VILLAIN 491

Chapter 491: The Witch and the Wounded Star (1)
The atmosphere of war was truly one of a kind.
It resembled an ordeal one that only a select group of humans experienced each time.
Some unfortunate souls were dragged into it more than once, while others had enough luck to escape
unscathed every time.
The War of Shadows was still in its infancy. Many had yet to grasp the scale of darkness it would cast.
At least not yet.
From the Empire's side,
the main ferror had finally envised intention their feet on enemy soil. Alltimo Continent
the main forces had finally arrived, planting their feet on enemy soil—Ultras Continent.
A force of 70,000 warriorsan army composed of the finest and fiercest.
7 Torde of 70,000 Warriors han army composed of the finest and hereest.
An army like that spread across vast land, its spirit blazing high fueled by people desperate to bring
glory to their homeland.
But many of them were nothing more than naïve amateurs, lured by dreams and ambitions that made them believe war was a simple affair.
them believe war was a simple arian.
It was only a matter of time before they crashed headfirst into bitter reality sooner or later.
,
Amid the Empire's encampments,

seated atop a tree stump with a small campfire flickering in front of him, Frey often caught glimpses of such soldiers.

People who would likely die without anyone ever knowing they existed.

But he didn't care much. There were very few souls he genuinely wished to see survive.

This was one of the rare moments Frey spent alone since returning to camp.

Most of the time, he remained close to the upper command, discussing his role in the war .. especially now that he occupied the vanguard position.

It wasn't uncommon to find Ghost, Snow, or even Phoenix around him. And when he returned to his tent, which served as his personal quarters, he usually spent time with Sansa ..who rarely left due to her demonic form.

All of that made his solitude feel both rare and cherished.

Frey had always lived alone .. dependent on no one, immersed in isolation.

And in such moments, he often drifted deep into thought, reviewing himself again and again, trying to reach the ideal version of who he should be.

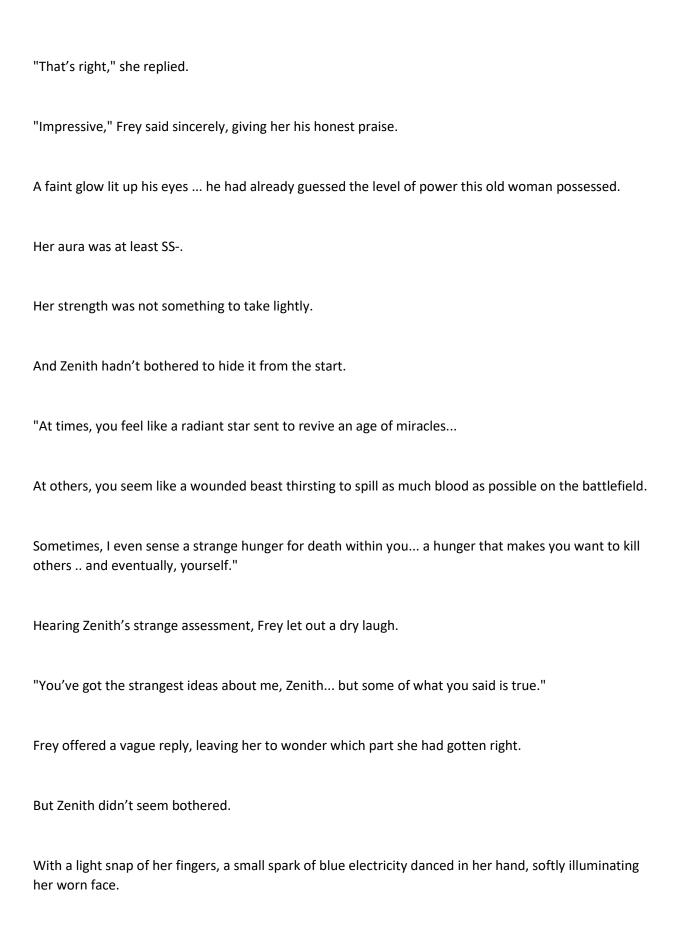
Seated there by the modest campfire,

Lord Starlight looked like a seasoned warrior who had lost his way in endless battles.

No one dared approach him. Many eyes were fixed on him, but only a few had the courage to take the first step.



Frey nodded in agreement.
The woman before him was one of the Eight those who remained with him until the very end. One of the few who chose to face death by his side.
"So, Zenith tell me. What brings you here to share my fire?"
Frey asked, seizing the opportunity to learn more about her. He had already decided to study those Eight more deeplyto understand the pieces he held in his hands.
Her coming to him alone had saved him the trouble.
Zenith sat silently for a moment, gazing into the fire, before she pulled out a fine cigar from her military coat.
"To be honest I came to see what kind of person you are."
Upon hearing her answer, Frey smiled faintly he had already guessed it.
"I assume your head is already full of ideas."
Zenith didn't deny it.
"Of course. You're unlike anyone else. Not even your father Abraham Starlight."
As soon as she uttered that name, Frey found himself interrupting.
"Did you know my father?"



"My name is Zenith. Just Zenith. I have no title, no one to claim me, Lord Frey I'm a woman who's already lost everything. Everyone dear to me is dead, and all I have left is emptiness."
"They all died while I somehow survived through all these long years. To be honest, I no longer know why I even keep fighting."
Gently extinguishing the spark, Zenith turned her gaze back to Frey.
"Lord Frey, I'm sure you're wondering why I've chosen to fight this war at your side so willingly.
Let me be clear I don't have a reason. I have nothing left to lose. And that's what makes me useful to you."
"An SS- class witch, with no ambition, no desires just an empty vessel looking for a fitting end."
With a cold smile, she stared at Frey.
For some reason his gaze had locked onto the gruesome scar carved across her face.
"And for that reason, I feel like I might find what I'm looking for by following you into this war Lord Frey."
Zenith
A witch who left nothing behind but corpses.
A soldier who had spent most of her life drifting from one battlefield to another, appearing when war broke out, disappearing quietly once it ended.

You could sometimes find her wandering through the alleys of the capital, or through the larger cities ... sometimes even the smallest villages ... drifting without purpose.

She rejected people. She had already lost too many.

In Frey's eyes, she looked like a woman carrying the weight of all those dead souls, continuing to live in their place.

Maybe all she really wanted was to die.

To die in a way that would make those who'd gone before her proud of the way she ended.

That was why she chose to follow him .. because death always followed Lord Starlight wherever he went.

Understanding all of this, Frey... in some way, saw himself in the old woman sitting beside him.

She was just like him .. burdened by the weight of lives that were lost for their sake.

She had lost her right to die a long time ago. Now all that remained was a worn-out body searching for the right place to fall.

Chapter 492: The Witch and the Wounded Star (2)

Zenith was not weak. In fact, she had been a fierce presence during the first battle in the Demon Sea.

Frey would most definitely benefit from having her at his side.

He knew she wouldn't hesitate to throw away her life for the right cause.

That didn't seem right .. taking advantage of a broken woman like her.



And yet, they understood one another perfectly .. more than either expected.

Without even realizing it, Zenith found herself talking far more than usual, sharing stories from her long life.

Frey listened patiently and intently, learning more and more about the witch who had decided to serve under his command.

Zenith would no doubt become his personal spellcaster .. his weapon against those who stood in his way.

That was why he gave her such attention, deepening his understanding of her.

It raised his affection score in her system significantly.

Then, just as Zenith was about to launch into another story from her distant past, they were interrupted..

A group of knights approached without warning, cutting through the silence of the camp.

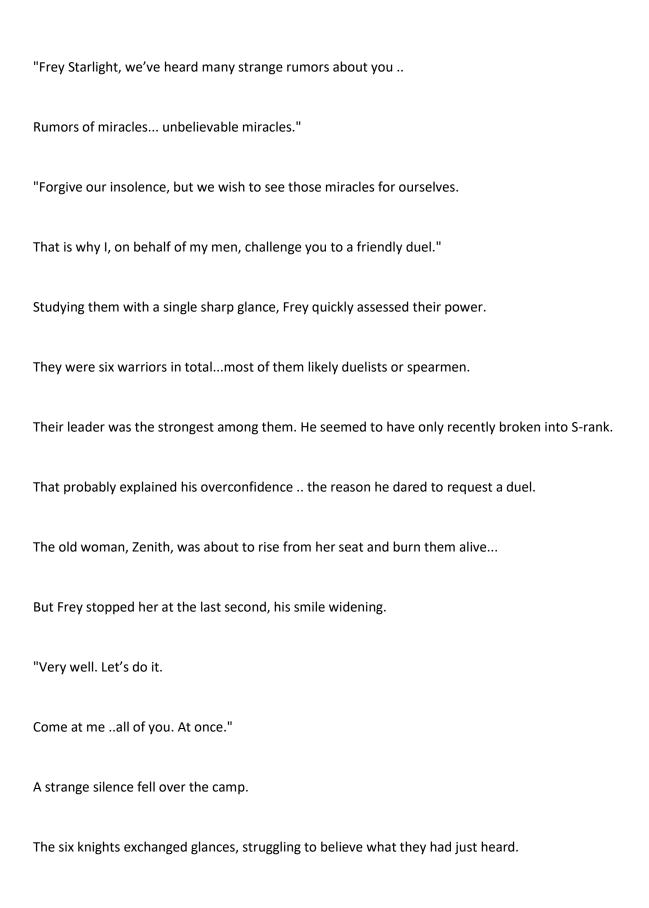
It wasn't hard to guess who they were here for.

Every one of them had their eyes locked squarely on Frey ... and he, Lord Starlight, understood it instantly.

"Gentlemen, what do I owe the pleasure of your visit for... to bring such threatening auras with you?"

Frey asked with a calm voice, as the knight at the front stepped forward to speak.

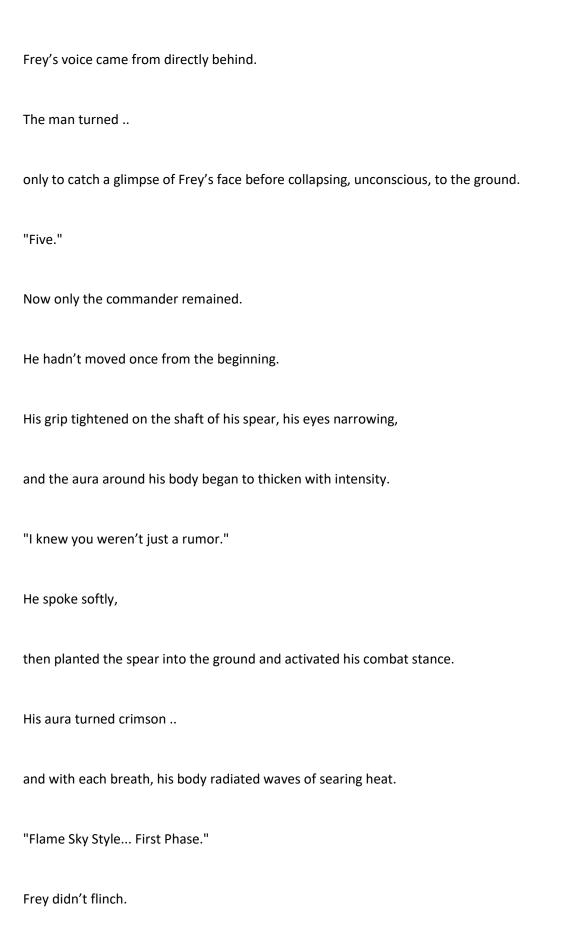
He looked like a seasoned warrior, framed by a broad figure and a chiseled physique that radiated strength.





