

## **VILLAIN 57**

### Chapter 57 Traitors

Oclas Mountains – Eastern Empire

Dozens of shadows streaked through the mountains with astonishing speed. A closer look would reveal their shared features—distinctive traits that marked them as members of a particular family.

"Sir Duncan, what do we do now?!"

A young man near the back shouted, his voice laced with panic. He could no longer suppress his fear. They were on the verge of leaving the safe zone and stepping into the true Nightmare Lands.

At the front of the group, the old man, Duncan, frowned.

His thick beard and long white hair stood in stark contrast to his muscular physique.

With a deep sigh, he spoke.

"We have no choice but to enter the Nightmare. It's either that... or death."

His grim words only confirmed the worst fears of those behind him.

Duncan cast a slow, assessing glance at his companions before shaking his head.

What a waste... If only we had been more careful, we wouldn't have been discovered...

Regret gnawed at him as his mind drifted back to the events that led them here.

After the last summit, the great families launched a large-scale purge, eliminating any suspected traitors.

As a senior figure of the Starlight Family and an S-rank Awakened, Duncan had never expected to be exposed. But he had underestimated the Starlight Family—underestimated what they were truly capable of.

Backed into a corner, he chose to flee with his followers before the situation spiraled out of control. That decision had brought them here.

The Eastern Nightmare Lands were among the most dangerous territories in existence—second only to the South.

And Duncan knew the truth. Out of everyone present, he was the only one with even the slightest chance of survival.

His goal was to cross the Nightmare Lands, circle the Demon Sea, and reach the Ultras territory.

But fate wouldn't even give him the chance to try.

Just as that thought crossed his mind, an immense, crushing pressure descended upon him.

His expression stiffened in horror. He recognized this aura.

"No... Impossible! She's already here?!"

Teeth clenched, Duncan barked a warning.

"Everyone, prepare yourselves! They've caught up!"

Before his words had even fully settled, the sky blazed with light as the clouds were torn apart.

And then—hundreds of radiant fists plummeted from above, descending like the wrath of the heavens.

Each massive strike, as large as an entire house, crashed down in an unrelenting barrage.

The devastating assault swallowed the landscape in an explosion so deafening it seemed to shake the world itself.

Duncan alone had managed to shield himself. His followers, however, had been wiped from existence—so thoroughly that not even their remains were left behind.

Panting heavily, Duncan struggled to steady himself.

And then, like a white meteor, a figure descended from the sky, crashing into the ground before him.

From the glowing impact emerged a woman. White hair. Pitch-black eyes. An overwhelming aura of raw, oppressive power.

"Carmen..."

At that moment, she did nothing to hide the fury in her expression.

"Look at you, Duncan." Her voice was calm, yet razor-sharp. "Tell me... why are you still alive?"

She took slow, deliberate steps forward, and with each one, the weight of her presence intensified. The ground itself began to crack under the sheer force of it.

"You were there, Duncan... You witnessed the War of Light."

Her fist clenched. Seven blazing stars ignited around her heart, burning with searing intensity.

"And yet here you are—turning your back on everything!"

Carmen lunged.

Her punch was intercepted—a thin, gleaming blade blocking its path.

In response, six stars erupted from Duncan's body as he prepared to fight.

"You wouldn't understand, Carmen... You didn't see what I saw."

Her expression darkened, teeth grinding together.

"Save your excuses."

One punch. Two punches. Then a relentless storm of blows.

Each strike crackled with light. Though she fought with bare hands, Duncan's sword—sharp as it was—failed to leave even a scratch.

At best, he barely managed to deflect her attacks, his mastery of the blade the only thing keeping him alive.

Behind him, massive craters—shaped like fists—marred the mountain, a testament to the sheer force he had endured.

But Carmen was in no mood to hold back. With every strike, her power surged. And then, she roared—

"You knew they were responsible for Abraham's death!"

Like a violent storm, she bulldozed through Duncan, tearing apart everything in her path.

"Tell me, Duncan—who do you think he died for?!"

Duncan countered, unleashing a flurry of dazzling, crescent-shaped slashes.

"I told you before... You don't understand! We cannot fight them!"

His blade finally found its mark, piercing Carmen's defenses. A flurry of devastating strikes followed.

"There is no hope for us! You have no idea what kind of entity you're challenging! This is no longer a war between men..."

With one final push, Duncan forced Carmen back, gathering every ounce of strength he had for a decisive blow.

"It's either this... or death! And I refuse to be the one who loses!"

The Oclas Mountains were bathed in a brilliant radiance as Duncan swung his sword with all his might, aiming for Carmen's throat—seeking to end everything in a single stroke.

