickly hiding whatever real feelings lay beneath.

But then, staring straight at me, he shifted the conversation to something else entirely.

"Isn't it about time you told me what's going on?"

"What do you mean?" I deflected, answering his question with a question, but Ghost pressed harder.

"I know something happened to Danzo. So stop hiding it and tell me ..

What exactly is wrong with him?"

The silent assassin .. always perceptive as ever.

Chapter 435: A familiar face (1)

— Frey Starlight's Pov —

Leaning against the wall of a dim alleyway, Ghost and I stood out to every passerby.

This place was as rundown as you'd expect from one of Belgrad's poorest districts.

And yet, this was where the Shadow Court had chosen to abandon Ghost's mother.

The Court was always searching for the most efficient ways to create assassins, arranging calculated breeding to pass down nothing but genetics.

As a result, all of Ghost's siblings shared the same father—Mist Umbra—but were born of different mothers.

And once the mothers had fulfilled their sole purpose ..giving birth ..

The Court discarded them, stripping the children of any trace of affection or warmth.

This was how they raised cold-blooded killers, molded solely for death.

But for Ghost, it was far worse.

He didn't just lose his friends at the Court—

He lost his siblings, one after another.

The last one was Atlas Umbra, who died right before his eyes.

And yet, Ghost didn't seem affected.

He had simply grown used to it.

It was a harsh reality for the silent assassin, But it was what shaped him into the man he was now.

His resilience and composure in the face of such darkness were, in their own way, admirable.

That's what made him so sharp ..

Always aware of the smallest details.

And that sharpness had led him to ask about Danzo.

"What made you ask that question?"

I turned the question back on him, and he replied calmly:

"It was obvious, watching you. Every time you looked at him, there was regret in your eyes. It wasn't hard to put the pieces together."

"At first, I thought you were just mourning what happened to him.

But when your sadness lingered for too long, I realized something far bigger was happening... something none of us knew about."

He had figured all that out through observation alone.

And he waited for the right moment to ask ..

A moment that came the second I appeared in front of him from thin air.

"You really are sharp..."

I said, gazing up at the sky.

He was right.

Much like Sansa, he'd read me perfectly, even though I thought I was hiding it well.

Staring at Ghost, I wondered if I should tell him the truth.

There wasn't much an assassin like him could do to help me save Danzo...

If anything, he'd be more suited to killing him .. And that was exactly what I was trying so hard to avoid.

But Ghost was Danzo's friend too.

Even though they fought often, the bond between them was real.

In our bleak little circle, Danzo was the only source of energy and life ..

That made him special, in his own way.

Ghost deserved to know.

And after all, he had accompanied me once on my journey to Londor.

"What if I told you there's a demon living inside him, Ghost?"

I dropped the words suddenly.

Ghost's eyes widened for a moment, but he quickly regained his calm.

"What are you talking about?"

"It's a Devil Seed."

And in that moment, I began explaining everything to him.

The truth of the malicious demonic entity dwelling inside our crippled, sick friend .. And that soon, that demon would emerge, threatening everyone around him.

Ghost listened silently to the entire story, saying nothing.

But I could see his expression shift as I gave him more and more details.

"You're telling me... a demon like that is inside him, and not even Saint Candidate Uriel noticed?"

I nodded.

"You could say... he will become the demon himself.

It's not a separate being inside him.

This level of fusion can't be detected, not even by holy power.

All anyone can do is fight him when the time comes."

The cursed one who invented the Devil Seed made it so perfect, so seamless, that it fully merged with the host's body ..

Making it impossible to detect.

"I don't get it, Frey.

If even Uriel couldn't sense it, how did you?"

It was a fair question.

And I couldn't blame Ghost for not being satisfied.

After all, my reaction had been far worse when I first saw the system's final quest.

"Let's just say... I have my own ways."

I answered briefly.

I couldn't tell him about the system—not yet.

So I had no choice but to leave it at that.

Whether he believed me or not, I couldn't blame him either way.

Ghost, as always, was unreadable.

His face gave nothing away.

Even his reply was short.

"I see."

That was all he said.

And then, silence filled the space between us.

He took his time thinking, glancing at me every so often.

His eyes fell on the dark circles beneath mine, on the exhaustion written all over my body.

Then, remembering all the madness we'd gone through together,

Ghost made his decision.

He chose to believe me.

I was certain of it ..

Because I had caught a glimpse of his thoughts, Using the third-person perspective ability.

"So what do we do, then? How can we save him?"

He asked directly, wanting to help.

But unfortunately, this was something only I could accomplish.

"I'm working on it."

I went on to tell Ghost about the Nameless Mask, and how the way to save Danzo was hidden somewhere inside it...

But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't grasp it.

"I'm the only one who can save him, Ghost. No one else."

His fate rested entirely in my hands ..

and the weight of it was crushing me.

As we walked side by side, we kept talking about it for a while longer.

"How's Danzo been lately?" I asked, since it had been a while since I last saw him.

"He's still broken. Honestly, I can't get used to this new, quiet Danzo."

It was nothing like the energetic Danzo we used to know.

Now, he was far too quiet, looking tired most of the time, unable to walk properly...

Like a ghost of his former self.

If he ever wanted to fight again, there was no hope left in his human body.

Humans simply couldn't repair shattered aura pathways.

But staying alive this way was still far better than dying in the form of a demon.

That thought had haunted me lately.

And the same went for Ghost, who couldn't do anything to help this time.

I wanted to visit Danzo again ..

maybe seeing him would push me to search even harder in that cursed library Nameless had built.

Then, out of nowhere,

I heard a sound I hadn't heard in a very long time...

coming from my stomach.

"Ah..."

It was rare...

To feel hunger in this mutated body of mine.

"You're hungry?" Ghost asked, and I replied,

"I suppose so."

If you counted all the days I spent in the Ultrass Continent, plus the days after our return and my time in the Shadow Sect...

You could say I had gone nearly a whole month without eating anything, surviving on barely a few hours of sleep.

I had pushed my body far beyond its limits ..