A spear.
A sword.
Dual blades.
A heavy axe.
A coiling whip
Each weapon launched with one shared goal:
To shatter the myth of Frey Starlight before it could begin.
But what happened next flipped that notion on its head.
In the blink of an eye, Frey vanished from sight.
A burst of compressed air echoed through the field
and the first knight found himself hurled into the sky before even realizing he'd been struck.
"One."
Frey's voice was calm as he appeared behind the second opponent.
A sharp roundhouse kick crushed the man's ribs, sending him crashing into the axe-wielder

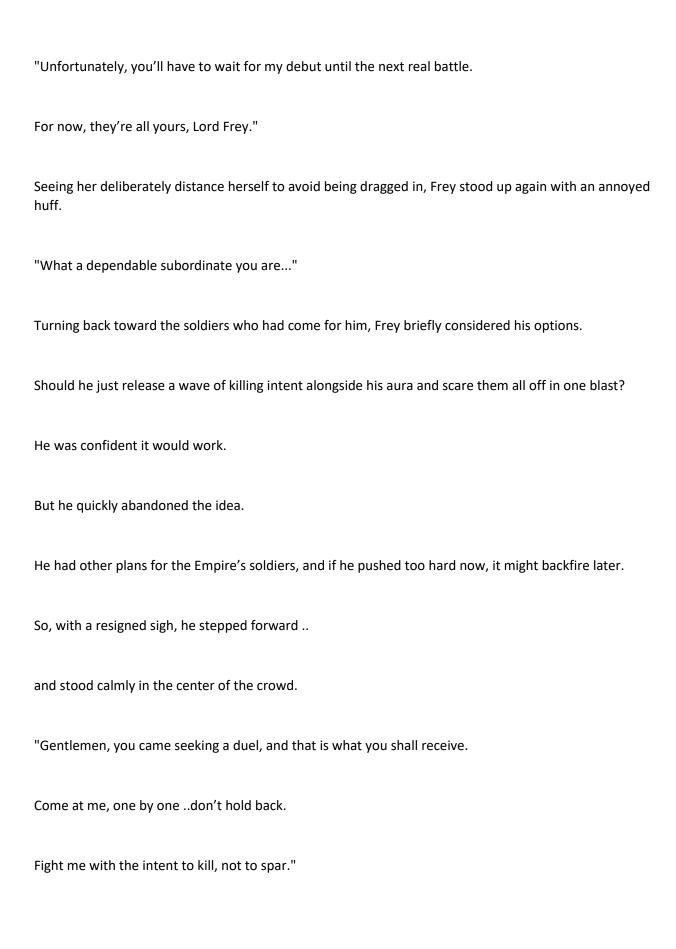




Even when the commander split the ground open with a molten slash—
Frey simply twisted his torso slightly, letting the attack pass within inches without touching him.
And then
In a flash no one could track,
he appeared right in front of him.
"Six."
One word.
Then Frey's fist sank into the commander's stomach with incomprehensible force,
driving the air from his lungs and lifting his body at an awkward angle
The man crashed down, barely conscious, gasping to stay awake.
Frey didn't pursue.
He stood still, calmly adjusted his coat, and began walking back to his seat beside Zenith, who had been watching the entire fight with a subtle gleam of amusement in her eyes.
"Apologies for the delay. Where were we?"
He sat back down

as the broken bodies of six elite knights lay scattered around him.
Chapter 493: This Is Not the Boy You Once Knew (1) "Apologies for the delay. Now, where were we?"
Frey said that to Zenith as he calmly sat down beside her, having just taken down six of the Empire's finest warriors in mere secondsbarehanded.
Zenith was impressed by the display, but not surprised.
She had already seen what Frey was capable of.
His effortless victory was expected.
What the old witch didn't anticipate, however, was what happened next.
Just as Frey turned back to resume his conversation, they found themselves suddenly surrounded.
Dozens of knightsboth men and women appeared seemingly out of nowhere, their threatening auras unmistakably brimming with eagerness for battle.
"What's the meaning of this?"
Frey asked, glancing over the large crowd that had gathered around him.
One after another, the requests came flooding in:
"Lord Starlight! Allow me the honor of dueling you!"





He declared as he assumed a relaxed stancefull of gaps and openings without even summoning the blades he was famous for.
It left many in the crowd wondering if he was even taking them seriously.
Clearly, he wasn't.
And that offended quite a few.
The first to step forward was a towering soldier with a massive greatsword resting on his shoulder.
He had long black hair, a muscular frame, and a giant scar running across his chest and neck.
He looked like a true battle-hardened warrior.
"Frey Starlight I know there's no smoke without fire in this world.
If the rumors say you're strong, then you must have something to back it up."
He wasn't the Champion of the Victoriad for nothing many had already witnessed his feats.
Gripping his greatsword, the seasoned warrior stepped forward.
"My name is Davos of House Sunlight. Allow me to test the strength that makes you stand so casually in front of me!"
With that bold declaration, Davos lunged forward at a shocking speedsurprising some, considering his massive build.

Swinging his sword in a powerful vertical arc, he aimed straight for Frey's head intending to cleave him in two.
The strike was incredibly fast, and out of nowhere, his blade ignited with flames,
turning the attack into a blazing catastrophe meant to erase Frey from existence.
But Frey barely needed any effort to see it coming.
At the very last second, he shifted his body to the right by mere centimeters,
letting the flaming greatsword crash into the ground where he had just stood.
Seeing his blade miss its mark, Davos gathered his strength to attack again
Only to find he couldn't move his weapon.
Trying to pull the sword free, he realized Frey was stepping on it.
Just one footcasually pressing down on the blade.
Davos pulled with all his might, veins bulging across his muscled arms,
but no matter how hard he tried, the sword didn't budge.
He had lost a contest of raw strength

to a lean young man who wasn't even trying, merely resting his weight lazily on one leg.
What stung Davos most wasn't just the power it was that Frey hadn't even taken him seriously.
"Davos of House Sunlight you place too much trust in your physical strength.
And that puts you in a terrible spot when your opponent is stronger than you."
Frey said as he moved for the first time since the duel began.
And with that motion
Davos suddenly saw the world flip upside down.
He was slammed into the earth with a single blow.
"Find your true weapon, Davos.
This world is full of monsters far beyond what brute strength alone can overcome."
Frey ended the match with those words,
as Davos remained sprawled motionless on the ground.
He hadn't even seen the last strike coming.
It wasn't a duel . it was a one-sided demonstration of power.

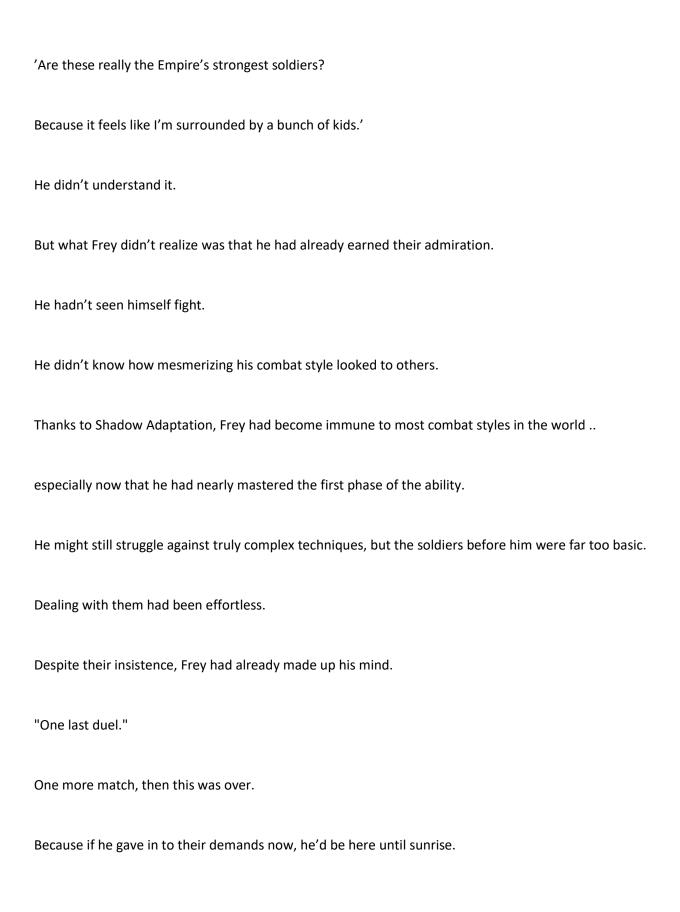
With his arm raised over his face, hiding it from view, Davos slowly stood up and dragged his greatsword away.
"Thank you for the match, Lord Starlight."
He said it quietly, but it was loud enough for everyone to hear in the silence that followed the earlier display.
Frey, on the other hand, simply nodded indifferently and announced:
"Next."
Sure enough, a second challenger stepped forwarda swift assassin specialized in speed and precision strikes.
But Frey brought him down easily—with a single blow, once again.
"Your stealth technique is useless once I've already sensed your presence.
Hiding your aura isn't enough.
Stealth extends to your breathing, your heartbeat, and every sound your body makes."
Frey ended the second duel with another piece of advice, then raised his voice again.
"Next!"
And so it continued
duel after duel, challenger after challenger.

Dozens upon dozens of soldiers stepped forward to face the young prodigy who had stirred their curiosity.
Frey faced every kind of warrior,
but not a single one lasted more than ten seconds against him.
He was terrifyinga true martial artist of the highest caliber.
It seemed like no matter what kind of opponent or situation he was placed in,
Frey adapted flawlessly.
Unbeknownst to them, his Shadow Adaptation ability was at work
and one by one, the soldiers began to see him in a completely different light.
Slowly, cheers began to erupt across the training grounds.
The area was no longer filled with dozens, but hundreds of soldiers, all watching in awe.
Bit by bit, the atmosphere shifted.
They no longer challenged Frey to shatter his legend,
or to test his strength out of skepticism.
They fought him simply because they wanted the honor of standing before a great warrior

to see how far they could push themselves.
Frey ended every duel with advice.
And strangely, those small insights always seemed to be the missing piece in the challengers' combat styles.
The nineteen-year-old looked less like a peer
and more like an ancient master who had lived for centuries,
versed in every combat style under the sun.
It didn't make sense.
But Frey was called a miracle for a reason.
And miracles were never meant to make sense.
His knowledge came from more than just experience
it came from countless life-or-death battles, and from the insight he'd inherited through the Nameless Mask.
Lord Starlight had far exceeded their expectations.
And that's why the crowd kept growing

more and more filled the grounds, eager to watch, eager to learn.
Hours passedone after another.
So much time went by that Zenith had already left, leaving Frey to face the endless stream of challengers alone.
But contrary to what one might expect,
laughter began to fill the air.
The soldiers were enjoying themselves, cheering every time Frey brought down another opponent with effortless grace.
And before he even realized it
Frey had just defeated challenger number one thousand.
Chapter 494: This Is Not the Boy You Once Knew (2)
The clock now read 4:00 AM.
It had been four hours since the first "friendly" duel began.
And for the first time,
Frey felt a faint burn in the muscles of his arms just a touch of strain.
'It seems I'm starting to grow weary.'