An S-rank Awakened's full-powered attack.

His blade sliced through the air—only to stop cold.

Duncan's eyes widened in disbelief.

A bare hand had caught his sword.

Carmen's fingers curled around the blade like an unbreakable vice. A strange, electric-blue energy pulsed around her arm—proof that she was finally taking this seriously.

"Go to hell."

With a single punch, Duncan—and the mountain behind him—were obliterated.

For a moment, all was silent.

Then, in the blink of an eye, the Oclas Mountains were swallowed by a blinding, radiant light.

From the light, Carmen emerged, dragging an old man by his hair.

Duncan's right arm had been completely erased—along with his shoulder and part of his chest.

A fountain of blood erupted from the gaping wound, painting everything in crimson.

Drenched in his blood, Carmen's hands ignited once more, blazing with the power of a star.

She seared his wounds shut as she muttered under her breath,

"No, you won't die... You won't... I won't let you."

Duncan remained conscious, desperately trying to scream, but each time he opened his mouth, only blood poured out.

Carmen paid no heed to his suffering. She simply continued his torment.

"I'm not done with you yet."

She had left him alive on purpose.

Despite the overwhelming urge to kill him, she forced herself to hold back.

After all, the dying old man before her might still hold valuable information.

In his current state, Duncan was weaker than a five-year-old child.

Yet, despite his pitiful condition, Carmen's instincts—sharper than those of any wild beast—screamed a warning.

Her brows furrowed in confusion as Duncan's body convulsed violently, his frame writhing in an attempt to break free.

At first, he coughed up thick, crimson blood. But now, what spewed from his mouth was black—a putrid, nauseating bile.

His eyes darted frantically, as if trying to escape their very sockets.

Then, as a strange, eerie force surged through his body, his trembling hand managed to shove Carmen away.

Her eyes widened.

Before her, Duncan's body twisted and contorted grotesquely.

Dozens of worm-like tendrils slithered beneath his skin, forming black, arcane symbols across his flesh.

From the shoulder that had once been obliterated, a new arm sprouted—jet black, with elongated, claw-like fingers.

A deafening scream tore through the mountains as Duncan lunged at Carmen.

"I told you—you wouldn't understand! No one does! Now look at what you've done!"

Carmen crossed her arms in an "X," bracing for impact.

But the monstrous new limb struck with unimaginable force, sending her flying straight into a distant mountainside.

The moment she crashed, a shockwave rippled through the air.

She lay there, momentarily stunned—not just by the impact, but by the sheer power radiating from Duncan.

His energy had surged past S+...

The light around him flickered and died.

Darkness took its place.

Carmen muttered in disbelief,

"This is impossible..."

Light and darkness—two opposing forces.

A body shouldn't be able to contain both.

Yet the man before her had shattered that rule.

As Duncan's relentless attacks continued, the seven stars around Carmen spun wildly—

And so, deep within the Oclas Mountains, a brutal battle erupted.

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-Frey Starlight Pov-

Sophia continued reading out the results, doing her best to ignore the "Suii" I had let out earlier.

She explained the point allocation system:

"First place earns 1000 individual points. Second place gets 500. Third, 250. The remaining survivors receive 100 each. Additionally, for every successful elimination, you gain 50 points. If you're eliminated, you get 0—unless you managed to take someone down before going out, in which case, you still keep the 50 points."

She lifted her gaze and looked at the group.

"Now, you might be wondering—what's the use of individual points? The answer is simple. These points hold immense value within the temple. You can exchange them for weapons, skills, money—anything. As long as you're inside the temple, these points are worth more than anything else."

Her words sent a ripple of shock through the crowd.

And honestly, who could blame them?

She had just told them they could buy anything with these points.

No wonder they were giving me strange looks—the guy who had just secured a whopping 1000.

Ignoring their stares, Sophia continued tapping on her panel, projecting a larger screen that displayed the full rankings.

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1st – Frey Starlight: 1000 points

2nd – Snow Lionheart: 500 points

3rd – Aegon Valerion: 350 points

4th – Ghost Umbra: 200 points

5th – Feyrith Earlet: 200 points

6th – Lara Croft: 200 points

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20th – Aaron Smith: 0 points

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Everyone checked their scores.

Only four people from Class B had managed to secure points—me, Feyrith, Seris (who earned 150), and Clana (who got 50).

Sophia gave us a moment to process the rankings before announcing the class scores and official standings.

"The class score is the sum of your points divided by 10. Keep in mind—each elimination costs your class 5 points. The final totals are as follows."

"Class A: 130 points."

Among everyone here, this score mattered most to the prince and princess.