I should've died long ago if I were still a normal human.

But the only thing it left me with was some hunger growls.

"What a cursed body..."

I muttered with a tired smile.

Chapter 436: A familiar face (2)

"Let's go find something to eat."

There were a few nearby restaurants Ghost pointed out.

I wasn't really in the mood to eat, but I followed him anyway, hoping I could forget ..Even for a little while ..

About Danzo, and the endless flood of information I had been drowning in.

"The restaurants around here aren't anything special, but they'll fill you up."

Ghost said, and I replied carelessly,

"Anything will do."

In the poor streets of Belgrad,

There were plenty of street vendors and open food stalls scattered around.

I glanced at them all with a blank face.

Food hadn't appealed to me in a long, long time.

So I decided to just pick one at random.

But as we walked a little further ..

I found myself stopping dead in my tracks as something caught my eye at the end of the street.

I rubbed my eyes quietly, trying to steady myself.

I was exhausted .. Maybe I was hallucinating.

But no... I wasn't imagining things.

The scene was real.

Among the various food stalls,

There was one in particular with a decent crowd gathered around it, thick smoke rising from its tiny stand that still clung to its old traditions.

Serving a line of customers,

A fat old man rushed around, taking orders one after another, his thick beard and rough features exactly as I remembered them.

"What is it?"

Ghost stopped too when he noticed me frozen in place, but I couldn't help but laugh quietly.

"So you're still alive, you damned old man."

I said with a smile, making my way toward him.

"We've found what we were looking for, Ghost."

There was no way I could just pass him by after all this time.

Maybe he had escaped back then ..

But the world really was a small place.

"Fate brought me back to you once again, Shaheen."

And with that, I stepped into his new restaurant.

In that moment, without warning,

Everyone inside turned to stare at us as Shaheen dropped his iron ladle to the ground, freezing in place, shocked to see me walking in out of nowhere.

"You look like you've seen a ghost... Shaheen, it's been a while."

I said simply, as the old man stared at me in disbelief, Rubbing his eyes repeatedly to make sure what he was seeing was real.

But he quickly started screaming when the leftover spicy food on his hands burned his eyes.

Letting out a muffled cry, his eyes now bright red from the heat, Shaheen spoke through the pain:

"Frey... ah, hello. I didn't expect to see you..."

Flustered, the old man took a long moment to calm himself down.

"Go wash your face first, old man.

We'll be waiting for you at one of your tables .. then we can talk."

I waved him off and took a seat at one of the wooden tables, Ghost beside me, silently observing everything.

Shaheen was still clearly shaken ..

you could see it in the frantic way he nodded before trying to pick up his fallen ladle...

Only to drop it again.

He really was hopeless.

But I couldn't help feeling happy to see him alive and bustling, just like always.

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It took Shaheen a full thirty minutes to gather his courage and finally sit down in front of us.

He was so late that I almost wanted to scold him for the terrible service.

But I didn't ..

I remembered how places like this, back before my reincarnation, were just as slow.

In that way too, he hadn't changed.

Even when he finally joined us,

silence filled the air,

the three of us just staring at one another.

Ghost sat between us, shifting his gaze back and forth ..

first to me, then to Shaheen.

Then back to me again, then Shaheen—

who was starting to sweat.

The silence dragged on until I stood up abruptly and slammed the table over him.

"What's wrong with you, damned old man?! Are you my ex-girlfriend or what?! Say something, for god's sake!"

Trying to crush him beneath the table,

Shaheen grabbed it firmly and shoved back at me.

"You filthy brat! Is that how you treat your elders?! I was actually embarrassed to face you, you know! I wanted to apologize and give you some free food, but now the only thing you're getting is my hairy old ass!"

"Oh, so now you're offering your ass to strangers, huh, filthy old man? No wonder you've got all these customers!"

"Your mouth's gotten bigger, kid. Maybe I should cut it off for you."

We shouted at each other in front of all the customers, both of us wrestling with the table.

I could've easily overpowered him, but I deliberately used the same amount of strength as him, making our ridiculous struggle perfectly even.

And after a few more minutes of nonsense,

we finally set the table down again and sat back in our seats.

"Let's do this properly, kid." He said with a serious face, and I nodded.

"Go on, then."

With a nod,

Shaheen began to apologize.

"I'm sorry, kid... for disappearing like that after our last conversation."

He bowed his head sincerely.

But I quickly lifted his head back up with aura control from afar.

"No need to apologize.

I see you've left the past behind.

There's nothing to regret .. you've done what I couldn't."

Shaheen had spent his whole life trapped in the temple, haunted by the ghost of his dead daughter, imprisoning himself within the walls of the past.

But he managed to break free from those chains.

And here he was now.

"Look at you .. your restaurant's thriving, you've got dozens of customers... I'm glad life has been kind to you, old man."

I said with a smile, and Shaheen narrowed his eyes at me.

"That's thanks to you, kid.

Your words that day gave me the push I needed.

Even so... I left without saying a word to you. I do feel a little guilty about that.

I hope you won't hold it against me."

Shaheen spoke sincerely, regret lingering in his voice,

unable to speak the full truth.

But I already knew what he meant,

so I spared him the trouble of saying it aloud.

Without realizing it, Shaheen had treated me like a son.

Maybe back then,

he used me to fill the void his dead daughter left behind.

And that's what built the bond between us.

But it was only a temporary escape from reality.

That's why Shaheen left me behind when he decided to start over.

If I had stayed by his side, he might never have left the temple at all.

But I didn't blame him for what he did.

It was a necessary step for him ...

And I respected his decision.

In the end, we understood each other.

And that was what mattered.

Shaheen nodded with a soft smile, regaining his usual composure.

"You look hungry. Should I bring you the usual?"

He asked with a grin, and I nodded.

"Yeah... the usual. For me and my friend here."

"Got it! Hahaha!"

Letting out his signature pirate-like laugh,

Shaheen marched back into the kitchen, brimming with energy.

Watching him from behind,

I couldn't help but laugh quietly too.

I was truly happy to see him again.