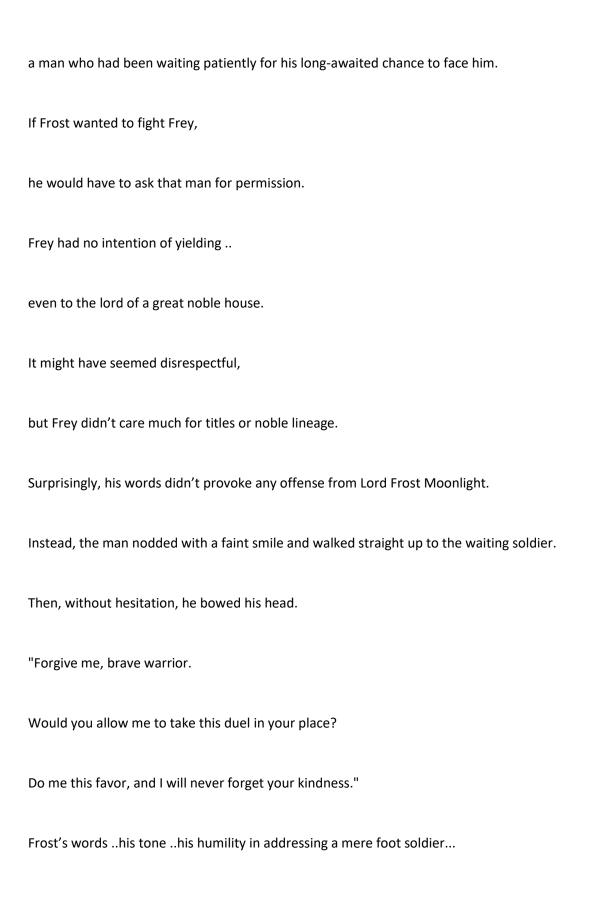


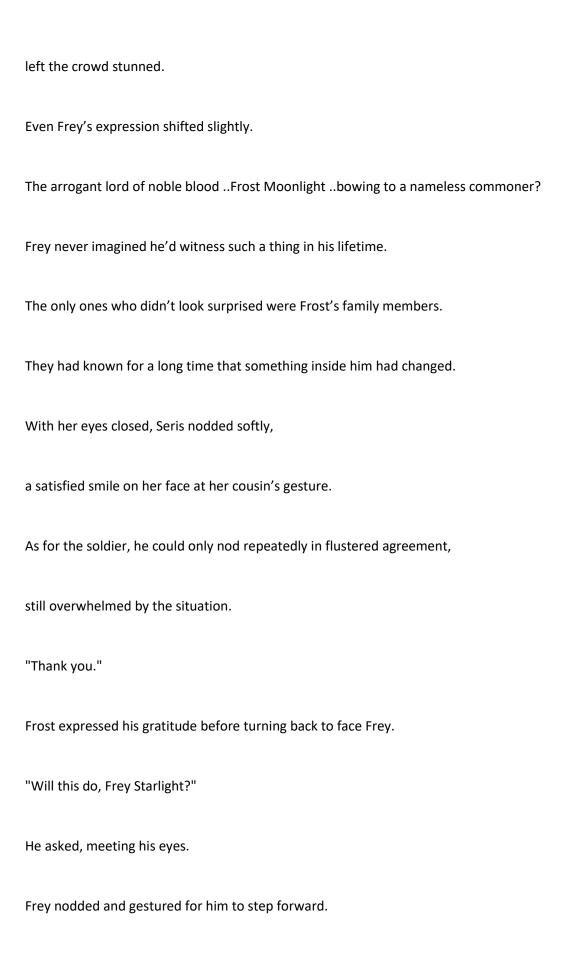


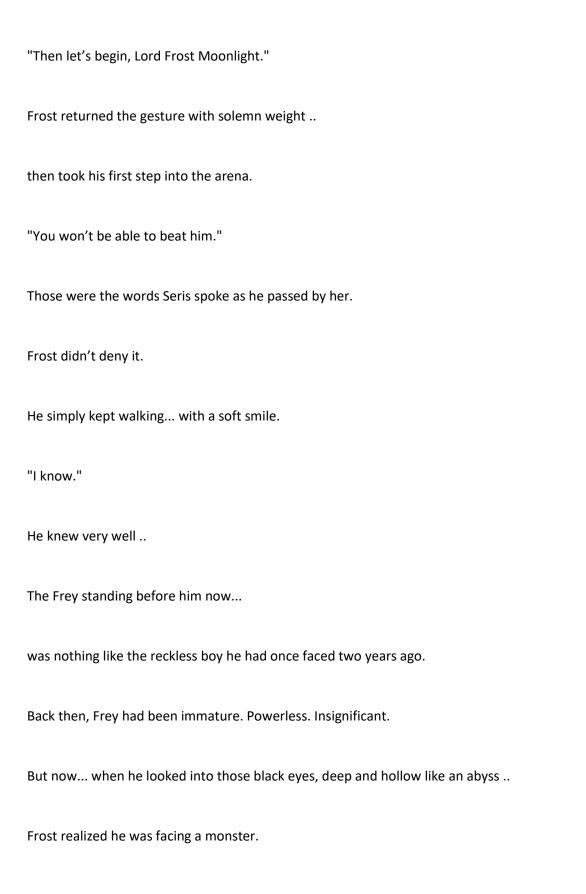


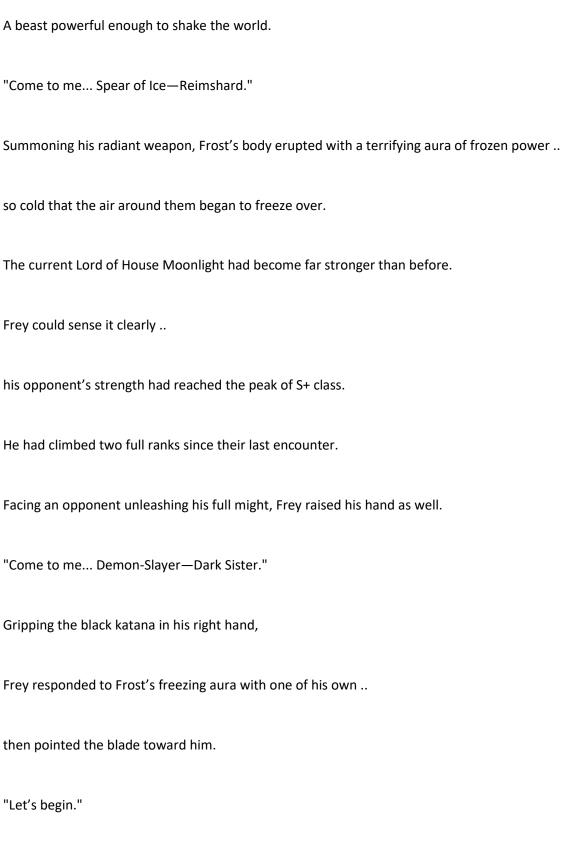
Many recognized him instantlyhe was one of the commanders selected to lead the Empire's massive army.
All eyes were now fixed on himand on the entourage that followed.
He hadn't come alone. Dozens of beautiful women accompanied him.
Frey showed little reaction, but it was clear from the look in his eyes—
He wasn't pleased to see this man.
"Frost Moonlight"
The current Lord of House Moonlight, accompanied by several sons and daughters of his bloodline.
Beside him walked Seris Moonlight as well.
It seemed the Church had restored her severed arm.
Unlike Frostwho had refused such intervention and continued to live with one arm since the tragedy that struck House Moonlight two years ago.
Seris looked far more stunning than she once had
maturity now graced her features.
"It's been a while, Frey I see you're still as radiant as ever."



