

## VILLAIN 601

### Chapter 601: The Dawn of a New Path

She gestured to him and explained, steady and clear.

"What lives inside you, Frey Starlight, is a creature—a living thing that must be killed if you want it gone for good. Unfortunately, my golden power cannot do that. The shadow has fused with you so completely that sacred power no longer affects it."

Wisker's shadow had become part of Frey's body—akin to the full Demon Seed that had taken root in Sansa and Danzo. Once merged, no amount of holy power could cleanse it.

"Fused with my body... what the hell," Frey laughed, dragging a hand down his face. "So I'm suffering the same thing he did, aren't I?"

He meant Danzo—the man Frey had failed to save.

When a complete Demon Seed fused, there was only one sure end: kill the host. That was the choice Frey had made then. And now, here he was, staring at something all too similar.

"It's like fate is mocking me... ha."

None of the others understood the name he'd left unspoken—he'd never told them about Danzo—but they understood enough: Frey was in real danger.

"If the shadow fully proliferates, I can't imagine what you'll become," Liora said. "At worst ..a mindless beast lashing out at everything on Wesker's command."

The thought sent a chill through both Uriel and Snow. Frey turning on them with his monstrous power would be a catastrophe.

"There has to be a way to save him. Lady Liora, aren't we the closest to the Lord of Light? Isn't His power the best answer for things like this?" Uriel pleaded.

Liora paused, considering, then answered.

"The Lord of Light is not all-powerful—and He is no god. He is a noble, mighty being, and He stands with us. But there are things even He cannot do." A small smile touched her lips. "Fortunately, this is not one of those things."

That caught Frey off guard. "What did you just say?"

"I'm saying we can deal with the shadow inside you ..or rather, he can." Liora lifted a finger and pointed at a particular someone.

The person she pointed to was none other than Snow Lionheart.

"Huh? Me?" Snow himself didn't grasp it at first.

"If SSS-rank sacred power isn't enough, what could I possibly change with what I have? All of my holy power comes from Vermithor."

Snow wasn't wrong—but something clicked for Frey when the saint indicated him. Frey knew what Snow was truly capable of.

"This might be possible..."

Wesker's shadow resembled a Demon Seed, but it wasn't the same thing.

A Demon Seed sprang from a World-breaking power ..there was no known cure for it.

But Wesker possessed no such authority, which meant his shadow could be destroyed, unlike the Seed ..and the key was Snow.

"To explain this properly, I need to guide you first—so you can find the path you're looking for, learn your origin, and know your truth," said the saint, turning her back to them.

"Follow me, all of you."

"Where to?" Snow asked.

"The World Tree," Liora replied.

The golden, mysterious tree that had sheltered her for years.

"That is the means by which you'll learn everything you need to know about yourself, Snow Lionheart. It will connect you to the one being who knows you completely ..the same one who gave you that sword you wield."

Understanding whom she meant, Snow whispered the name.

"The Lord of Light."

Liora nodded. "That's right. To save Frey Starlight, and to show you the best path—the one that will draw out your true potential—you must learn the full truth of yourself and your origin. The only one who can lead you there is the Lord of Light."

At that, Snow fell silent for a few heartbeats, parted his lips—then said nothing. He glanced toward Frey; Frey gave him a steady nod, urging him on.

"Is that even possible? Meeting the Lord of Light...?"

Until now, the Lord of Light had been little more than a name. Snow couldn't believe he might meet Him so simply.

"It's our duty as saints to support the hero," Liora assured him. "I'll prepare the way. All you have to do is go with the current. The Lord of Light will not turn you away—because you are the one knocking at His door. He cannot refuse you."

Her confidence was absolute. "You don't know the truth yet, Snow Lionheart, but you matter deeply to the Lord of Light. From the years I watched the world from the Tree, I learned this: even Kazis was only a forerunner to your coming—and yours alone."

As the four of them made for the World Tree, Liora shared revelations about Snow Lionheart—revelations Snow struggled to accept.

Frey, however, had seen this coming. "Have faith, Snow. You're still the most gifted person on this planet. Even I can't compare in that regard," he said with a grin, clapping his friend on the back.

Snow's confidence had been badly shaken of late ..especially as he fell behind, unable to find a way forward ..and the brush with death against Blattier had been a coup de grâce, compounded by the past Liora had shown them. Confronted with enemies far stronger than he'd imagined, Snow had begun to feel very small in a very large world.

Liora was about to set that right by giving him the path made for him.