Chapter 437: Despair

— Frey Starlight's Pov —

Taking a spoonful from his bowl of spicy food, Ghost's usually calm face visibly twisted with discomfort.

"What exactly do you people like about this stuff?"

He asked, glancing around at the old men and locals who were happily devouring the same dish, their faces radiating pure joy.

"This is the food of real men, kid! No place here for the weak! Hahaha!!"

Shaheen laughed heartily, making his rounds between the tables, taking orders from everyone.

Even though Ghost had barely managed a single bite, Frey had already finished his entire bowl.

"You finished it that fast?"

Ghost asked in confusion, clearly baffled. He had lived a hard life, forced at times to eat grass just to survive.

But even then, he had never tasted anything as fiery as what was now burning in his hands.

"You should've ordered something else, Ghost.

This kind of spicy food is one of a kind.

Either you fall in love with it and devour it...

or you can't stand it and leave it untouched.

There's no middle ground."

Frey spoke with a rare smile ..something he hadn't shown in a long time ..as he signaled for Shaheen to bring him another dish.

"Coming right up! Hahaha!

Frey, I see you still appreciate real spicy food! You have my respect!"

"Don't underestimate me, old man.

I'm tougher than you think."

"Haha! We'll see about that!"

Shaheen disappeared into the kitchen again, while Frey and Ghost sat quietly at their table.

The atmosphere around them was loud and chaotic, like a public café watching a football match .. a sport that had vanished hundreds of years ago.

The noise was overwhelming,

but somehow, Frey found himself genuinely at ease in this environment.

Unlike him, Ghost seemed clearly annoyed,

but he chose to let Frey enjoy this rare moment of peace.

"I'm glad to see you like this again, Frey.

But I have to ask .. what do you plan to do now?"

Ghost was clearly talking about Danzo.

Hearing that, Frey lifted his head, gazing up at the sky.

"I'll save him, Ghost.

I'll save him."

So far,

nothing in this life had gone the way he wanted.

The world had always pushed back against everything he tried to accomplish.

Frey had never forgotten the death of Clana Starlight.

He could still remember the warmth of her body in those final moments as she died in his arms.

She hadn't meant much to him,

and yet she had died to save him.

It felt like her life had been wasted on someone like him.

That was a burden he never wanted to carry again.

"I'll save him... no matter what it takes."

Danzo's fate rested entirely in his hands,

and he intended to carry that responsibility to the end.

Final Mission :

Time Remaining: 17 Days.

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That day, Frey visited his sick friend once again, with Ghost by his side.

Several other elite students came to visit as well.

And by chance, Seris was there this time, having finally finished her duties toward her family.

The princess of the Moonlight family remained as calm as ever,

but there was a clear maturity in her demeanor now.

Due to the lack of church forces capable of using advanced holy power, Seris hadn't yet recovered her severed arm,

instead using a hand crafted from pure ice.

Wearing her black coat, she nodded to Frey, and he did the same.

After everything they had been through,

an unspoken respect had grown between them,

allowing them both to leave their hatred behind.

Whether it was Seris letting go of what Frey had once done to her,

or Frey setting aside his grudge against the Moonlight family and its tangled past.

Between them, Danzo sat quietly on his bed.

His skin looked much better than before,

but he was still pale compared to what he once was.

"I'll be leaving now. I'll give you some space."

Having seen Frey and Ghost arrive, Seris didn't want to intrude, so she left quietly.

"I'm glad to see you're still alive and well, Danzo. I wish you the best."

In response to her kind words, Danzo simply nodded.

"Thank you."

And just like that,

Seris left,

leaving only Frey and Ghost behind with Danzo.

The man spent his remaining days in complete peace, unaware of the monster lurking inside him.

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— Frey Starlight's pov —

Time was slipping away fast...

Especially when you needed it most.

Barely half of the allotted time remained before the quest's deadline.

And I hadn't made any progress so far .. a reality that pushed me to my limits.

I gave up sleep, abandoned all comfort, and poured every second I had into the Nameless' library,

a place holding all of his knowledge and wisdom.

Searching for a solution,

I spent 23 out of every 24 hours inside that place.

Leaving the last hour for Danzo.

I visited him every day now. Our presence by his side seemed to bring back a little life to him.

His body was visibly improving day by day, which made his father happy .. and filled my heart with growing unease.

As soon as my time with him was over,

I would teleport straight back to the Shadow Sect and continue what I was doing.

The sect had grown terrifyingly massive, its size breaking beyond the limits of the Black Mountain.

Only God knew what that Engineer was trying to build there.

Time remaining: 16 days.

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The next day, I managed to get permission from Adam Smasher to take Danzo outside.

Danzo was using a wheelchair.

The weather had grown bitterly cold with the coming of winter, and it had been snowing and raining frequently.

Adam had wrapped his son from head to toe in warm clothes, covering him completely.

Danzo looked strange in that wheelchair of his, but I made sure not to show it on my face.

Together with Ghost, the three of us went to Shaheen's new restaurant.

Shaheen recognized Danzo instantly—he'd often visited the old man with me before—

and he handled the situation well, saying nothing about Danzo's condition.

Instead, he tried to lift his spirits.

And I appreciated what the old man did.

Thanks to him, I saw that familiar smile on my sick friend's face once again.

Time remaining: 15 days.

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The knowledge about teleportation and spatial manipulation was so vast that even after 15 days, I still hadn't finished it.

It frustrated me deeply.

Nameless had somehow turned this knowledge into a world-breaking power—

allowing him to transcend the very laws of space.

He was a being capable of appearing anywhere in the world at will.

A power beyond imagination.

But because of that, I now found myself drowning in this endless field, unable to reach what I sought.

The anxiety within me kept growing.

The odds were against me, and the Engineer did nothing to help me in my struggle.

The dark circles under my eyes had worsened, and my head throbbed constantly.

Spending 23 hours a day on this madness had drained me, but I had no choice.

With each passing second,

I felt myself inching closer to collapse.

Time remaining: 12 days.

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The Empire was undergoing great changes.