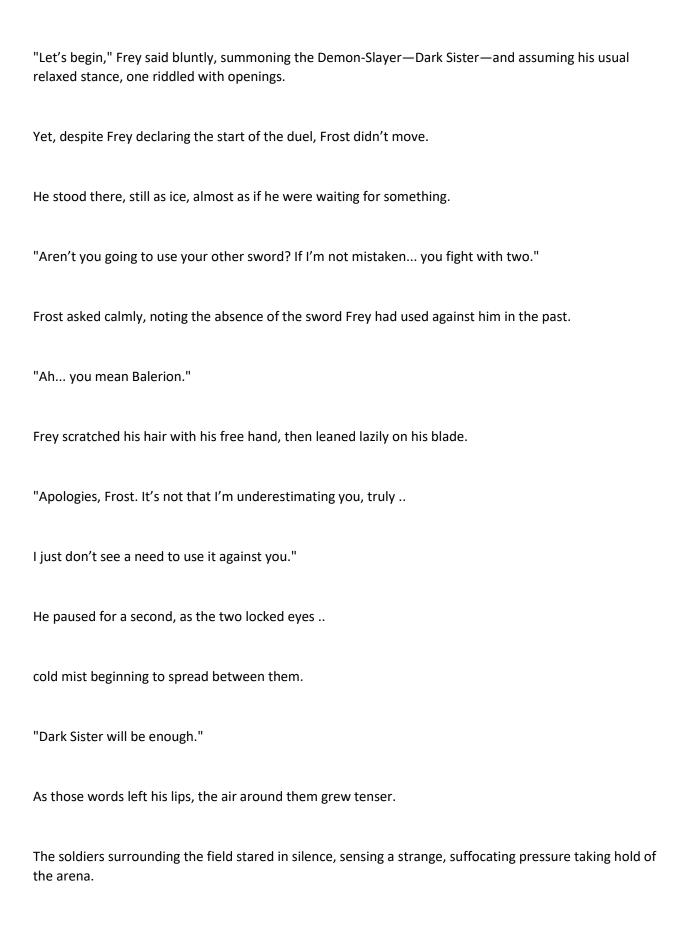


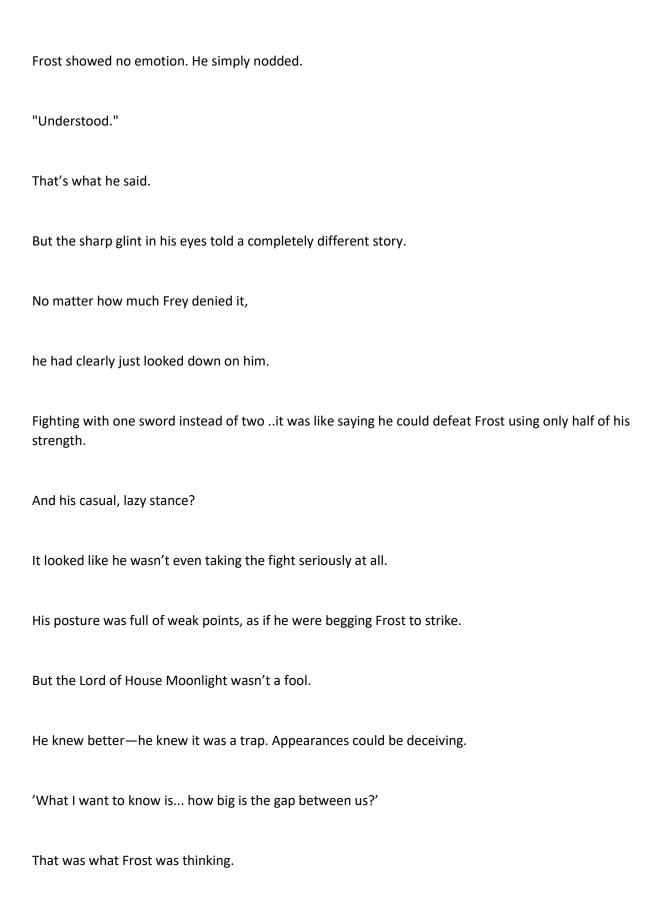


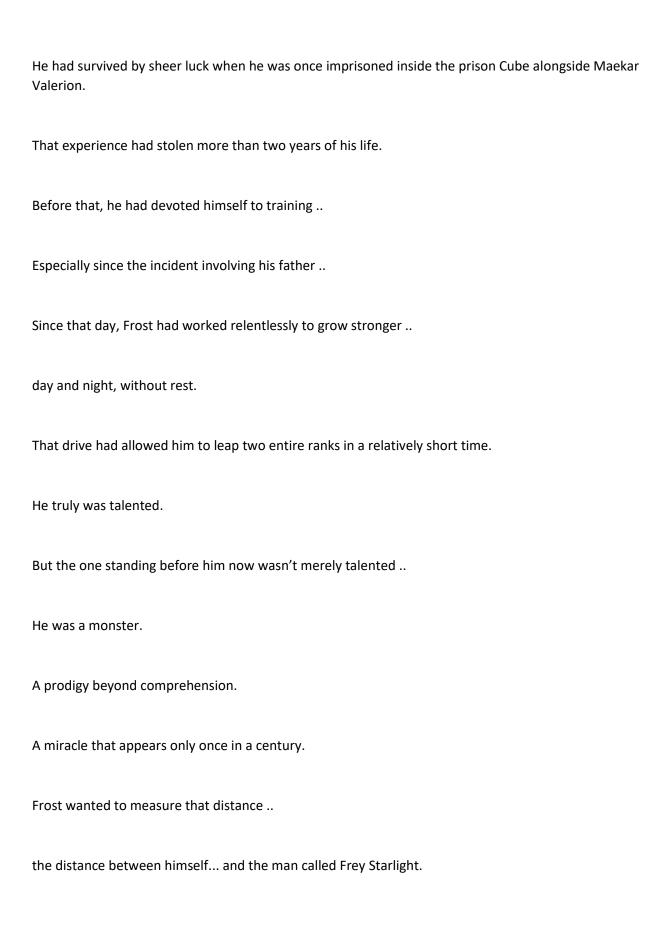




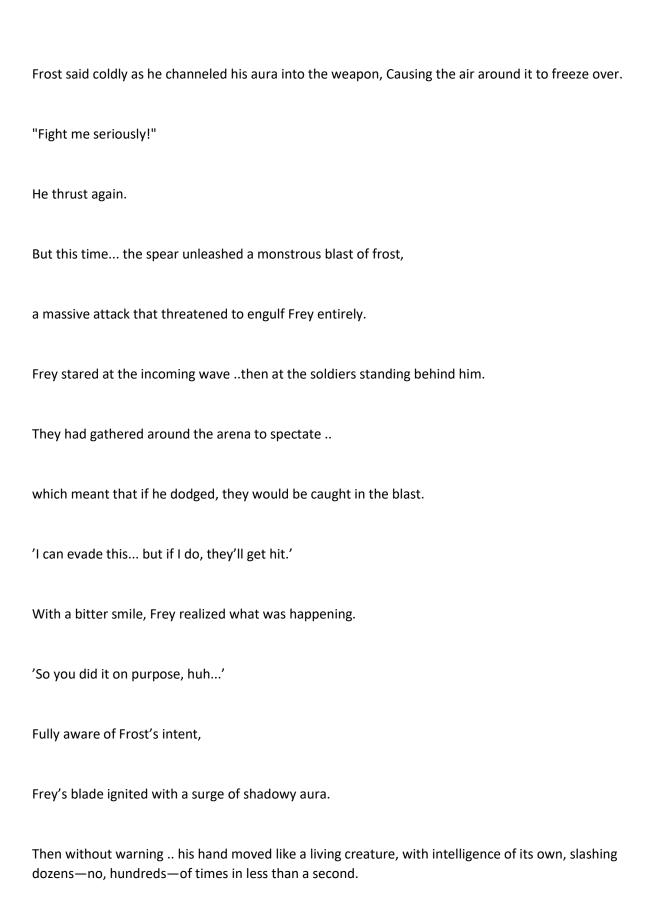
Chapter 495: The Distance Between Us



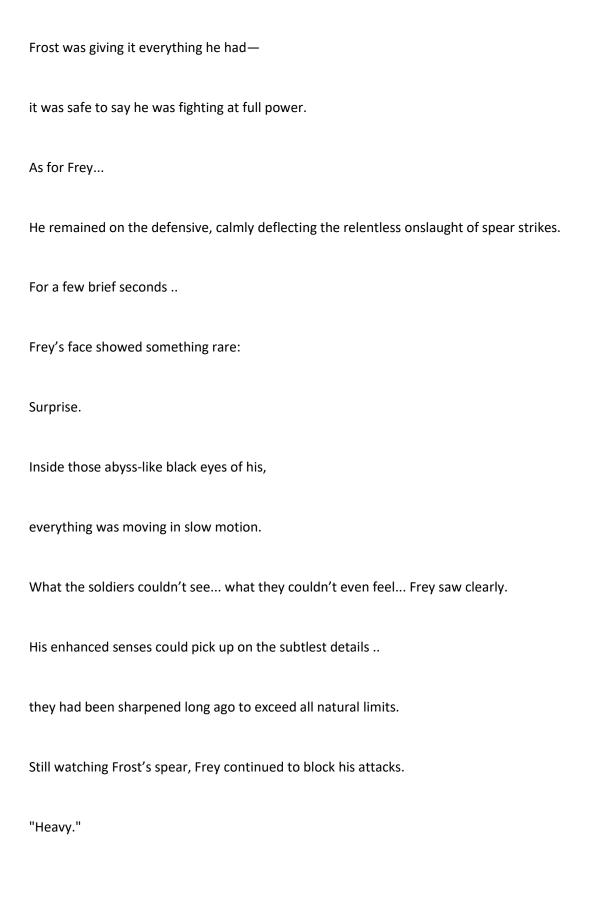




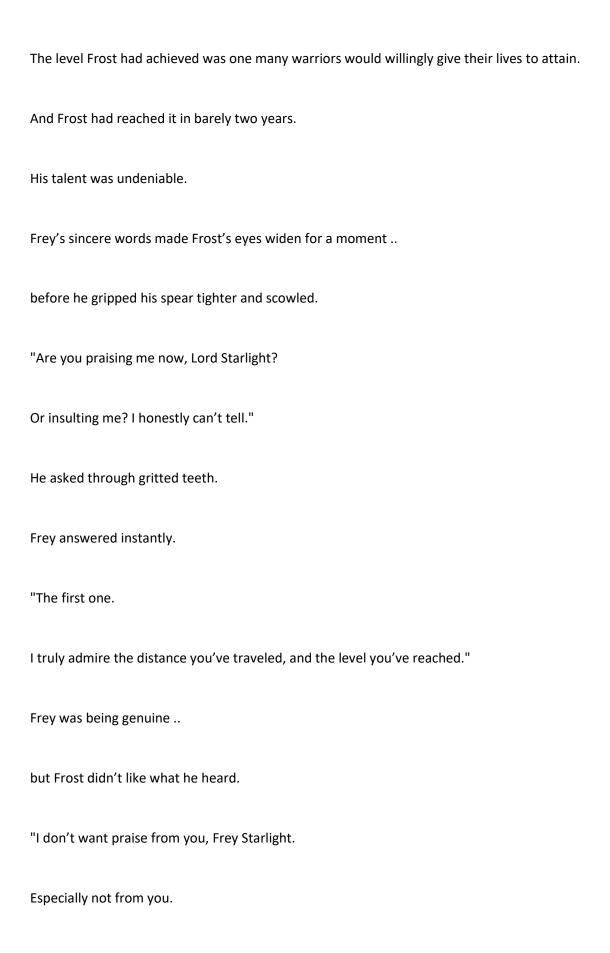
And so—without warning—
Frost launched forward, shattering the ground beneath his feet as he surged ahead faster than the speed of sound.
The sheer force of his movement created a sonic boom that exploded through the air
and in less than a second, he was in front of Frey.
Wielding his great spear, Reimshard,
he thrust with blinding speed, aiming straight for Frey's face.
But Frey bent backward at the last moment dodging the strike by a hair's breadth.
Frost immediately vanished from sight reappearing behind him.
This time, he didn't stop at a single attack,
he unleashed a torrent of spear strikes.
So fast, it looked like he was wielding dozens of spears instead of just one.
On the other side, Frey dodged everything with terrifying precision,
his body glowing with a deep, violet aura.
"All you're doing is running from my spear."



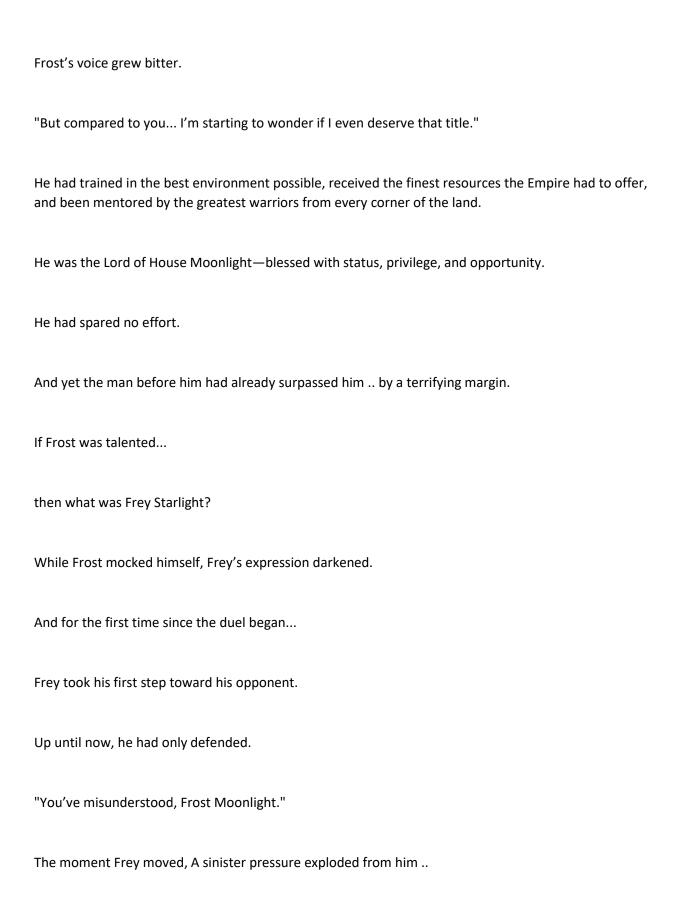
He intercepted the icy blast with ease
shattering it into harmless shards of frost.
But just as he neutralized the attack
Frost appeared right in front of him again, using the previous explosion as cover.
His spear now massively enlarged by his freezing aura looked less like a weapon and more like a missile made of ice.
Frey raised Dark Sister and blocked.
Metal struck metal.
The resulting clash created a high-pitched shockwave so intense
it made the surrounding soldiers clutch their ears in pain.
Frost didn't relent he continued attacking without pause, While Frey remained on the defensive, parrying each strike effortlessly.
Both of them became streaks of light, dashing across the arena.
Their battle was so fast and brutal
that the sparks from every weapon clash erupted like wildfire across the field.