Standing before the World Tree, Liora laid a hand to its massive trunk. The tree opened its heart like a heavenly gate to another realm, inviting them in.

"Go on, Snow Lionheart," Liora said.

"Once you're inside, the Tree will flood you with its power. Don't resist—let it wash over you. Let it lead you."

Snow nodded and stepped through with heavy feet. The instant he entered, the Tree sealed the passage behind him, enclosing him within. Liora had expected as much; it posed no problem.

She turned to Uriel. "Come, Uriel. You are meant to be the saint who walks beside the hero. My hero died long ago."

Answering the call, Uriel stepped forward, then glanced back at Frey. He stood off to one side. When their eyes met, he gave her a small wave ..urging her to play her part.

For some reason, Uriel saw him as different from the rest of them.

Dark. So dark that their light seemed to irritate him.

"The saint who accompanies the hero... but which hero?" Uriel murmured, then moved to Liora's side.

Liora took the lead and instructed her. "Our task is to link Snow to the Lord of Light and ensure nothing interrupts them. To do that, you must form a bond with the World Tree. Cast your sacred power into it—it will answer you."

Uriel nodded and did exactly as told. Within moments, her body shone, bathed in the Tree's golden light.

Seeing it, Liora smiled, delighted. "She succeeded on her first try... marvelous."

Liora released her own power as well, her body gleaming beside Uriel's. Standing together, the two of them were breathtaking in Frey's eyes.

Above them, the Tree blazed brighter, signaling the beginning of the rite—the rite that would open the way for the promised hero and unveil secrets buried long ago... about the hero Frey had once written of.

From a short distance, Frey watched it all unfold.

He glanced at the blackness creeping over his skin, forced a crooked smile, and clenched his fist.

"I need to work harder."

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Author's Note:

Hello everyone, it's been a while...

I just wanted to leave a few random thoughts about the novel and its future. This may not be that important to you, so feel free to skip it. But if you're interested, come and listen to the complaints of an amateur writer trying to find his way in this place.

So... The Villain's POV has come a long way. We've already passed 600 Chapters—that's a huge number, guys. But the shocking part is that I realized the story hasn't even reached its halfway point yet... which means it might end up requiring around 1,500 Chapters to tell it fully.

Lately, I've been wavering a lot between release schedules of 3–4 Chapters a day, which I believe is higher than most authors here on Webnovel. Unfortunately, the novel's performance has been steadily declining. Naturally, there are several reasons for that ..the biggest being that this is my very first novel, and I honestly don't think the early Chapters were the best.

To be honest, I truly love this story. That's why I keep writing so many Chapters even as I watch it fall. But a decline simply means I haven't done enough to reach higher rankings, doesn't it? Good is good, bad is bad ..there's no need to sugarcoat things. Of course, there are outside factors too, like piracy sites where the novel gains some popularity but brings me nothing in return. Still, even Shadow Slave is pirated much worse ..so who am I to complain?

In any case, because of everything I've mentioned, I've started leaning toward launching my next novel earlier than planned. A new story, fresh blood, new ideas.

Of course, I won't abandon The Villain's POV. But to be completely honest... if things keep declining further, the release rate might drop significantly, and it could even go on hiatus.

That last possibility is the one I absolutely don't want to reach. But in the end, it all depends on how this novel performs.

So I want to ask you now ..would you prefer to see the new novel released soon, even if it strongly impacts the update pace of The Villain's POV?

Or should we wait, stockpile more Chapters, and let The Villain's POV have its full chance to shine?

Your opinion matters to me.

#### Chapter 602: Lord Vessel (1)

The holy island of Noctera lay in ruins. Everyone upon it had perished after the last battle between Frey and his companions and Blattier.

That sacred island ..meant to be a heaven on earth ..had become nothing but a stretch of rubble and wreckage.

Yet across that vast expanse, one place stood untouched by the fighting: the golden World Tree, which had served as a shield for everything beneath it.

The World Tree blazed brighter than ever, having taken the promised hero, Snow Lionheart, into itself.

The rush of aura was majestic—so much so that Frey couldn't help but be impressed. Gold flooded everything, the World Tree like a sun that banished the darkness.

Saint of Dawn, Liora, together with Uriel, guided the hero and made the rite possible. Uriel's role was largely secondary—Liora carried most of the weight—but it was a valuable experience for the new saint, and Liora deliberately kept her close.