The Iron Emperor—Sir Alon—was building a vast military force, reorganizing everything.

Anyone who saw what he was doing would know:

he was preparing for a brutal war soon to come.

The Iron Emperor wanted to meet me, according to what Ada told me.

He had already met with all of my fellow elite classmates.

But I simply ignored his invitation.

I didn't have the time to waste on him.

That night,

I snuck into Danzo's room with Sansa once darkness fell.

As soon as we arrived, Sansa let go of my hand and quietly approached the sleeping Danzo to check on him.

With a single glance, she could tell what was happening.

"This isn't good. The Devil Seed has spread its roots completely inside him..."

The princess spoke quietly, though it was what I had feared.

"Can you suppress it?" I asked.

She nodded.

"I can. But only temporarily.

In ten days from now, I won't be able to stop the growing power inside him anymore."

Turning to face me, Sansa spoke firmly.

"If we reach that point, we'll have to kill him, Frey."

She was blunt—and right.

But I was determined to avoid that outcome at all costs.

"I'll take responsibility for him.

So don't take any action on your own."

I warned her firmly.

She would likely try to kill him herself, sparing me from having to do it with my own hands.

I knew she would ...

I had already read those thoughts inside her mind.

And it seemed like she knew that I knew.

After a long silence, she finally gave in.

"Fine. I promise I won't do anything without your knowledge."

"Thank you..."

I thanked her with a heavy sigh.

There was much more to talk about ..

But we said nothing.

We simply left.

I hadn't seen much of Sansa lately.

She had been busy with her own situation inside the Imperial Family ..

a family where most of them wished her dead.

She had her own problems, just as I had mine.

But we didn't burden each other.

This time, we fought our battles alone.

Sansa had grown incredibly strong.

So I was sure she'd find a way to deal with her situation somehow.

But that didn't change the fact that I hadn't done anything to help her through her struggle.

"I'm sorry... Sansa..."

Time remaining: 10 days.

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Three days later ..

I finally began to reach my limits.

Trapped within the endless walls of the library,

I felt an unbearable pain in my head, as if someone was forcing something into my brain.

Hallucinations became frequent now ..

I could no longer tell left from right.

I was just a tiny, insignificant speck in the vast ocean of existence,

desperately trying to break through the crashing waves that swept me away without mercy.

Throwing me deep into the abyss.

"Gathering this much knowledge took thousands of years. What makes you think you can grasp it so quickly?"

That's what The Engineer told me once.

Nameless, with all his greatness and wisdom, spent millennia to reach this point.

By what right did I think I could claim it for myself?

"Damn it all..."

I didn't want to acquire all that knowledge—

I only wanted the smallest fraction of it.

Just enough to achieve my goal.

Let Nameless, his mask, and his knowledge all burn in hell.

"Why can't I grasp it?!"

In a hysterical fit,

I hurled the books everywhere, unable to reach what I sought.

I was still stuck on the first floor.

And beyond me were countless other floors...

Some piercing through the skies,

others plunging deep into the earth below.

"There's no end to this..."

I was starting to lose them.

Danzo... and my mind.

Time remaining: 7 days.

Chapter 438: The Price of Life and Death

25 days had passed.

Inside the Silver Dragon Guild,

I stood frozen, unable to move,

as its master—and Danzo's father—Adam Smasher embraced me tightly.

"Thank you, my boy... thank you for everything you've done for my only son..."

Hearing his words of gratitude, I didn't know what to say.

It happened when I went to visit Danzo as usual .. only to run into his father.

"Your presence brought a smile back to his face.

You restored his energy and his health.

I could never repay you for what you've done...

But please, accept my deepest thanks."

As his massive arms pulled me into a crushing embrace, I saw tears welling in his eyes.

It must have been hell for him ...

watching his son return to him as a broken shell.

He had done everything he could.

But in the end, it wasn't enough.

And then, one day, I came—alongside Uriel—and brought his son back to life.

To him, I must've looked like a ray of hope piercing through the darkness surrounding them.

"My son didn't just gain a friend...

He gained a brother.

Thank you for everything you've done for him, Frey."

With tired, hollow eyes blackened from exhaustion, and a clenched fist, I listened to his words, unable to give him any reply.

Thank me for what, exactly?

I wanted to ask him.

I hadn't done anything for his son.

Nothing at all.

Danzo was the one who had helped me time and time again.

He was the one who preserved what little humanity I still had left—the part of me I never wanted to lose.

And now, when the chance finally came for me to return the favor,

I stood powerless,

receiving praise and gratitude from his father, who didn't even realize his son only had a few days left.

You shouldn't be thanking me.

You should be cursing me.

I clenched my teeth, trying to hold myself together...

trying to say something.

But in the end,

nothing came out.

I was already nearing the breaking point.

And so,

I just stood there, frozen,

until Adam Smasher finally let me go.

He smiled as he bid me farewell.

"Take care of each other, both of you. You're like sons to me now."

"..."

No, Adam.

No.

You're so wrong...

"Your only son is the one lying in that bed.

No one else."

Time remaining: 5 days.

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"Relentless effort does not guarantee success."

No matter how hard you try,

no matter how much of yourself you pour into it, Success is never promised.

It's always out of reach.

Only 3 days left...

Only 3 days remained...

Just a few fleeting hours separated me from facing the turning point ..

a point that could break something deep inside me.

"I'm exhausted..."

Lying there in the Library of Existence, isolated and alone in its vastness,

I had finally reached my limit.

I hadn't slept, hadn't rested, hadn't given in.

I did everything I could, surrounded by endless books.

And yet, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't find the answer.

"Do you want me to kill him with these hands of mine?"

If death was his fate...

Then why was his life thrown onto my shoulders?

If he had died somewhere far away in the Ultras Continent, the pain wouldn't have been this bitter.

I was afraid.

And I was angry.

Angry at how Danzo's life had been toyed with ..

like some lab rat, his life prolonged on purpose just so it could end at the 'right' time.

He had lost to Gvardiol.

He should've died then.

But that damned hybrid kept him alive on purpose.