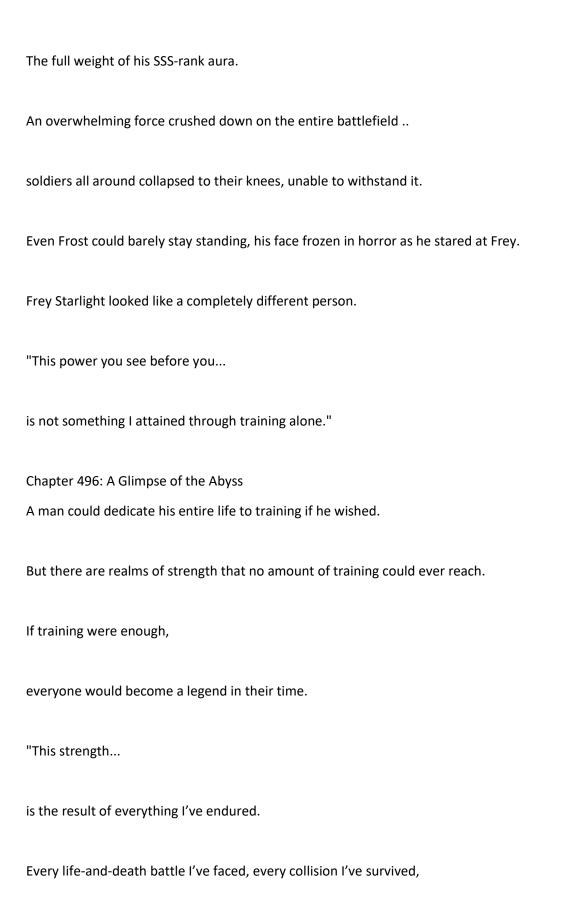


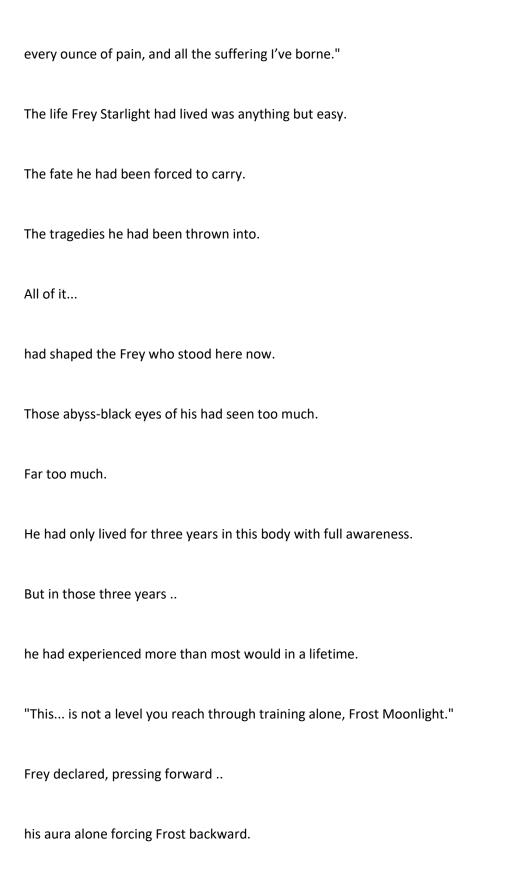


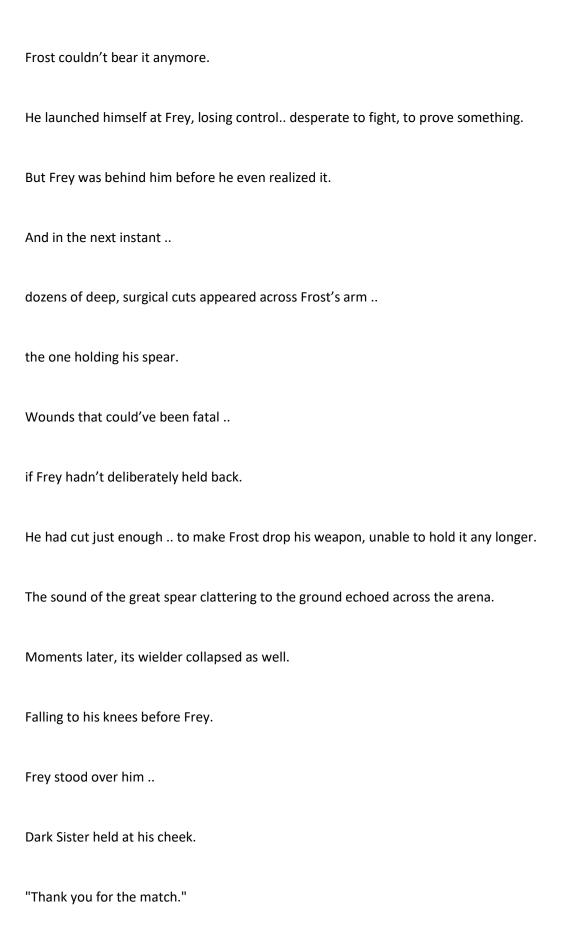


You're the very monster who makes all this effort I've put in all this progress I've made feel meaningless."
Who was he lying to, really?
After everything he had done
all the training, the sacrifices, the progress
He still hadn't touched Frey once.
While Frost gasped for air,
Frey hadn't shown the slightest change since the duel began.
He had blocked everything
making all of Frost's efforts seem like a child's attempt to scratch a wall of steel.
And now here he was
praising him.
Praising what, exactly?
"This is the level I've reached after doing nothing but train since the last time we fought.
I the one they called a prodigy"

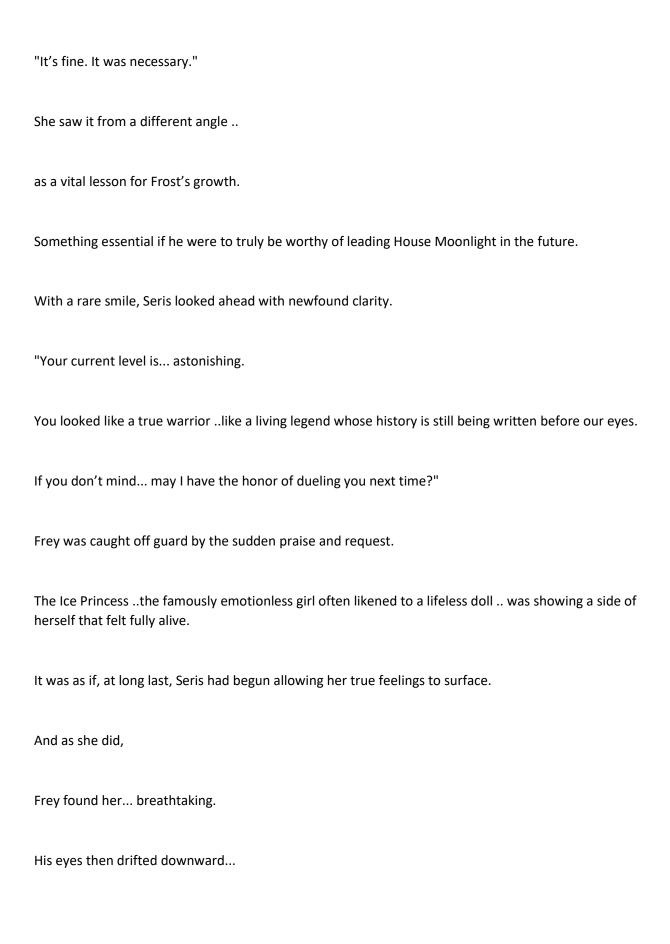






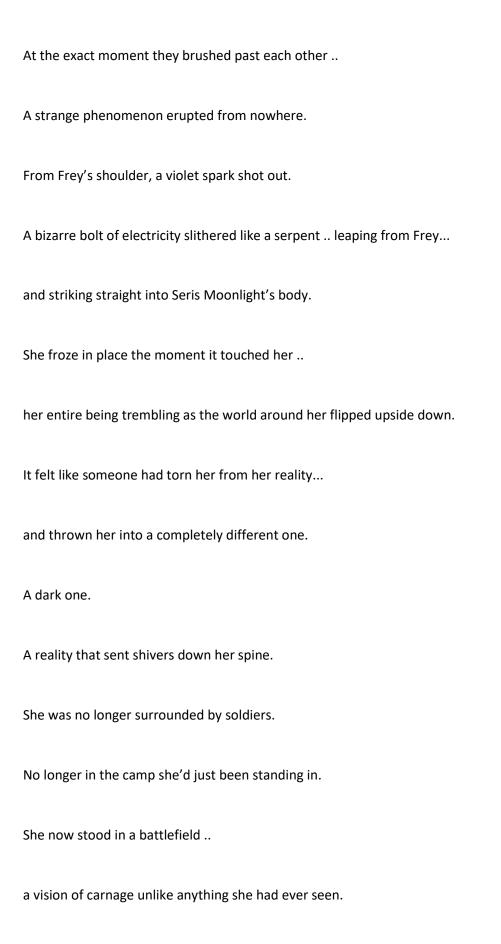


That's all Frey said before withdrawing his aura and stepping away
bringing the spectacle to an end.
Everyone instinctively made way for him as he passed, still shaken by the overwhelming power they had just witnessed.
Seeing the aftermath of what he'd done, Frey sighed with mild irritation
And just as he was about to leave,
he saw Seris Moonlight standing in his path.
It was almost laughable
of all directions he could've chosen to leave from, it just so happened to be the same spot where Seris had been watching the duel.
As he passed his former Temple companion, Frey muttered an apology under his breath.
"Sorry I might've gone a little too far."
It had been a duel, after all.
But Frost was still the head of a noble house. There had been no need to humiliate him.
Yet Seris shook her head.

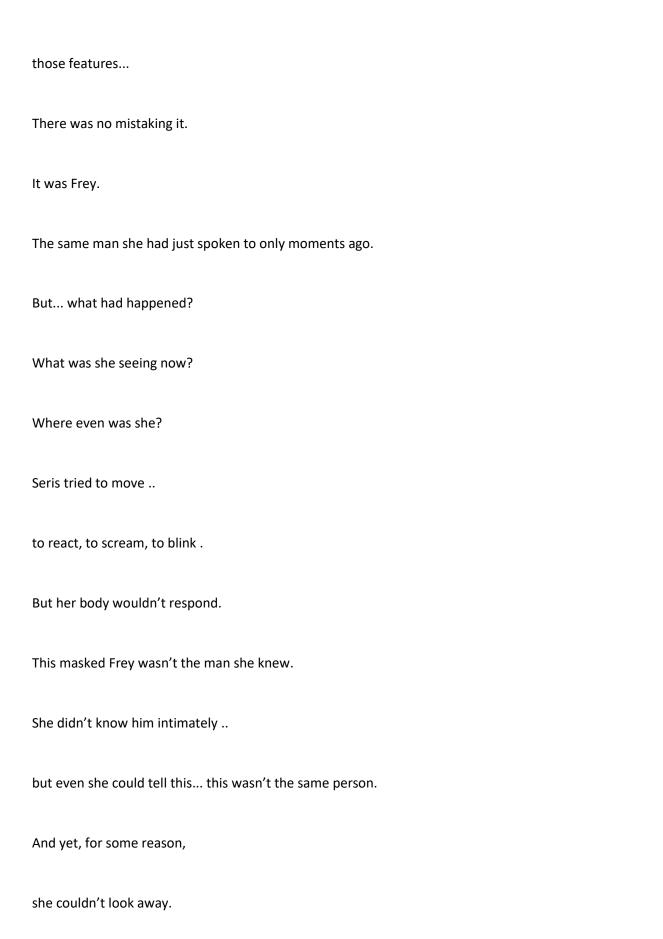


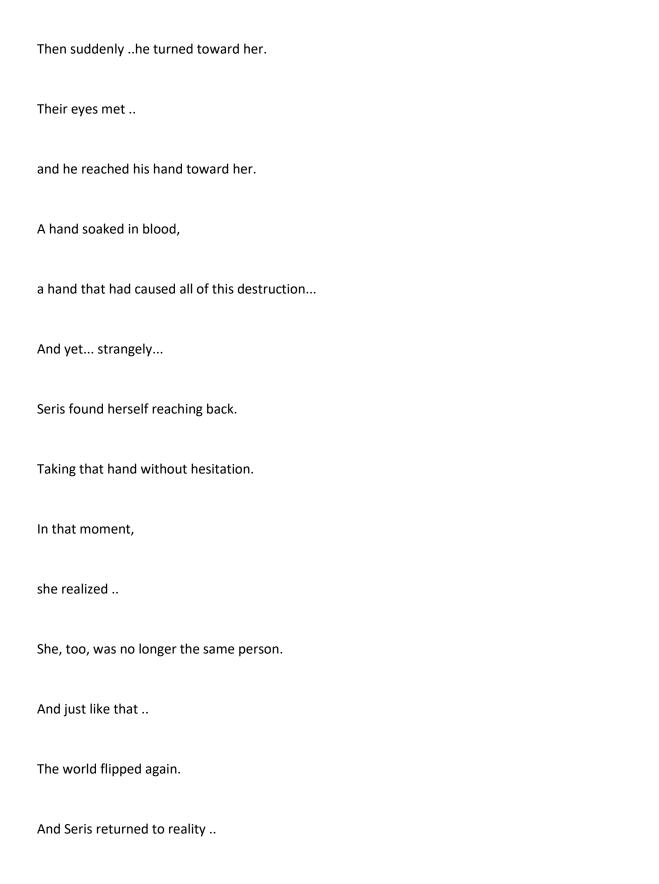
falling on Seris's restored arm.
She wore a black military uniform bearing the sigil of House Moonlight.
And despite the long sleeves, a portion of her right forearm was visiblerevealing a strange, intricate tattoo.
A frost-marked symbol, icy flowers etched like thorned vines crawling across her pale skin.
Seeing that design, Frey's smile deepened as he walked past her.
"It's an honor to witness your growth with my own eyes, Seris
But I'd prefer to stand beside you on the battlefield
destroying our enemies rather than face you as one."
Frey declined politely as he passed her.
Seris nodded without complaint.
"Then I'll see you on the battlefield, Frey Starlight."
With that brief exchange, the two of them nodded and passed by one another.
After all those years,
there was no longer any bitterness between them.