After several long minutes, Liora withdrew, and Uriel followed. The Tree's radiance still shone, but it had clearly steadied; it was stable now—proof the process had taken.

"Our work ends here. The rest is in the hero's hands," Liora said, lifting her face to the World Tree's boughs that blotted out the sky.

Frey, who had stayed back until then, stepped forward once the saints were done. He was surprised—it had taken far less time than he'd expected.

"Is it really over that quickly? I thought it would take at least a few hours."

Liora shook her head lightly.

"The rite isn't complicated. It would have failed with anyone but Snow Lionheart. But because he is the chosen one, success was inevitable. The Lord of Light will never turn him away; He will always open the door for him."

Turning once more toward the Tree, Liora spoke with quiet gravity.

"He was destined from the start to surpass us all. Snow Lionheart may lack the confidence fitting his station, but once he grasps the full extent of his potential, he'll become something else entirely."

Earlier, Snow had looked down on himself before Liora—chiding her for laying her responsibilities on him and the new generation. He saw himself as beneath her. But Liora knew part of the truth, and she knew that wasn't so.

Whether he would realize that potential and break past his present state—or fail and keep falling—now depended entirely on him. There was nothing more the saint could do.

As the three of them stood before the World Tree, Frey noticed something odd that had held his attention for a while. His senses, sharpened by an SSS-class aura, caught what others would miss.



"Saint Liora, forgive the question... but are those barriers your work?"

They weren't obvious; few could have perceived them. But the area around them was encircled by a colossal ward that sealed it off from the world—an SSS-class barrier.

At his question, Liora smiled faintly and nodded.

"Your senses are impressive, Frey Starlight. As you said, I'm shrouding this place from the outside world. No one must discover what's happening here."

With her appearance, and with Snow Lionheart's choosing of his path underway, Liora made sure to hide everything as best she could, buying time for Snow and the others.

"Our task here is finished, so I'd like to use this chance to pass on what I can to you, Uriel Platini. Come with me, please." Liora didn't waste a moment. She turned to Uriel as soon as Snow's rite was secured.

Uriel had been pondering how to grow stronger; she met Liora's request with bright resolve and nodded.

"Let's do it."

"Very good. Then I'll leave guarding this place to you, Frey Starlight."

Leaving Frey behind, Liora and Uriel headed elsewhere.

Frey sat cross-legged on the ground before the golden World Tree. There was nothing for him to do but sit, staring up at that nonhuman titan of wood and light.

With the shadow creeping through his body, he couldn't train. The usual methods no longer worked, and the Blood Path he had taken demanded killing to advance.

In other words, while Snow sought a noble road to power and Uriel received Liora's guidance toward the same, Frey had nothing to do but wait.

"Heh... this place is far too bright for me."

The feeling was strange—a sense of not belonging, like an intruder who shouldn't be here at all.

Frey didn't understand why he felt that way, as though Noctera itself rejected his presence. He'd been too busy fighting to heed it before, but now, with the battle over, the awareness settled in.

He drew out the Nameless mask and studied the metal face he'd taken to wearing so often of late.

"When I think about it... Snow and I are very alike—and nothing alike."

Frey, bound to Nameless in one way or another. Snow Lionheart, who had drawn the Lord of Light's gaze. Two roads that looked similar from afar.

But one path was dark, choked with curses. The other shone with blessing.

Two faces of a single coin—each looking in the opposite direction.

And now, the promised hero, Snow Lionheart, was about to find his road at last.

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Inside the golden World Tree, Snow Lionheart stumbled through an expanse so vast it felt like another world altogether—a realm flooded with light, steeped in a strange familiarity that made him feel, for once, like he belonged.

The instant he entered, Snow was forced into the War King Form, golden runes swarming across his body faster and more fiercely than ever before.

"As if every particle of me is reacting to this place..." Snow said, staring into the boundless white ahead as he fought to steady himself—to keep his power from slipping out of his control.

Within seconds, light gathered around him and took the shape of a faceless white wraith.

It was the same wraith that had appeared to him whenever his power surged... the same presence he'd sensed on the day the sacred sword Vermithor chose him as hero.

The wraith had always been silent, unreachable. But this time was different.

Little by little, golden force converged upon the phantom, and familiar sigils formed across its body—golden runes, brighter and more potent than ever, unmistakably akin to Snow's War King Form, as though this were its fully evolved state.

As the final sigils locked into place, the wraith's features came into focus.