It was a crucial factor in the race for the throne.

Even Maekar himself would be reviewing these results.

Since the end of the test, Sansa hadn't lifted her head once.

I wondered what was going through her mind right now.

But from what I heard, she had lost directly to Aegon.

Perhaps everything had gone just as he planned.

Ghost was the one who eliminated Danzo and Ragna.

And knowing him, he wouldn't have done so without a reason. Aegon must have struck some kind of deal with him.

He was also the one who sent Snow and Dawn to Seris, eliminated Sansa, and was the first to uncover the real objective.

Yet, even he hadn't accounted for two variables.

Me.

And Feyrith, who somehow survived until the very end.

That brought us to the present situation.

Sophia continued.

"Class B: 105 points."

She turned to us.

"You avoided disaster thanks to Frey Starlight's quick thinking. But I expect better from you... Class B."

With that, she left us with her final remark before stepping onto the bus.

We followed suit.

Quick thinking?

No.

Neither quick thinking nor strategy had anything to do with it.

Like I said before—I'm just a cheater.

But she wasn't wrong.

Class B only survived because of me.

After all, my 1000 points alone contributed 100 out of our total 105.

Imagine if we had ended up with 130 - 5.

It would've been a catastrophe.

I took my seat, ignoring the different reactions around me.

I had a feeling Aegon would be knocking on my door soon after everything that happened today.

A new source of trouble.

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The ride back was uneventful.

Surprisingly, Danzo and Ragna were quiet.

I smirked. They must've been sulking.

They weren't weaker than Ghost.

If they had faced him head-on, he wouldn't have beaten them so easily.

But because of their arrogance and impatience, they suffered a decisive defeat.

A valuable lesson for them.

Wait.

Why do I even care if they learn from it?

I smacked myself.

"I need to get a grip."

I spared one last glance at Sansa.

"She always helped Frey... Consider these 100 points a small repayment."

Not that it mattered.

I was going to win them regardless.

I wanted to check my tasks now, but pulling out my device and tapping away like a madman would attract attention I didn't need.

With a sigh, I leaned back into my seat.

The return trip was quiet.

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After a Few Hours, We Finally Reached the Temple Grounds.

The crimson sun hung low in the sky, casting its final glow over the land.

Winter's chill had begun to creep in—I could see my breath in the cold air as I stepped off the bus.

One by one, we disembarked.

Sophia was about to deliver a closing speech when a sudden commotion erupted nearby.

The sound was unmistakable—voices, footsteps, an undeniable sense of urgency.

A crowd of temple students had gathered in the distance, all converging on the same spot.

Something was happening.

Sophia frowned and pushed forward to investigate.

The rest of us followed.

At first, I wasn't concerned.

But as we drew closer, a familiar scene played out in my mind.

"No... It's too soon for this to happen."

Yet reality proved me wrong.

My eyes widened as we stepped into the temple's main plaza.

A massive crowd had formed, all staring in the same direction.

At the heart of the square, against the pristine white marble of a towering structure, ran a single red line.

A streak of blood.

Blood that dripped from a body suspended high above.

A human corpse.

A wave of reactions swept through the students—some gasped in disbelief, others stumbled back in horror.

Some thought it was a joke.

Others knew better.

As for me... I simply cursed under my breath.

Sophia, however, reacted instantly.

"What the hell are you all doing?! Get back!"

Her voice cut through the murmurs as she sprang into the air, landing effortlessly beside the hanging corpse.

At the same time, temple staff and instructors rushed in, trying to scatter the crowd.

I let out a dry chuckle and turned away.

Pointless, Sophia.

I knew exactly what she was trying to do.

She wanted to suppress this.

An incident like this would shake the temple's reputation to its core.

But unfortunately for her...

If events were unfolding the way I had written them, this wouldn't be the only body.

Soon, more would appear—scattered throughout the temple grounds.

One after another.

Until the temple could no longer hide the truth.

Until the scandal became too great to contain.

I cast a final glance at the corpse as they began lowering it.

It has begun.

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Deep in the Oclas Mountains...

A woman stood motionless before a corpse, dark fumes rising from its remains.

Carmen exhaled, a slow breath escaping into the cold air.

Her expression was unreadable.

She lifted her hands, inspecting them carefully.

Both were encased in ominous black gloves—tainted, unnatural, as if woven from something far beyond human understanding.

A metallic ring echoed through the air as she clenched her fists.

Duncan was dead.

Beaten beyond recognition.

His body was no longer human—it had become something else entirely.

The black sigils carved into his flesh pulsed with a sickening glow, radiating waves of malevolent energy.

Carmen sighed.

"Just... what the hell is happening here?"