Both had moved past what once was
and looked forward to what could be.
For the first time
fighting side by side felt like a real possibility.
At least for Seris, who didn't hesitate to show Frey her back.
Frey Starlight had changed.
From the arrogant young lord he once was
to someone mysterious and unreadable
then the cursed champion of the Victoriad
and now
the miracle-bringer.
It was only natural for her perception of him to change after all that.
And as these thoughts passed through her mind, they walked shoulder to shoulder each going in a different direction.
But then

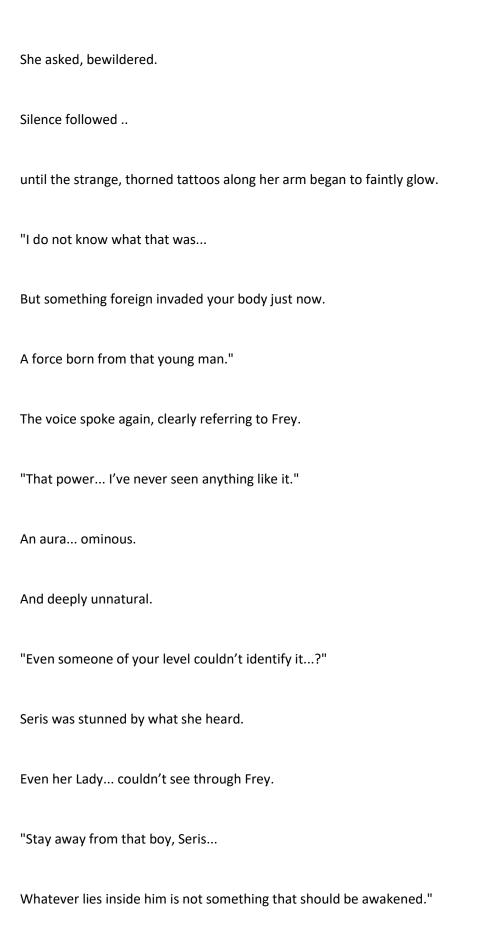


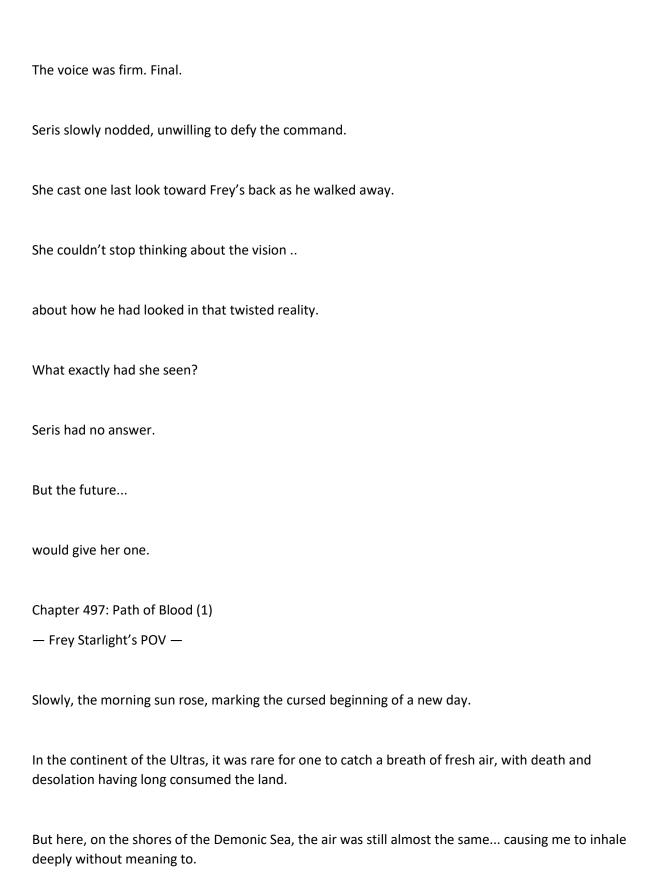
Flames raged across the land.
Flames blood-red and crimson,
as if even fire itself had been tainted by the amount of blood spilled.
And when she turned around
She saw him.
The man responsible for it all.
He stood behind the chaos
a figure wearing a strange black mask, surrounded by a bizarre group of individuals.
They looked like his followers
and they stared at him with devotion.
A cursed gathering, led by one man who made her very soul tremble.
And when she looked closely
he was familiar.
That white hair





as Frey passed by her, silently walking away.
At that moment, she turned toward him immediately, shock etched across her face from the horror of what she had just seen.
Her hand reached out, instinctively
trying to stop him.
But before she could take a single step in his direction
A sharp voice echoed in her mind.
"Do not move. Take one more step and you'll regret it."
It was the voice of a woman . old, gentle yet cold and commanding.
Seris obeyed instantly.
She didn't dare go against it.
"My Lady what just happened?
What did I just see?
And what does it have to do with Frey?!"





A refreshing winter breeze filled my lungs to the brim. I had already distanced myself from the gathering of soldiers and was heading toward the tent that now served as my temporary home. I had spent far too long sparring with them barehanded, to the point where my muscles started to feel slightly fatigued. It wasn't anything serious .. just a dull, lingering ache from throwing punches nonstop. But still, it was annoying. If this was enough to wear me out, it only meant one thing. I still had a long way to go. Today, the army would begin its advance again, and the main assault on the continent of the Ultras would commence. In other words... the real war was about to begin. Naturally, I'd been chosen to lead the vanguard. That meant I'd be on the move today, and before that happened, I had only a few short hours to rest. Silently, I stepped into my tent. It was quiet inside—bare, really—just my gear and a wooden bed I rarely used. Standing still, I spread out my aura to scan the area out of caution, but sensed nothing.

"...Sansa didn't come today."

Or perhaps she came earlier and didn't find me here.

A shame, really.
We didn't even get to spend the final night together before the next battle began.
With only a few hours remaining, and complete solitude surrounding me, I figured this was the perfect time to sharpen my awareness.
Sitting on the edge of my bed, I reached inside my garments and pulled out a certain item.
Without warning, I placed the Nameless Mask over my face and closed my eyes, allowing it to pull me inward into that surreal, imaginary world housed within.
The reality around me twisted upside down in an instant.
When I opened my eyes again I was already standing in that bizarre library space.
This place no longer felt strange to meI'd spent enough time here during my early training.
So, with steady steps, I ignored the chaos of books strewn all around the ground and headed straight to the second floor without delay.
That floor wasn't much better.
Unlike the early days when every book was neatly aligned, practically begging to be read, the place was now a disaster zone.
And honestly I was the reason.
At some point, I'd grown tired of returning books to their place and began tossing them aside once I finished them.

I did it so often that it became a habit. I never bothered organizing this damned imaginary space. So, like always, I made my way to the middle of the pile I'd last been reading and picked up the last book I touched: "Path of Blood." Seated among the clutter, I resumed reading .. diving deeper into the twisted training methods of that man. Nameless. The warrior who built his legacy through the burial of countless souls. In order to create the ability that shattered the very limits of the world—the power that defied the laws of life and death—he had to study every form of life this world held. He slaughtered every race imaginable and conducted sickening experiments on them, one after another, until he attained enough knowledge to understand their origin... and essence. That maddening obsession drove him to kill more than anyone else... to sow more destruction than anyone else. A monster among monsters, Nameless was the only one truly worthy of the title "Death." If death itself had a king in this world, it would be him—without a doubt. In any case, even though his main goal had been to break the cycle of life and death, what Nameless accomplished had other... unintended side effects.

Additional results that only amplified his power further .. pushing him to a level where he could challenge beings like Agaroth.

This was what came to be known as the Path of Blood.

A unique method of training that Nameless discovered and refined over countless years on the battlefield.

By walking this twisted and dark path, Nameless found a way to grow stronger with every life he took.

The more he killed... the more his hands were soaked in blood... the more his power surged.

In other words, he didn't just gain combat experience from each battle.

He ascended to higher realms every single time he fought.

A sickening method of training .. one fitting only for a beast like him.

And here I am... following in his footsteps, continuing down the very same path.

The path that drowns you in blood, in death... in endless, savage killing.

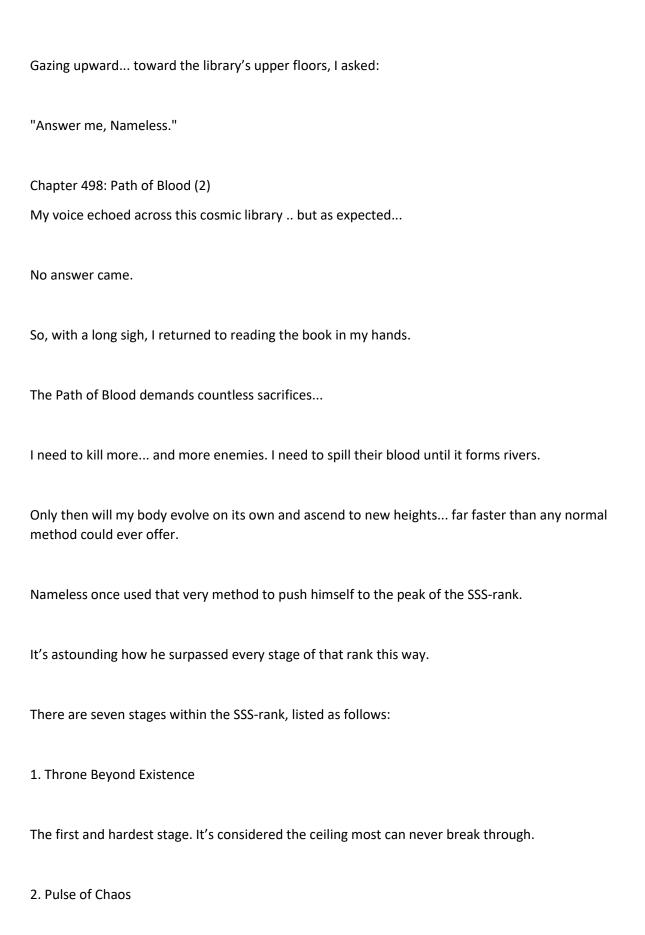
Yet, even as I say this, what I've achieved so far is nothing but a drop in the ocean compared to what Nameless accomplished.