Golden eyes appeared first—large, keen, and blazing with a radiance that sent a shiver through Snow. Then, slowly, the rest of the face: nose, mouth, skin... followed by that distinctive white hair. A half-golden, half-black mantle settled over a body that now possessed solid form.

The white wraith had become a man—his presence so imposing that Snow Lionheart found himself speechless.

The man spoke first, a gentle smile touching his lips.

"At last we meet, Lord Vessel."

Those were the first words from the apparition—addressing Snow with a strange title he did not understand.

"You... the Lord of Light..." Snow managed, struggling to grasp that the figure before him was the very being whose name so many humans had invoked—yet whom none had been granted to meet.

#### Chapter 603: Lord Vessel (2)

Snow had imagined many things about the Lord of Light; he'd never truly known what kind of entity He was. Now, standing face to face with Him, Snow felt only confusion.

It wasn't the man's overwhelming presence, nor the fact that he was the being many treated as a god—even though this was not, strictly speaking, his true body. What unsettled Snow most was the uncanny familiarity—a closeness, a sense of belonging to this man he had never met.

He called me "Lord Vessel"... but what does that mean?

"Who are you? What ties are there between us? You are the Lord of Light, aren't you?"

The man took a step forward.

"'Lord of Light'... it isn't my name, though it is the title others use for me."

Step by step, he closed the distance to where Snow stood.

"My name is Orsted—the second Lord of Light of the race of Lightbearers."

The Lord of Light spoke his name, declaring his existence and identity.

Snow understood at once that the one before him was far beyond his scale—Orsted, Lord of Light, second among the Seven Great Powers. A being to rival the mightiest of demons, bearer of immeasurable strength.

Orsted halted when he reached him. They stood face to face. Orsted was taller—Snow had to tilt his head back to meet those golden eyes.

Snow opened his mouth, searching for words, but none came. There were too many questions, too many unknowns—he didn't know where to begin, nor how to address someone so far above him.

Orsted, it seemed, needed no words from him; he was already aware of all that churned within Snow Lionheart.

"You came seeking answers," Orsted said, lifting a hand that flared with tremendous light. "Doubt has gnawed at you. Somewhere along the road, you lost your way. You fell to foes beneath you, and with defeat upon defeat, you lost faith in yourself."

He knew. He had been watching.

Snow held his silence a moment, then gathered himself. There was nothing to hide from the one before him.

He went straight to the first question.

"Before—you called me 'Lord Vessel.' That isn't my name. What did you mean by it?"

"Oh? Would you prefer I call you Snow Lionheart? I can—though you should know that 'Snow' is not your true name, and what I called you is the more accurate address."

Light spread through the space as Orsted spoke.

"We could talk for hours; talk is easy. But it's better that you see the truth with your own eyes than hear it from the mouth of a stranger."

His tone hardened. His gaze, suddenly cold, pinned Snow in place.

"Before we begin, take this to heart: if you are to endure what you are about to see and live, kill your human self. Kill the naïve, fragile thing called Snow Lionheart—and let the true lord be born at last. Your time is running out."

Kill the human—and let something else take its place.

That was what the Lord of Light told him to do, and Snow could not grasp what he meant.

"I've lived my entire life as a human. Born among humans, I lived with them, fought for them—that's the only way I know how to exist. I don't understand what you're asking of me. I can't become something that contradicts what I am."

Snow Lionheart saw himself as human—nothing else. He had come for answers—to find a path that would make him strong enough to cast off his weakness and never lose again, no matter the foe. That was the strength he sought, the kind of answers he wanted—and so Orsted's words did not sit well with him.

Orsted looked straight through him, understanding all the same—and he did not seem the least bit annoyed by Snow's reply.

"Very well—there's no need to rush what's inevitable. You're free to choose as you wish... but only after you learn the truth."

Without warning, Orsted bent the space itself, sending out a vast wave of light that changed everything.

Snow felt his consciousness hurled away beneath that power; within seconds he blacked out and collapsed, his mind sinking into a dream.

A strange, long dream—

A dream that showed him a tale no human could grasp, a story time itself had forgotten... one that unfolded far from the earth where he'd lived his whole life.

The story of the purest, most immaculate being in this world—a blessed entity destined to accomplish wonders. And so he did.

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The cosmos is immeasurably vast, full of secrets and stories without end—too many for any one mind to comprehend.

But among the corners of the universe, at one of its brightest, most radiant points, there was a colossal world that shone like a sun, lighting the space around it. They called it Duskreach.

Its inhabitants were the purest of all creatures: a great race known as the Lightbearers.