And now I was the one suffering the consequences of his actions.

"What the hell am I even thinking?"

Forcing myself to stand,

I rose again and looked around the endless space.

I had reached my limit.

There was nothing more I could do.

After just a few seconds of standing,

my legs gave out beneath me, and I collapsed to my knees on the ground, broken.

"Please... show me the way."

I whispered, exhaling slowly.

"I beg you... just this once .. show me the way."

Who was I even speaking to now?

I didn't know.

But I was drowning in exhaustion, buried beneath hopelessness.

I couldn't think clearly anymore.

The wounds on my body ..

perhaps time could heal them.

But the fear carved into my soul...

who would erase that?

Fear of what was coming...

"Please... show me the way..."

If saving Danzo meant finding one book in this endless sea of knowledge,

then no matter how much I searched, I would never find it.

This entire place was just a space my mind had created ..

and so, I begged myself,

To show me the way.

To give me what I sought.

It was meaningless,

but if it showed anything, it was the depth of my despair.

And then, to my shock ..

The impossible happened.

Without warning, without my will,

A miracle.

"This...!"

It appeared from nowhere.

I didn't know where it came from or how it had gotten here.

But a black, ominous book rested in my hands.

I didn't know if this was truly what I sought,

but I found myself opening it desperately, frantically searching for the answer hidden inside.

And the moment I opened it ..

My consciousness was thrown far away, into another world of memories.

"You have touched the forbidden."

There were laws upon which this world was built...

Laws the Engineer had once spoken of.

If I wanted to save Danzo,

I realized I had no choice but to break one of those laws if I hoped to survive.

The completed Devil Seed was something unique.

A cursed tool invented by one of the most terrifying demons.

A soul resided inside that seed.

And unlike Sansa's incomplete seed—

where the seed fused with the body—

Danzo's seed had fused completely, and the soul had merged with him as well.

They had become one.

And one...

cannot become two.

What I was trying to achieve ..

was freeing Danzo, from Danzo himself.

That was neither realistic nor logical.

In this world, escaping a completed Devil Seed was impossible.

That's what I realized the moment I opened that book.

What I was about to attempt to break ..

was the Law of Life and Death.

The very same thing Nameless had once tried to defy.

Opening that book,

the past was illuminated before me.

And my mind was torn apart by a cold voice that shook my soul.

"There is no life without death."

I heard it clearly.

Was that... Nameless' voice?

Slowly,

I began to sink into the truth.

No life without death .. that's what he said.

So then, what had he done to reach that higher law that stood at the top of the world?

And in that moment,

I understood.

And my expression darkened.

As I stared at a horrifying sight unlike anything I had ever seen, my whole being trembled.

"What did you do?"

Blood.

Death.

Slaughter.

With his own hands...

He killed them one after another ..

ended their lives, snuffed out the flame of their existence.

And then, he defiled their corpses.

Kill, kill, kill...

And then more killing!

All to achieve what he desired.

To satisfy that twisted, diseased passion of his.

He did whatever it took to get what he wanted.

"What... is this?!"

I had never seen this before.

The truth... about Nameless.

"He wasn't some great king, like they called him."

It was blood, and for blood.

He wasn't noble.

He wasn't righteous.

He wasn't anything like that.

"He was insane!"

Wherever Nameless went,

disaster followed.

Giant black birds would soar ominously in the sky wherever he appeared.

And soon after, calamities would strike.

He killed them.

He killed every type of creature, one after another.

Death, death, and more death ...

and even more death beyond that.

He caught them all, and dissected their corpses one by one.

Cut them down to the smallest pieces,

until their blood became seas and oceans.

Nameless spared no one.

Neither the weak nor the strong.

Neither the young nor the old.

Neither the poor nor the rich.

He killed them all, and did whatever it took without hesitation to achieve what he sought.

Blood.

Blood.

And more blood.

He never faltered,

and he never stopped.

Alone,

he did what not even the demons themselves dared to do.

Frozen in place before that terrifying sight—

the horrifying experiments that entity carried out,

I found myself stumbling backward,

retreating in horror.

"I was naive..."

A king? A mighty warrior?

Bullshit.

How could I have forgotten?

"He was a monster. A monster as terrifying as Agaroth."

To reach that level...

there was no way he did it through normal means.

He was insane ...

without limits or chains to bind him.

As long as it meant achieving his goal,

he would do anything,

without a second thought.

And so it led to a massacre.

And oceans of blood.

Staring at those catastrophes, I finally understood what had happened.

"He did it... and the demons bore the blame for what he had done."

Realizing the truth, all I felt was disgust at what I had seen.

His past was dark ..

but no one had ever truly known him.

Because he left no one alive to tell the tale.

And so, the world thought the demons had committed these atrocities,

because such horrors matched their ways.

But the truth was far from that.

The real monster

was the man behind that dark mask.

This was how Nameless challenged the Law of Life and Death ..

and reached the level he had attained.

Realizing this,

Despair washed over me.

How was I supposed to comprehend what I had just seen?

Those horrific experiments,

that sea of slaughter...

All for the sake of surpassing the limits of flesh and blood.

This was the power I needed to save Danzo.

But reality was far crueler than I imagined.

Because to reach that insane level,

I would have to sacrifice everything,

become a monster like him...

and do what he did.

Break the highest Law of Life and Death.

And that...

that simply wasn't possible.

Unlike teleportation,

you couldn't learn this just by witnessing it.

"From the very beginning... there was never a way to succeed."

When this book appeared before me,

it wasn't offering me hope.

It was offering me despair ..

crushing the last shred of my will.

"I can't save him.

I can't..."

Swallowed by the bitter truth,

I finally sank into darkness ...

defeated once again.

They were really going to make me do it...

Make me kill Danzo.

Chapter 439: The Fourth Seat Awakens (1)

The Northern Region of the Human Empire...

Ashina Province.

This was the uppermost border of the empire, a place where snow fell relentlessly all year round.

In those frozen lands, there stood an old wooden house, Once home to an elderly couple.

Now, it had become a grave that held one of them.