Since the start of the war, I've killed a total of 27,000 Ultras soldiers.

Before that, I wiped out thousands of Nightmare Creatures in the eastern territories.

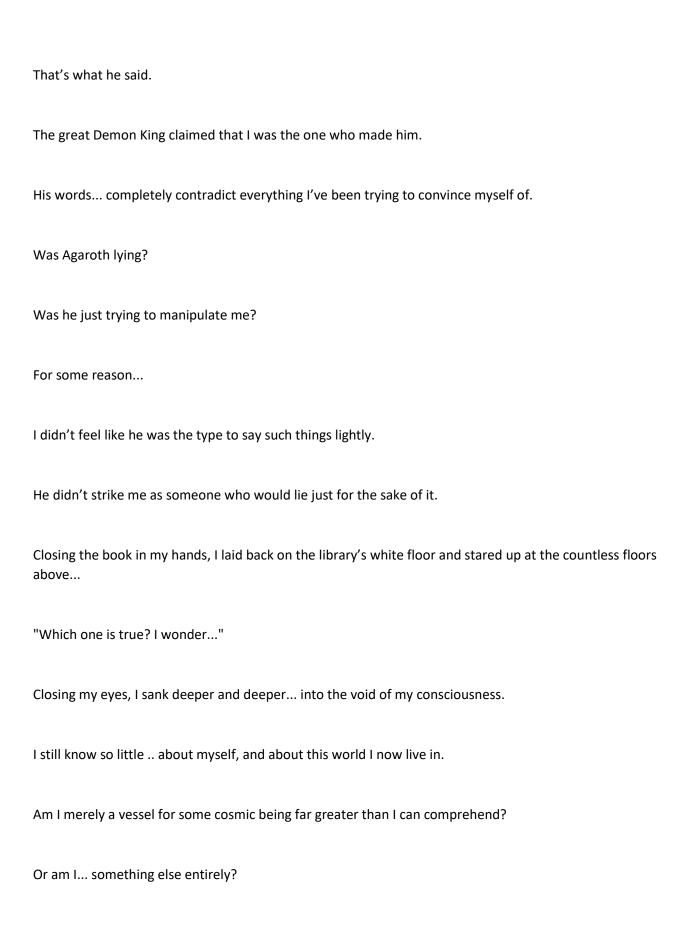
But in the end, those numbers are meaningless. Tiny, insignificant compared to the legacy Nameless left behind.
I found myself laughing unconsciously as I continued reading about the Path of Blood and that nameless monster's past.
I've killed so many humans and beasts alike and as a result I'm starting to feel like I can't breathe anymore.
I've hidden it well until now, but these stains of blood the crimson marks that won't wash off my body
They've grown too numerous.
And now it feels like I'm sinking into this red swamp one I might never crawl out of.
I've killed many
And I'm still ready to kill far more than that all for the sake of power.
The overwhelming strength I needed to achieve my goal I was willing to go much, much further to obtain it.
But somewhere along the way, I began to lose myself.
My sword started craving it
Blood. Death.
My body, my soul, my very existence became incomplete unless I was on the battlefield.

That bloody smile it would form on my face without me even realizing whenever I was about to slaughter my enemies.
Today, I'm returning to the battlefield.
That thought alone made my body tremble not from fear but anticipation.
I've become someone who craves the battlefield someone who welcomes war.
1
"I'm slowly losing myself"
It's only been eight months and already, I've reached this state.
I reached it after killing what now feels like a mere handful of people. And because of that, I couldn't help but wonder
"What exactly are you, Nameless?"
How did he kill so many so many souls
Innocent or guilty, it didn't matter.
How did he stay sane all those years drenched in death and bloodshed?
"Was it because you felt nothing? Were you always that heartless monster from the beginning?"

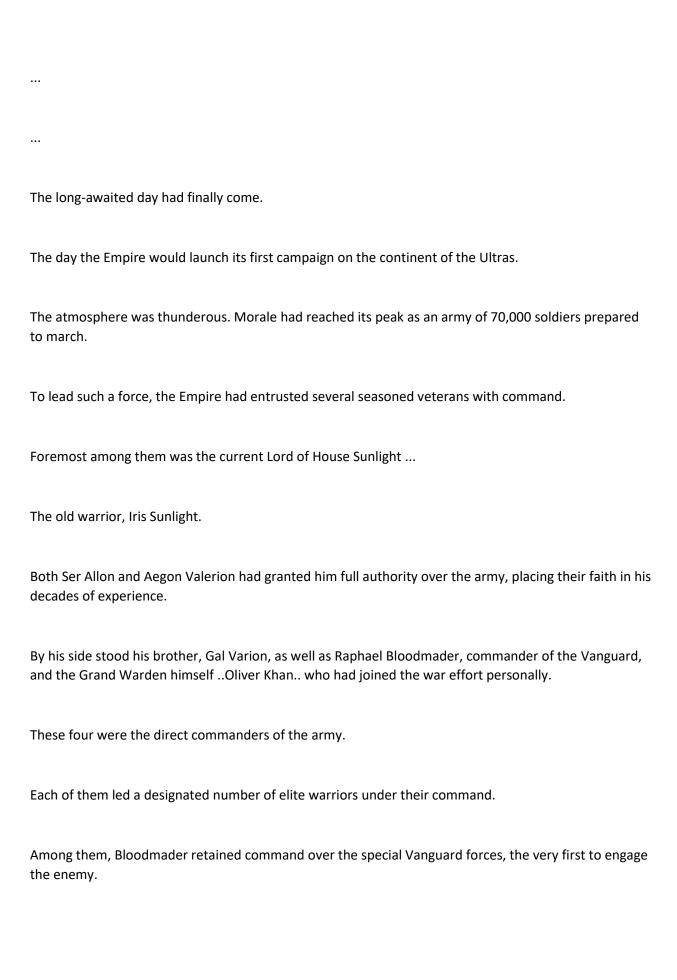


The stage where raw power begins spiraling out of control, far beyond one's limits. Reaching this stage often results in gaining entirely new abilities abilities that transcend human comprehension.
3. Origin Revelation
A mysterious stage where one reaches the full potential of their race. It's an anomalous phase one that varies from species to species. Because each race holds unique traits, it's impossible to predict what kind of power a person might awaken upon reaching this level.
4. Aura Boil
A stage that affects one's aura specifically.
To put it simply — SSS-ranked warriors wield an aura fundamentally different from all other beings.
Their aura is exponentially more powerful than the norm.
It erupts with volatile, boiling force. The way it functions is akin to the concept of literal boiling making every attack they unleash feel like something from another world entirely.
As I read these details — most of which were still new to me — I began to understand just how far away I truly was
From the power I sought.
I hadn't even reached the bare minimum required to attempt stepping onto this path.

And the biggest issue?
The books I'd read so far only detailed the first four stages.
As for the fifth, sixth, and seventh I knew nothing beyond the names I'd once scribbled onto a piece of paper, back when I was still just an author.
An author who lived his life inside a fantasy.
"I really believed I was the one who created this world"
But the deeper I dove into these books into the long history of this world the more I realized
I was nothing but a single piece within this vast universe.
All that prior knowledge I had the story I once wrote
They were nothing more than coincidences.
Easily explainable in a dozen different ways.
I wouldn't even be surprised if the Engineer had a hand in it all.
To be honest, that sounded like the most logical scenario to me.
But then when I think like that, I can't help but remember what Agaroth — the Demon King — once said to me, during our very first meeting.
"My creator the one who made me."

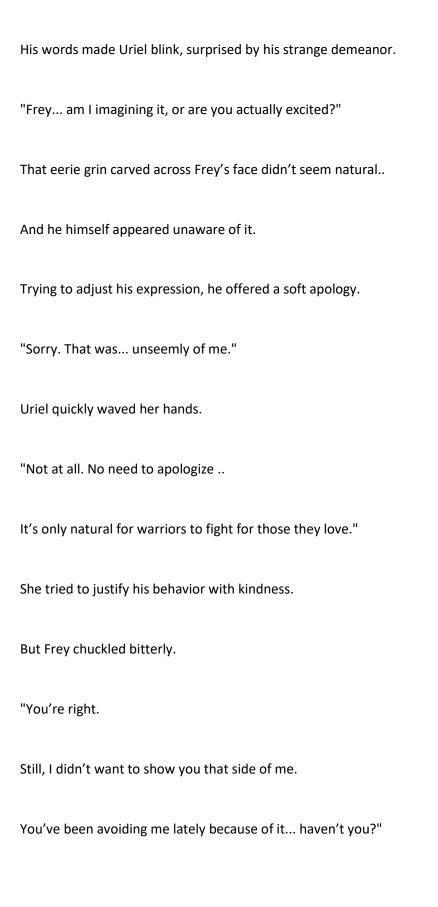


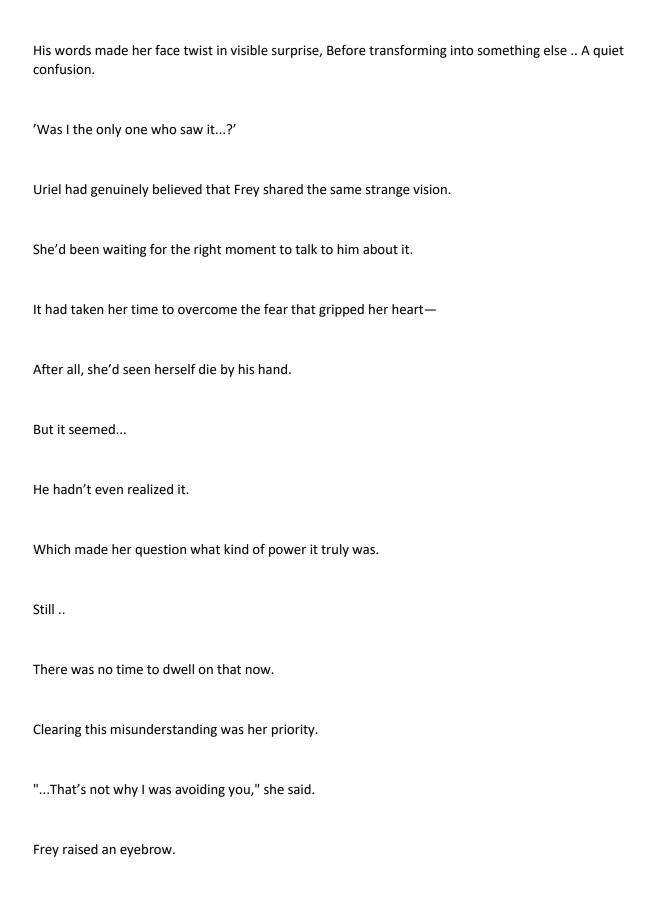
What is it that the Engineer truly wants from me?
And what did Agaroth desire?
I had no answer to any of these questions.
So I rose once more, preparing to leave this imaginary space.
"There's nothing I can do but keep moving forward."
I won't lose. I won't fall again.
I made that vow to myself long ago The next time I'm defeated will be the day I die.
And that's a fate I cannot allow.
So I'll keep moving forward, no matter how much I change
No matter how drenched these hands become in blood
I will never stop
Not until I kill all of my enemies.