They were a beacon holding the world back from the horrors of the dark.

The Lightbearers had existed for an age beyond memory, counted among the five greatest races in all creation, and most of the universe knew of them.

They were the demons' natural opposite: as that foul race brought death and ruin, the Lightbearers brought blessing and life.

The Lightbearers were always first to take the field against the demons; conflict between the two was inevitable, for each was the other's natural foe.

Among the Lightbearers stood champions so great each could have penned a legend of their own. They were the ones who bore the burden of the war and won their people glory.

Those champions were given a single title: the Vessels.

They were vessels of light who wielded a different strain of sacred power. Unlike the power used by other Lightbearers—or even by the saints—their power was meant not to mend, but to destroy.

A sublime, holy force whose sole purpose was to purify demons—to unmake them.

Then, one day, the Lightbearers witnessed a phenomenon unseen in all their history. An event without equal—a turning point that changed their fate, and the fates of hundreds of other races besides.

On that day, a new Vessel was born.

One stronger than any who had come before, purer than all the rest—perfect.

So perfect he was deemed the summit of his kind—their purest and mightiest, a noble existence the like of which had never been born, and would never be born again.

On the day of his birth, the heavens shone in a different light, and a Presence descended ..a being whose mere existence was said to rival the sun itself.

It came to bless and to witness the birth of that newest Vessel—the purest of them all. All the Lightbearers, and every Vessel among them, gathered to behold it.

It was an event so great that the Great One of the Lightbearers descended in person.



The Great Ones are beings beyond understanding; each race has its own, and many go tens of thousands of years without even knowing theirs exists. But the Great One of the Lightbearers was different—close to his people, he dealt with them directly.

His name was Sun Presence—said to be the very sun that lit Duskreach, the source of all sacred power.

That august being descended to bless a newborn child and bestowed a name upon him.

"His name," the Presence declared, "is Pure Vessel."

He would become the first Lord of Light, once ranked First among the Seven Great Powers—a being whose era marked the Lightbearers' golden age.

This was the beginning of the tale of the king who never was.

#### Chapter 604: Broken Vessel (1)

On Duskreach's zenith—beneath the gaze of Sun Presence himself—the purest and most powerful of all Vessels was born.

Pure Vessel was no ordinary Lightbearer. From birth he was destined for greatness. He came into the world not only with the light that could annihilate demons, but also with the Light Soul—the ultimate weapon against the dark.

It was a boundary-shattering power, capable of unleashing ruinous, destructive force. Because of it, Pure Vessel grew with breathtaking speed into the champion his people had hoped for.

He was set apart, isolated from everyone so he could focus solely on training and strength.

Day after day he endured brutal regimens—from countless martial disciplines to bodies-of-iron drills no one else could survive. His program was anything but normal; the commanders of the Vessels pressed him on purpose to learn his limits. Each time he completed their trials, they brought him harsher ones—tasks that would break any other Vessel. None could keep pace; all collapsed halfway through.

Amazingly, Pure Vessel bore them all and finished each one flawlessly, no matter the difficulty. He mastered everything set before him—so completely that he learned to invoke his Domain at a very young age.

The Domain was the Lightbearers' strongest weapon—what Snow Leonhart calls the War King's Form—but the true Domain is far stronger; Snow's form is only a spark by comparison. The golden runes that manifest with the Domain grant Lightbearers unprecedented might, multiplying what they can output many times over.

In Pure Vessel's case, the Domain returned even more than it did for the rest of his kind.

Thus he forged his strength and began to make a name for himself. But the road was desolate, steeped in loneliness—shaping the quiet nature that kept him distant from his peers. Other Vessels tried to approach him at first, but after being crushed by his overwhelming talent, a gulf opened between them. Rather than draw near and try to understand him, they treated him like something sacred, living in a world apart. The gap was vast; anyone who tried to get close was forced to face how small they were beside the purest, mightiest Vessel.

Such was the solitude that came with overwhelming power—and it marked Pure Vessel's earliest days.

That solitude forged his singular temperament... but it did not last.

Yes, he was treated differently, and most lacked the nerve to approach him. But not all.

Among them, another Vessel appeared. He was neither noble nor beautiful like Pure Vessel. He was plainly of lesser quality, and his talent could not compare. And yet—though obviously inferior—he completed everything Pure Vessel did, without failing.

"Ha! Look at that! You thought you were the only special one? There's nothing you can do that I can't!"