Millicent, the old witch, had died after her defeat at the hands of Beatrice.

She was quietly buried there,

and few even knew she had been alive in the first place.

Her story was a tragic one...

But that didn't change the fact that she, together with her now-absent husband, had once protected the northern borders.

And without them, there was no longer a line of defense against one of the Nightmare Lords .. the Abyss Watcher.

This forced Sir Alon Valerion to place a beast resembling the Nightmare Knights in her stead, to hold the line.

And so, amidst the beautiful snowy fields,

a fierce battle unfolded, spilling foul blood across the land without end.

The Abyss watcher's charged in vast numbers, rusted swords in hand,

desperately shielding themselves behind their tattered armor.

But their defense was meaningless against the dark shadowy tendrils that swept them away one after another.

Floating silently above them,

her dozens of black tendrils stretching from her back, Sansa slaughtered the Abyss Knights without mercy,

ripping them apart without pause.

With every drop of their blood that splashed onto the snow, the smile on the demonic princess's face grew wider and wider ..

Delighting in the bloodshed,

drunk on the thrill of the hunt, as her murderous intent swelled with each passing moment.

Her shadow spread so rapidly that it engulfed the entire battlefield in the blink of an eye. And in less than a second,

It transformed into sharp spikes .. cold as black steel .. piercing through the bodies of the Nightmare Knights, annihilating them with terrifying ease.

"This is boring. Weren't they supposed to be an SS+ threat?"

Sansa muttered with a frown, having effortlessly wiped out all the Abyss Watchers.

She had been stationed here for days now,

fighting the Abyss Knights day after day,

slaughtering countless enemies.

But they were far too weak ..

leaving her bored with the entire ordeal.

"The Abyss Watchers are a vast horde of nameless knights. Their strength varies from one to another.

Only their leader has reached the SS+ level."

A calm voice interrupted her from behind.

Wearing his usual white mask,

Oliver Khan explained the truth about the Abyss Watchers.

"I see. Then let's go find their leader !"

Sansa smiled eagerly, but Oliver shook his head immediately.

"No.

Your only task is to stay here and guard the border."

"You're so boring, Uncle Oliver.

Are you trying to lock me up here or something?"

"..."

Sansa descended quietly from the sky,

wearing her carefree smile, while Oliver remained silent.

It was hard to read Oliver Khan's thoughts or emotions since he wore a mask all the time, but his eyes said plenty.

Though he was starting to accept the reality, he still couldn't stop his mixed expressions from surfacing whenever he looked at Sansa's dark horns...

Her skin had grown paler,

her hair now a white tinged with gray.

Wearing that black dress she wove from shadows, she looked entirely demonic.

Watching his only niece turn into a demon was hard for Oliver.

It was far from easy.

And with her heightened senses,

Sansa had already seen all of that ..

which only deepened the tension between them.

"It's the only way to keep you alive.

That was the condition we agreed upon."

Oliver changed the subject, reminding her of the necessity of staying in the north.

Sansa simply shrugged indifferently,

heading into the wooden cabin where Millicent and Vendrick once lived.

Despite the growing tension between them,

Sansa didn't care much.

Her personality had changed.

She was no longer the princess Oliver once knew and loved.

There was little left that could stir her now ..

even exile from the empire wouldn't faze her.

Oliver honestly believed she wouldn't care in the slightest.

In truth,

Even if she tried to escape, not even Sir Alon, with his light-speed sword, could stop her.

She had grown far too strong ..

as befitting a demon.

The current emperor wanted her dead.

But an unexpected intervention changed the Iron Emperor's mind.

"Who would've thought the one to save her would be Aegon, of all people..."

Oliver Khan sighed in frustration, following Sansa into the cabin .. recalling what had happened before.

The princess's transformation into a demon was unforgivable ..

a complete disgrace to House Valerion,

descendants of the First Emperor who had sacrificed his life to save humanity.

Her very existence was a stain on their legacy, and that was why Sir Alon had drawn his sword.

Back then, Oliver Khan hadn't known what to do.

He froze, unable to move.

But unlike him, Aegon stood before the Iron Emperor and argued for his sister's life.

Aegon Valerion ...

the first to escape from the Ultrass Continent, and the only one to return without a single injury.

A young man who had achieved so much in such a short time, quickly earning the Iron Emperor's favor.

And so, he persuaded Sir Alon to spare Sansa's life ...

on the condition that her power would be used for the empire.

Even in a situation like this, Aegon Valerion had managed to come up with the most beneficial plan .. and it had worked perfectly.

Sansa agreed to the prince's dubious proposal, becoming a secret weapon of the Empire, a tool wielded by the Iron Emperor and Aegon as they pleased.

It all began with assigning her to guard the northern borders, for now.

Sansa had become a demon,

and Aegon secured his claim to the throne.

He even gained the full attention of Sir Alon.

"It wouldn't be wrong to say the Empire is now in Aegon's hands."

Staring up at the sky,

Oliver Khan wondered with concern ..

What kind of future awaited the Empire when Aegon finally ascended the throne?

The prince was certainly capable...

but his true motives remained a complete mystery.

Only God knew what dwelled within that mind of his.

The fate of mankind had never been more uncertain, with a devastating war looming on the horizon.

Anyone could see it now ..

a storm was coming.

A storm that would change everything on this planet called Earth.

...

...

...

On the other side of the world ..

Where the Ultras lived.

The land of the other humans .. those branded as traitors.

That land had witnessed many events recently.

Events that changed it forever.

Perhaps the most important of them

was the return of their supreme lord, whom all had thought dead:

The Human Demon ..

Dragoth.

Driven mad ever since his crushing defeat at the hands of Abraham Starlight,

he had finally begun to regain his composure, after enduring endless torture throughout the past years.

The return of such a beast to his senses

only made the threat to the Empire even greater.

Surrounded by Gavid Lindman and Mergo,

the supreme lord of the Ultras was restored.

Elsewhere, both Baylor Moonlight—the traitor— and Gvardiol officially rose to the rank of lords, after the deaths of Madam A and Godfrey.