Those forces were divided into squads
Each assigned to powerful warriors who were granted the title of "General" in this war.
Among them stood Phoenix Sunlight.
But what drew the most attention
Were the two squads placed under the command of young men who hadn't even reached the age of twenty.
One squad was led by Snow Lionheart—
And among his ranks marched the Saintess Yurasha herself.
The other followed the modern miracle
Frey Starlight.
It was he who requested to be the very first to face the enemy head-on.
Was it courage?
Or was the Dark Star of House Starlight simply insane?
Frey Starlight's squad consisted of one thousand soldiers, including eight elite warriors from the previous vanguard who had chosen to follow him.
Most notably

Sansa Valerion and Ghost Umbra had joined him of their own free will.
And so had someone else.
As Frey donned his armor, a figure approached him in the ceremonial robes of a battle priestess
Her radiant blonde hair glowing more brilliantly than ever.
It was Uriel.
Chapter 499: Path of Blood (3)
Frey greeted her with a smile.
"Uriel. I didn't expect you to join me. Shouldn't the Saintess be chasing after the prophesied hero?" he asked.
Uriel nodded.
"You're not wrong. The Saintess does follow the hero
And that's exactly what Yurasha is doing.
There's no need for two saintesses, so I chose this side instead."
"I see," Frey nodded, walking alongside her toward the army's front lines.
"Your presence will be a great support for the troops. Just stay behind me and try to keep up."







Frey misunderstood again, which made Uriel part her lips, trying to clarify ... but he suddenly burst out laughing, cutting her off. "No need to make that face, I'm only teasing. Besides... I was planning to do that anyway." There was no need for her to ask .. he simply wouldn't let her die. Frey was direct like that, and Uriel found herself at a loss for words. In moments like this, he felt like the older one .. not the other way around. The Saint Candidate lowered her head, seemingly lost in her own thoughts, eyes drifting to the shadows spreading beneath her feet. That darkness reminded her of something. "Will that demon girl be joining us?" Frey turned to her, following her gaze to the shadows below. "You mean Sansa? Yes, she's with us as we speak." It wasn't easy to sense Sansa's presence, but Frey had no trouble with it. Seeing Uriel's grim expression, Frey sighed, well aware of her deep hatred for demons. "Sansa is an ally. And someone dear to me... Uriel, I want you to trust her." It was a rare request coming from Frey, but Uriel gave no reply. And he didn't push her. He already knew

her past.

Still, he wanted to plant the seed — perhaps one day, Uriel could come to accept the demon who walked among them. Frey and Uriel couldn't talk much longer. The noise of marching soldiers, the thunder of war drums, and the trembling earth beneath them drowned out everything else. As Iris Sunlight ignited the air with a rousing speech, the troops roared in unison, ready to launch the first assault of this war. Unfortunately, Frey paid the old man's speech little attention and missed it entirely... His focus was drawn entirely to what stood ahead of him. As he looked toward what was coming, Frey was caught off guard by the approach of a large figure from the right flank. A towering man, scarred and rugged, with reddish-brown hair tucked beneath a dented helmet. A massive greatsword was strapped to his back, and his merciless eyes gleamed with something unsettling. "You..." Frey recognized him immediately. One of the eight who had chosen to follow Frey to the bitter end. "So you still remember me. I'm honored... Lord Starlight."

With a grim, gravelly voice that made many avoid him instinctively, the man introduced himself. "My name is Morval Nox. A lone mercenary who's spent his life wandering through warzones." A twisted smile curled across Morval's face .. one eerily similar to Frey's own. "Morval, huh? That's quite the bloodlust radiating from your body..." Hearing that, Morval let out a loud, guttural laugh. "Isn't it obvious, Lord Starlight? That's precisely why I chose to follow you." "Oh? And how so?" Frey asked, though he already had a feeling. "I won't lie to you, Lord Starlight... I'm here to kill. I want to tear and spill the blood of as many people as I can. I've spent my whole life drifting from battlefield to battlefield for that reason alone." Morval looked exhilarated. It was clear he wasn't a normal human being. He was... wrong — in a way that made him love the act of carving through flesh. "By your side, Lord Starlight, I feel I'll finally be able to satisfy that hunger .. the hunger for slaughter." Morval laughed again, so loudly and violently that the soldiers around him instinctively stepped farther away. He was already infamous.

Not a warrior who fought for kin or country but a mad butcher who found his purpose in carnage and ruin.
There, and only there, could he be his true self.
One could argue he was more wicked than the Ultras themselves
He had a dark history.
Frey knew all this and yet, he showed no disapproval.
In fact, he welcomed it.
"Excellent, Morval Knox. Then prepare to stain your hands in blood because we won't be sparing anyone."
With that, he moved to the frontlines and surged forward.
Moments later, the first assault force scorched its way into enemy soil under his lead and no one else's.
The scouts and assassins had already returned, and Frey now knew the position of many of his enemies.
And he had made up his mind:
He would kill them all to the very last one.
Chapter 500: Intervention of Faith
The world was undergoing many upheavals.

Soon, kings would clash, and all cards would be revealed.
The war that pitted humans against humans had, ironically, drawn the attention of all powers. And now, at this very moment
It had become impossible to predict what might happen in this war that had yet to truly begin.
The War of Darkness.

The Holy Island — Sicily —
A paradise for the church's followers, blinded by their faith for far too long
It truly was a heaven on earth, a miracle where a waterfall descended straight from the sky, nourishing its land and people with divine grace.
Since the return of Ser Alonne and his surprise assault on the central cathedral, the Church's activity had diminished drastically to the point where it now seemed entirely subordinate to the Empire.
The capture of both High Bishop Michael Platini and Ramiel Calestis inside Beatrice's prison cube had only worsened the situation.
Church followers were everywherein noble houses, in major guilds.

It was an entity with roots so deeply embedded that it had long been considered the cornerstone of the Empire's very foundation.
Their complete submission to the returned Emperor from beyond the grave—Ser Alone—was something few had foreseen.
And now, with the War of Shadows begun, the Church had dispatched its most powerful asset: Saint Eurasha, marching to battle alongside their chosen Hero.
One could say the faction loyal to the Lord of Light had shown their true allegiance to the Empire they belonged to.
Especially against their one sworn enemy—the Ultras.
The Church's desire to annihilate the filthy demon-worshippers surpassed all else. Cleansing the world of their schemes had become their holy mission.
That much was undeniably true, but
Were the Ultras truly the only enemy?
The truth ran far deeper than most imagined.

On the sacred grounds of Sicily,
a group of men carved their way across the holy land, heading toward a place that few had ever dared to approach.

Led by the Three High Bishops, they moved swiftly, accompanied by a select unit of elite ranks from within the Church.

Their destination was the base of that magnificent waterfall descending from the sky.

At the head of the group walked High Bishop Blatter, the aged man who had guided the Church for decades.

"Any news from the war?"

he asked, his face void of emotion. The man to his right responded:

It was Ramiel KmCalestis, the youngest and only black-haired High Bishop among the three.

"According to the reports, the first clash occurred today. Although the main armies have yet to mobilize, the vanguard fought a difficult battle. One could say the current situation favors the Empire."

Hearing this, Blatter gave a silent nod.

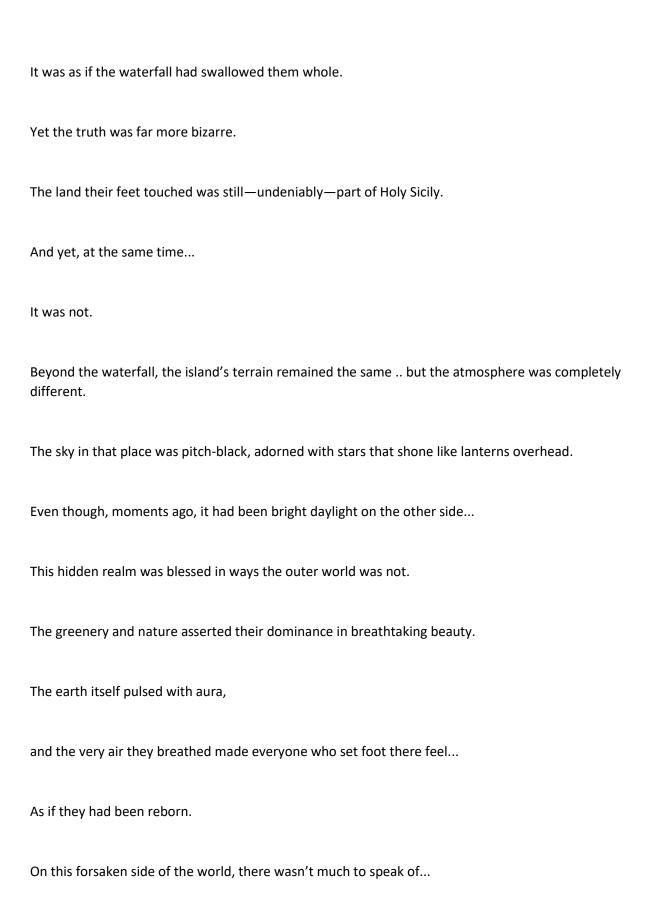
"The Hero is among the vanguard. There's no room for defeat .. The Lord of Light would never allow His chosen to die on this earth."

Besides that, Saint Eurasha was with him. And in this world, very few could hope to kill her.

"We've sent many forces alongside the Hero and the Saint. Things remain stable for now, and the Royal Family hasn't requested further reinforcements—but the likelihood of them summoning us personally in the future is high..."

This time it was the man on the left who spoke ..High Bishop Michael Platini, also known as the Church's Executioner.

His harsh expression and severe gaze had long made him the least liked among the Bishops.
Staring at Blatter, he brought up a critical point.
"The Royal Family believes they have us under control. And that's fine—this situation works in our favor."
As he said this, Blatter came to a halt, having finally reached their destination
The base of the miraculous waterfall that split the skies.
"The Iron Emperor is extremely dangerous. I never expected him to attack us alone upon his return. That old man places absolute faith in his strength"
Ser Alone was but a single man, yet his power and experience were vastenough that even Platyr hadn't dared to oppose him openly.
"But even he failed to discover this place, despite standing so very close."
With a sinister smile that didn't match his noble aura, Blatter and his team advanced toward the waterfall.
As they stepped forward with unwavering confidence, their bodies glowed with the brilliance of Holy Auralight so bright it illuminated the path ahead.
Then, without warning, something inexplicable occurred.
Blatter and those with him had entered the waterfall from one side
But they never emerged from the other.



Only lush greenery and a few scattered structures temples erected in honor of the so-called gods worshipped by the Church's devout.
Before Blatter and his entourage, another group appeared, every one of them clad in pure white from head to toe
Elderly men, women, and old prieststheir eyes brimming with unwavering faith.
All of them bowed respectfully before Platyr and his companions.
"We welcome the High Bishop to the Land of Eternal Night Noctherra."
The sealed land that only a chosen few had ever been allowed to enter.
The secret the Church had hidden for centuries.
Blatter gave a nod as his deep eyes examined the sacred grounds.
"Is the angel ready?"
He asked the question that truly mattered—the reason he had taken the risk of entering this place.
The old man standing at the front of the welcoming crowd smiled deeply, eyes still shut, and nodded.
"Give the order, Blatter and our greatest weapon will march at your command."
"Excellent."

Platyr replied as he ventured deeper into the Land of Eternal Night alongside those whit	e-robed
strangers.	

"The War of Darkness has begun. The Ultras and the Empire will destroy each other."

In a war of this magnitude, both sides would reveal their full arsenal. No one would hold back their trump cards.

They would clash with everything they had, and though there would surely be a victor, that was of little concern.

"The Starlight family has sent its most elite forces to the front lines, with that monster Frey Starlight at their helm. The Imperial family is conserving its strength for the Masters of the Ultras. Sooner or later, both will suffer devastating losses."

As all eyes turned toward the continent of the Ultras, and the war reached its boiling point, no one could imagine what was quietly unfolding on the other side of the world.

"The time has come."