He was a strange one—brazen enough to defy his superiors and ignore their orders.

Somehow that chaotic, flawed Vessel managed to keep pace with the one hailed as the greatest in history. It was the first meeting between Pure Vessel and his only friend: Broken Vessel.

Broken was the only one bold enough to approach him, to force a rapport—and no one could stop him. His talent lagged far behind, yet he climbed to a level of strength near Pure Vessel's, so no one could bar his way. Pure himself didn't object. Taciturn as he was—rarely showing his true feelings—the presence of Broken Vessel, and the nuisance he brought, was in its way... welcome.

In time the two became inseparable. They trained together, lived together, spent their days in Fellwyn—the cold training complex where Vessels spent their entire childhood, to be fielded in war later.

Vessels were not like other Lightbearers roaming free; they remained confined to Fellwyn until their steel was tempered and they were worthy to become the Light's strongest knights—the ones who fought the fiercest, most terrifying demons.

It was a bleak childhood most could not bear; many Vessels broke along the way and could not endure. Yet among them, Pure Vessel and Broken Vessel were the pair that drew every eye—an odd duo: one loud and unruly, the other calm and noble.

They stayed side by side, always training together.

They fought dozens of bouts, and Pure Vessel won them all. Broken never once defeated him—and he would cause a ruckus every time he lost.

"Another match!!" he demanded each time Pure slammed him to the floor. Pure—cold and unyielding—accepted every rematch, no matter how many, and won them all. Once, he wiped the floor with Broken more than a hundred times in a row.

"Are you all right?" Pure Vessel asked it often at the end of every spar, every drill they endured together.

"Get away from me, damn you! I swear I'll beat you one day!"

That was usually the answer—one that drew a gentle smile to Pure's face, every time.

Then they grew. Pure's regimen grew harsher still—designed for him alone, far beyond what other Vessels faced. Broken Vessel was the only one reckless enough to try to follow it with him.

At first, his only friend could keep pace. But as time passed, the distance between them widened, and Broken began to struggle beneath that hellish training.

While Broken was gasping—collapsed on the ground, unable even to catch his breath—Pure would often sit beside him and wait for him to rise again.

Pure never spoke about himself. He would simply fall quiet and listen to Broken's rambling. Yet he seemed to accept—and be grateful for—the presence of that noisy nuisance in his life.

"Are you all right?"

Those words were heard again and again, because Pure had always asked Broken that question.

At first, Broken took it for pity, or even mockery, and over time that seeded a sour resentment in his heart—especially once he could no longer keep pace.

Inside the bleak training complex of Fellwyn, the world seemed to begin and end within its walls.

In the beginning, Broken didn't understand Pure at all; he stuck to him purely out of rivalry. He wanted to prove that a Broken Vessel—the lesser, the defective—could do everything that noble being, the one everyone fussed over, could do.

Later, as their friendship deepened, Broken began to grasp what Pure truly was.

It happened on a day he challenged him again—only this time the battle was different.

The gap between them had widened; Broken could barely keep up. He snapped, fighting in despair to defeat him, and the duel became a fight to the death.

As their blades crashed and their light scorched everything around them, Broken hit the lowest point of his life, throwing everything he had into the struggle.

"I tried too... I know I was born beneath you, but I kept trying and trying... yet my light stayed dim and paltry beside yours!"

With every clash, his true feelings broke the surface.

"I tried to reach you, to understand you... For that alone I worked hundreds of times harder than the other Vessels—just to prove to the whole world, and to you, that even a lowly vessel like me can reach that realm, that world nobles like you live in!

"But what did I get for all that effort—for all that pain?

"No matter how I tried, I was only chasing your back from afar... and at some point even your back vanished from sight. You soared away, leaving me down here in the abyss!"

BOOM!!

When the fight reached its end, Broken hadn't even managed to touch Pure.

"Tell me, Pure Vessel... did my existence mean anything? Did my effort, my struggle, ever reach you? Did you care at all?

"Tell me! I couldn't understand you no matter how hard I tried!"

He shouted with everything in him—but no answer came.

In the end, Broken fell onto his back, spent and powerless, and waited for Pure to deliver the last blow and finish him—he was the one who'd made it a death match, after all.

But the mercy shot never came.

Instead, Pure Vessel came and sat beside him, and asked the same question he always had:

"Are you all right?"

#### Chapter 605: Broken Vessel (2)

The same hollow words—words that had always sounded like mockery. But that night their echo was different, and the Broken Vessel, bleeding out on the ground, finally understood what lay behind them.