The Madam fell to Maekar's spear.

As for Godfrey ..

the way he died remained unknown to this day.

This time, the Ultras gathered their true strength, preparing for the war to come.

Among their strongest,

perhaps the most mysterious was the warrior Draxler.

This man wandered aimlessly through one of the deserts, his greatsword resting on his back, his gaze fixed on a mountain far in the distance.

After a long, tiresome journey,

he finally reached his destination.

There, inside one of the enormous caves—its entrance resembling the maw of a colossal beast ..

Stood a refined woman, wearing a deep violet dress, her hands calmly folded together.

"You've finally arrived."

The woman spoke with a soft smile.

It was Beatrice.

"My apologies. It took me quite some trouble to find you... which caused the delay."

Draxler bowed his head respectfully.

He had known from the start that Beatrice would never die so easily.

But finding her afterward had been a difficult task.

He brushed his orange hair back,

revealing two golden bracelets adorning his elbows.

Then, with great care,

he removed them ..

and his body shone with a blinding white light.

In mere seconds, a dramatic transformation overtook the mysterious young man with golden teeth.

His skin darkened into rough obsidian,

his eyes became a mix of crimson and black, and a pair of black horns pierced through his orange hair, rising atop his head.

"Rank 33, Draxler, at your service."

In that moment, Draxler's true identity was revealed ..

one of the 72 Demon Seats,

the holder of Rank 33, and a direct servant of Beatrice.

"Hmm, well done."

Beatrice smiled, gesturing for Draxler to follow her.

"These enchanted bracelets hid my true form perfectly, Lady Beatrice...

but they also limited my power greatly.

It reduced my effectiveness on the battlefield."

Draxler grumbled, complaining about the magical tool Beatrice had crafted for him,

but she remained unfazed.

"No matter. You're of no use on the battlefield anyway."

"Ugh..."

Hearing the harsh truth, Draxler let out a sigh.

"You're cruel as ever, Lady Beatrice."

"If you know that much already,

you shouldn't have spoken ill of my magic tools in the first place."

"My apologies..."

Draxler apologized with slumped shoulders,

looking like a defeated loser,

trying to stay on Beatrice's good side.

She gave him a faint smile.

"You'll have to work very hard from now on if you truly want to apologize."

"I'll do my best."

Draxler replied with a blank face.

He already knew Beatrice would work him to the bone anyway, so it didn't really matter.

As the two of them ventured deeper into the dark cave, Draxler gradually became more and more serious...

"Did we really manage to catch his attention?"

Draxler asked cautiously, and Beatrice answered calmly.

"Yes. That's the very reason I created the Witch's Game in the first place.

We succeeded .. he already appeared before me once."

The moment she mentioned him, excitement clearly spread across Beatrice's face.

She had finally obtained what she had long desired.

Chapter 440: The Fourth Seat Awakens (2)

"When I tried to kill those worthless servants, he appeared before me, stopping me in my tracks.

There's no doubt it was him.

That level of wave manipulation is something only someone of his caliber could perform."

Beatrice still remembered every moment of that encounter, when she had nearly killed Gavid Lindman and Mergo.

Just as she was about to strike,

time froze around her, reality flipped upside down, and a tremendous force pressed down on her, rendering her unable to move.

Hearing this, Draxler nodded.

"Hellmond is in complete chaos right now.

The Great King, Agaroth, and the First Seat, the Red Moon Crimson, have been dormant for a long time, and have stepped away from the battlefield."

"As for the Second Seat, Agares,

he vanished after his defeat against one of the Seven Supreme Powers.

Which leaves Shadow King Vayne as the strongest active demon among the upper seats."

Draxler paused for a moment, gathering his thoughts before continuing.

"Vayne has always been a strange and reclusive demon who follows only her whims.

She has no interest in leadership whatsoever, which left the Fourth Seat, Wesker, and the Fifth Seat, Marvas, to lead the upper demons."

Since the top three had withdrawn from leadership for various reasons,

the upper demons had split into two factions:

One led by the Fourth Seat, Wesker ..the Black Faction, which included demons like Beatrice and Astaroth.

The other followed the Fifth Seat, Marvas—the Red Faction.

Although they were part of the same hierarchy, the two forces were constantly at odds, their relationship tangled and strained.

Wesker was cunning and calculating,

often scheming from behind the scenes.

Marvas, on the other hand, was the oldest among the 72 upper demons, a seasoned war general with vast experience.

The struggle between these two forces had raged for years, especially after the higher ranks ignored them completely,

leaving them free to wage their own wars.

The power struggle was evenly matched,

until the Red Faction recently gained the upper hand after the sudden disappearance of the Black Faction's leader—Wesker.

This disappearance led Wesker's followers to search for him, their journey eventually leading them to Earth ..

the last place Wesker was seen.

Realizing this, Draxler stared at Beatrice's back, unable to believe what they were about to face.

"Is Lord Wesker really in this place?"

Draxler asked, but before he could say another word, his mouth vanished without warning.

Beatrice turned toward him,

holding her magic staff in hand.

"You talk too much, Draxler.

You'd better control yourself before my hand slips further."

With that threatening tone,

Draxler realized his missing mouth was Beatrice's doing.

He had no choice but to submit,

understanding that he had crossed the line.

Beatrice, however, was entirely certain of her actions.

She had spent a long time planning the Witch's Game, all for one higher purpose:

To draw Wesker's attention.

His disappearance wasn't random ...

Beatrice knew him well.

This wasn't the first time he had done something like this.

The King's Eye never moved without meaning.

Every step he took was calculated,

and his sudden vanishing could mean only one thing:

He was preparing for something enormous.

Beatrice had always been fascinated by the intricate schemes Wesker wove from the shadows.

The Witch's Game was nothing but a cheap imitation of her supreme master's grand designs.

That's why she wanted a front-row seat to the show the Fourth Seat was about to put on.

She was certain it would be spectacular.

As for Marvas and the Red Faction?

She wasn't concerned about them in the slightest.

Once it was over,

Wesker would deal with them easily.

