

VILLAIN 46

Chapter 46 Against the Ice Queen (2)

I woke up early the next morning—5 a.m. sharp.

After taking a quick shower, I put on my training clothes and made my way out of my room.

The Elite Residence was massive, housing various facilities for different purposes—including multiple training grounds.

There were designated areas for every combat discipline, from swordsmanship to archery and beyond.

Right now, I was heading toward the dueling grounds. The reason was simple: the people I was looking for were there.

Upon entering the spacious hall, I was met with an array of training equipment and a selection of swords neatly displayed on the racks.

I wasn't the first to arrive. Two figures were already inside, locked in their own training.

Both were engaged in attacking practice dummies—sturdy mannequins designed to withstand relentless strikes.

The first was distinguished by his white hair and golden eyes—Snow Lionheart. The second was a young man with black hair and deep crimson eyes—A-4, Dawn Polaris.

They both noticed my presence, evident from the quick glance they shot my way before resuming their training.

Ignoring them for now, I approached the displayed swords and picked one that closely resembled Balerion.

Taking position in front of a training dummy, I began my own drills.

The reason I was here was straightforward—I wanted to challenge those two.

Aside from the protagonist himself, Dawn Polaris was the most skilled swordsman in the Elite Class.

Sparring with them would be incredibly beneficial. It might even help my shadow adaptation progress further.

But the real question was—how should I go about it? Should I just walk up to them and request a duel?

I decided to take my time. Rushing things wouldn't do me any favors.

Engulfing my blade in a surge of black aura, I struck the dummy before me.

One strike. Two strikes. Four strikes.

I unleashed the Ten Thousand Steps of the Shadow technique, my sword weaving through the air in a storm of dark slashes, filling the hall with the sound of relentless impact.

Snow and Dawn took notice, perceiving my display as a silent challenge. Their own intensity spiked in response.

Dawn's sword ignited with blazing flames, while Snow's was cloaked in a brilliant white light as he slashed at inhuman speeds.

The room became a cacophony of steel and power as the three of us relentlessly assaulted the dummies, pushing them to their limits.

These training dummies were built to endure attacks from C-Class Awakened, yet now they trembled violently, threatening to shatter under our combined assault.

Everything was going as planned—I was on the verge of drawing them into a fight.

Until something unexpected happened.

All three of us froze mid-swing. A fourth presence was approaching.

My expression darkened as I turned toward the entrance.

What is she doing here?

Seris Moonlight stepped inside, dressed in a short white training outfit that covered only her upper body. Her hair was tied back in a ponytail, and in her hand, she carried a medium-length sword.

She walked forward with her usual unshaken composure.

At that moment, Snow Lionheart took the lead.

"Seris Moonlight, right? Mind telling us what brings you here?"

Yes... deal with her, Snow.

This cursed body always reacts strangely when she's around.

Seris simply raised her sword and responded with her usual cold indifference.

"I came to train."

Her short reply left the three of us even more puzzled.

Dawn was the next to step forward.

"If I'm not mistaken, you're a Wave Controller. This is a dueling ground."

Seris nodded. "I'm aware."

At that moment, a thin layer of frost spread across her blade as she swung it a few times.

"My role as a Wave Controller requires me to fight from a distance. But if an opponent manages to close the gap and break through my defenses, I'll be at a disadvantage."

She paused briefly before continuing.

"That's why I need a way to fight in close quarters. Is that explanation enough?"

Dawn and Snow exchanged glances before nodding.

Man... she treats them like children. This is the protagonist I created and took pride in?

I sighed, resigning myself to the situation.

But just as I was about to continue my training, something completely unexpected happened.

Seris studied the sword in her hand before slowly raising it.

"In truth... that's not the real reason I came here."

Her blade pointed at a specific person.

Me.

My expression faltered, and before I could stop myself, I blurted out—

"What?!"

Suppressing the emotions of this damn body, I faced the girl standing before me.