Pure Vessel had been alone for most of his life. He'd been treated like a noble relic, kept at a distance from his peers, to the point he never learned how to express himself properly at all.

"Are you all right?"

It wasn't scorn, nor empty phrasing. It carried weight.

It was Pure, worried that his only friend might no longer be able to keep up with him.

As if he were asking, "Can you keep going? Can you still run with me? Are you still there?"

Yes—Pure Vessel cared. Broken's presence mattered in his life. That was what Broken had failed to see.

"Just as I kept lifting my head to the sky, chasing your back... you kept turning your head, peering down into that abyss behind you—looking for me."

At the start—climbing that long stairway of power—whenever Broken lifted his gaze, he saw his friend's back. And Pure, looking over his shoulder, would find him close behind.

But eventually, as the gap widened, they could no longer see each other at all—and that was why Pure kept asking that question, which Broken had taken as an insult. He thought Pure was mocking him and all his struggle.

In truth, Pure had valued him—and had acknowledged him as a friend—since long ago.

Realizing all this, Broken laid his forearm over his face with a bitter look.

"Damn it... you're awful at expressing yourself, you damned bastard. How can something people call 'perfect' be this bad at it? It makes no sense—ha... ha..." He let out a dry laugh, and Pure Vessel answered with a gentle smile.

"I'm not perfect at all... I'm far more broken than you."

From the beginning, Pure Vessel had been raised in a brutal forge meant to turn him into a weapon of war. He carried the hopes of an entire race. Yes, he was monstrously strong—but in every other branch of life, he was more incomplete than anyone.

"Your existence truly saved me, Broken... so don't you dare sink into that filthy abyss."

There in the cold facility of Fellwyn—the pit the Vessels saw as an abyss that swallowed their dreams—Pure made that one request of his friend. Broken burst out laughing.

"That's not fair, Pure... asking me something like that."

What Pure wanted was for him to keep chasing, to keep trying to match him. And to do that, Broken would have to work many times harder than he already had if he hoped to pursue the shadow of that monster with terrifying potential.

Forcing himself upright, Broken stood again, drenched in blood, and stared up at Pure sitting above.

"Watch me, Pure. I won't just climb out of this abyss—I'll surpass you and fly farther than you ever will. I'm the Broken Vessel no one expects anything from!"

He shouted... then crumpled to the ground again.

Pure simply nodded, wearing that calm, noble smile of his as always. The smile that had always infuriated Broken—yet today, somehow, it didn't.

Pure Vessel was the vessel that carried the hopes of an entire race.

Broken was the vessel that carried Pure's hopes.

Strangely, the weight of one person's expectations was heavier than that of the Lightbearers as a whole.

And so the days went by, one after another, and the two kept moving forward—together. The training grew hellish, but Broken endured to the end, chasing the phantom of his extraordinary friend.

Then one day, as they sat slumped against a wall, Broken floated a wild idea.

"Listen, Pure... how about we run away from here?"

He asked it out of nowhere—even Pure was taken aback.

"Run away?"

Pure had never once considered such a thing in his life. Escape from Fellwyn's abyss—was that even possible?



"How would we escape? And where would we go?"

It sounded utterly unrealistic, but Broken had reached his limit.

"I can't stay in this damned place anymore, my friend. The darkness of this abyss has grown too heavy for me."

Fellwyn—the abyss that forged the fiercest Vessels—was a cursed place where, no matter how brightly light burned, the darkness devoured it. The Vessels lived their lives in pitch blackness, unable even to see each other's faces. Whether Pure or Broken, neither knew the other's features; in that darkness they were only two roaming flames of light, searching for their path.

"Tell me, Pure—have you ever heard of the Legendary Vessel?" Broken asked. Pure replied, puzzled:

"Legendary Vessel?"

He didn't recognize the title—he'd spent most of his life in isolation—but Broken was different.

"The Legendary Vessel was a remarkable woman. They say her birth caused a stir much like yours, Pure. Many call her the strongest vessel in history. People piled hopes and expectations on her without end—but do you know what she did? She threw all of that in the trash and chose to do whatever she wanted. Can you believe it?"

"She was the only one who dared try to escape Fellwyn—the place that's supposed to be inescapable—and she did it. She cut down everyone who stood in her way and walked out of this darkness into the real world. She's out there now, doing as she pleases—to the point she even cast aside the name granted by Sun Presence and chose one for herself."