She was certain of it.

At that moment,

Beatrice cared about only one thing ..

meeting him.

And that was why she had come here.

"He led me here himself."

It happened during the final battle against the Elite Class students.

Back then, Beatrice had felt a subtle current guiding her toward somewhere far away.

That was why she never activated her final magical trap, the one that would have annihilated Frey and his companions.

A witch like her had already accounted for the possibility that Frey might break through her defenses, so she had prepared an automatic trap that would trigger even without her casting it.

Meaning Frey's anti-magic would have been useless.

"I was guaranteed victory.

The Witch's Game was designed that way from the start."

Frey and his companions had zero chance of winning ..

unless some outside force intervened.

Who could have predicted that Wesker himself would intervene on their behalf?

In such a case, Beatrice had no choice but to yield.

And at that moment...

She realized they had ventured too deep into the cave, the darkness around them growing heavier and heavier.

A darkness far from ordinary.

It was said that those who reached the higher realms of the SSS rank

possessed such overwhelming power

that those below SS+ couldn't even sense it...

And so, Beatrice and Draxler stood frozen, unsettled beneath the crushing weight of the vast darkness that crept over their skin.

Slowly, the shadows gathered and converged, taking the form of a colossal silhouette stretching across the cavern wall.

It was a demonic shadow, its single crimson eye snapping open without warning ...

gazing straight into their very souls.

That eye did not merely see their bodies.

It pierced far deeper, laying bare their past, present, and future, holding their fate in its grasp.

"The King's Eye,"

Beatrice whispered, awe-struck.

Draxler dropped to his knees without hesitation, pressing his forehead to the ground.

Beatrice followed, bowing deeply,

her lips curling into an exhilarated smile despite herself.

They sought to greet him, to honor him,

yet his mere presence robbed them of their voices.

They couldn't sense his power ..

but the pressure he radiated left no room for doubt.

Then came that voice.

sweet, seductive, the very whisper that had lured countless beings into ruin.

The Fourth Seat spoke.

"Beatrice, one day your curiosity will be the death of you."

Summoning all her strength, Beatrice managed to reply to her master.

"If death is the price to witness the masterpiece you've painted here...

then so be it. Let death come !!"

"Ever the sweet talker."

The crimson eye continued to fixate on them, as Wesker spoke from beyond the veil of shadow.

"Your little game was amusing to my eyes.

So go ahead, say what's on your mind.

I'll allow it."

Those final words ignited a spark in Beatrice's eyes. Without thinking, she stepped forward, unable to contain her excitement.

"Your words are more than I deserve!"

But the shadow on the wall remained silent.

And in that silence, she realized her flattery was meaningless here.

So she cast aside her empty words and asked the question that had haunted her for so long:

"Forgive my boldness, My Lord

but why go to such lengths to toy with a worthless species like humans?"

A fair question.

In the distant past, there had been a mighty civilization ..

highly organized, fiercely strong ..

warriors so powerful that even the demons could not breach their defenses.

With a population of two billion, they were all hardened fighters, a race whose might forced the demons to tread carefully.

But in that age, Wesker vanished,

only to reappear hidden within their ranks.

From the shadows,

he plotted and schemed, turning them against one another within mere years.

They split into two warring factions,

blinded by petty disputes, unable to see the truth before them.

Thus began a catastrophic war.

Blood flowed without end.

That once-unbreakable civilization

crumbled overnight, reduced to a sea of corpses.

With only a few well-placed whispers

and a handful of masterful conspiracies,

Wesker destroyed everything.

One billion lives were lost in that war.

And then, at the moment of one side's triumph .. at the peak of their joy ..

Wesker appeared before them,

snatching away their victory and replacing it with utter despair.

He was a sadist who delighted in breaking souls.

Just as they thought they had won,

as their joy reached its peak, he descended upon them ...

slaughtering the remaining billion himself in a massacre that scarred the world's darkest history.

Wesker's dreadful reputation was born of acts like these.

But humans were not like that civilization.

They were far weaker.

Unlike that ancient race, who could repel the elite demons, Wesker alone could erase all of humanity from the face of the Earth in less than a day.

And yet, he hadn't.

So Beatrice could not help but ask herself:

Why?

Why would the Fourth Seat,

one of the mightiest beings in existence,

bother hiding and manipulating such fragile creatures from behind the curtain?

That was the answer she sought.

"You're clever, Beatrice...

but your vision is far too narrow."

Between Beatrice's violet demonic gaze and Wesker's crimson King's Eye,

the gap was vast.

She had only glimpsed the surface ..

ignorant of the deeper currents beneath.

"There is far more beyond what your eyes can see.

In the end, you are nothing but a pawn on this board .. just like every human soul standing on this chessboard called Earth."

The game had been in play for far longer than she realized.

And whoever revealed their hand first would lose.

Whether it was the one with the King's Eye,

or the one with the piercing blue eyes playing the opposite side ..

Or perhaps...

A third player ..

an uninvited guest in the game?

"Many eyes are watching this place.

Even the King himself has shown interest."

"!!!"

Beatrice could not hide her shock.

And how could she not?

When she heard that the Demon King, Agaroth .. in all his unimaginable might ..

was watching them.

Here on Earth, in this insignificant corner of the vast cosmos.

"You've always been a fine piece, Beatrice.

So continue to play your part...

but do not try to break out of your shell."

After all ..

What good is a pawn ..

if it tries to leave the board and confront the player himself?

"The end draws near.

The schemes will be revealed, the plans exposed, the secrets laid bare...

and this world will finally learn the true meaning of horror."

With those final words, the shadow slowly faded away, leaving Beatrice in stunned silence.

"Not much time remains."

Planet Earth stood on the verge of a decisive turning point in its long and tangled history.

A turning point that could mark the end ..

of a story woven from countless threads of fate, now wrapping tightly around the necks of its inhabitants.

And among them all...

Frey Starlight stood at the center of those tangled threads, gazing up at the sky,

weary and worn by the storm of events surrounding him.

Time remaining until the end of the final mission: 1 day.