"You want to duel me?"

She nodded.

"Yes. A swordfight, nothing else."

I frowned.

This girl was supposed to hate Frey. He tried to assault her, after all.

Yet there was no trace of hatred on her face. No emotion whatsoever. Just a cold, unreadable expression.

"A duel with swords... You understand what you're doing, right?"

She nodded again.

"I do. I know I'm handicapping myself right now. But I want to test something."

"Test what?"

Seris stepped back, adopting a ready stance.

"I want to see how much your sword has changed."

With a sigh, I lifted my own weapon.

"Fine. I accept."

I didn't know what she was trying to prove. As a Wave Controller, close combat was the worst decision she could make.

She wasn't stupid. She had to be aware of that.

But she still wanted to fight.

And I had no reason to refuse.

After all, one of my objectives was to defeat her.

Snow and Dawn stepped aside, watching from the sidelines.

Without hesitation, Seris lunged forward, her body radiating a faint white glow.

She slashed horizontally at my left side—her speed sharp, controlled, and far above what a typical Wave Controller should achieve.

I raised my sword vertically to block.

Our blades clashed, and the frost coating her weapon attempted to freeze the dark aura surrounding mine.

Seris quickly retreated before thrusting toward my face, but I dodged with ease.

I observed her closely.

This level of swordsmanship was far beyond what someone of her background should possess.

Once again, I was reminded of the terrifying talent this girl held.

She pressed on. Left. Right. High. A feint, then a strike from the side.

Her technique was impressive. But that was all.

She never even came close to landing a hit.

Her positioning and judgment were remarkable, but she was still far from being a threat.

My real struggle wasn't her attacks—it was this damn body.

Every time she got too close, I flinched instinctively, unable to suppress the lingering trauma of Frey's past.

It infuriated me.

Eventually, Seris caught on, pausing momentarily.

"Frey Starlight... are you mocking me?"

I narrowed my eyes.

"Mocking you?"

"How long do you plan to just defend?"

She dashed forward again.

"Fight me seriously!"

Seeing her charge, I couldn't help but chuckle.

"As you wish."

Biting my lip hard enough to draw blood, I forced my body to steady itself with pain .

I unleashed Ten Thousand Steps of the Shadow at full power.

Ten clones of myself materialized around Seris.

"Mirage."

She barely had time to react before a storm of slashes engulfed her.

She raised ice barriers in an attempt to block, but I didn't stop.

"Mirage."

"Mirage."

"Ten Thousand Steps of the Shadow: Mirage."

Ten slashes became twenty. Then thirty.

Seris Moonlight vanished within the relentless tide of black steel.

Her defenses shattered like fragile glass before collapsing completely.

Her sword was sent flying as she crashed onto her back.

With a final motion, I drove my sword into the ground beside her face, looking down at her.

"Thanks for the match."

-Snow Lionheart Pov-

Overwhelming... utterly overwhelming.

I had never witnessed such a relentless sword style before. In that short exchange, he had unleashed dozens of strikes, making any form of defense impossible.

He ended it flawlessly.

Before I realized it, a small smile crept onto my lips.

Frey took a few steps back as Seris slowly rose to her feet. She showed no frustration—perhaps she had expected this outcome from the start.

And then, almost instinctively, I found myself standing before Frey, a sword in my hand.

A quiet chuckle escaped me.

It seemed I could no longer hold myself back.

Frey noticed and laughed as well.

"You want a piece of this too?"

I nodded.

"Frey Starlight, face me."

At that moment, Dawn Polaris stepped in, attempting to dissuade me.

"The girl's fine... there's no need to escalate things."

Frey, however, just smirked.

"It's fine. He's not here for revenge... He just wants to test himself after seeing what I can do. Isn't that right?"

His words caught me off guard—he had read my intent perfectly.

I confirmed it with a nod and readied my stance.

"Shall we begin?"

Frey Starlight did the same, raising his sword toward me.

"Come, hero."