Deep in Fellwyn's shadows there had been a Vessel who not only fled, but rebelled against everything—even her own name. She had defied the great Sun Presence himself.

Hearing that impossible tale, Pure felt a strange thrum reverberate in his chest. He was moved in a way he hadn't expected.

"This woman... what's her name?"

Pure found himself wanting to hear the name she chose—proof that she had seized her freedom and shattered her chains.

Broken only shook his head.

"I don't know. Speaking her name is forbidden here. All we're allowed to call her is the Legendary Vessel—the only one who achieved what we believed impossible."

Rising to his feet, Broken held out his hand to Pure.

"Let's get out of here and find her together, Pure. Then we can ask her name ourselves!"

"We're strong—we've spent our whole lives training in this cursed place. Let's shatter our shackles and step into the world, my friend!"

He invited Pure—and for Pure, those words stirred a desire that had been suppressed deep inside for a very long time.

Freedom.

To be free of the chains of expectations others had laid upon him—and to do only what he wanted.

It was pure selfishness—selfishness that began to spread through Pure Vessel, kindled by his friend, the Broken Vessel. That kind of selfishness filled Pure with a quiet joy. He took his friend's hand.

"Let's do it."

Together they set out to attempt what the Legendary Vessel had done—an undertaking that demanded making the impossible possible.

It was the turning point that would shape, more than anything else, the Pure Vessel the world would come to know.

## Chapter 606: Pure Vessel (1)

In the distant past...

The race of Lightbearers had long been a beacon steering the other races through the ages. Whenever the darkness swelled, their lighthouse cut a path through it. Of all the wars etched into history, none was more relentless than the eternal clash between Lightbearers and demons—two natures born to oppose one another. For beings such as these, war was inevitable.

The Lightbearers fielded the Vessels as their premier fighting force, while on the demon side the Hell Dukedom stood foremost—names like Gael, the Father of the Abyss, or Manus, the First Demon. The Dukedom's fiends were dreadful, and their atrocities beyond counting.

Even so, the Lightbearers and the allied races had thus far managed to hold them at bay; champions rose on either side, and the scales stayed level—no lasting advantage for either camp.

That balance shattered when the unthinkable happened—when a phenomenon changed everything.

In Duskreach, the Lightbearers' cradle, a majestic citadel hung high above the clouds—a marvel of architecture that defied belief. There, upon a throne, an old man traced over a stack of reports streaming in one after another. Before him stood two men whose mere presence loosed a terrifying pressure, an aura that seemed able to shake time and space.

The old man remained unmoved by their power; all his focus was pinned to the pages in his hands.

"So the demons, a race scattered by nature, have at last united under a king?" he said, scowling, and tossed a report aside. "It's so absurd it's nearly laughable."

His eyes flared with a deep violet as he finally looked up at the men. This was the oldest among the Lightbearers, a being who had lived for millennia and been crowned to lead his people—

The Luminous King, one of the greatest Lightbearers in recorded history.

"How credible are these damned tidings you bring me?" he asked. One of the two answered:

"Almost certain. A strange demon unlike any we've seen has subdued the Hell Dukedom alone, proclaimed himself King of Demons, and formed a new order they call the Organization of the Seventy-Two High Demons."

Demons had always been fractured—unity lay against their nature. For the first time since history began, a single fiend had broken that rule and drawn the entire vile race beneath one banner. And if the demons were perhaps the strongest race of all, their unification was a true catastrophe.

"This so-called king you speak of—how strong is he?" the Luminous King asked, curiosity edged with steel. Silence dragged between the Vessels. They were the strongest serving him, and they had already crossed blades with this new king; they had seen with their own eyes what he could do.

Their reply came heavy.

"If I had to name it with one word—calamity. A base monster that must not be allowed to live, no matter the cost," said the first.

"I have fought demons for thousands of years," the second added, "but I have never seen one butcher our troops like that. Even when the two of us tried to stop him, surviving him—that was the best we managed."

Each word deepened the Luminous King's grimness. A strange demon whose power swelled the longer the battle raged; one even the mightiest Vessels failed to halt—escaping with their lives was their greatest feat. A Demon King who had appeared from nowhere and conquered Helmund in short order, bending it beneath his heel...

All the omens of a disaster were upon them—one whose scope they could not yet grasp.

"My king, I beg you—rally all Vessels and put an end to this fiend, before his strength grows any further," urged one of them—Manifest Vessel, the foremost of the knights at that time. He saw further than most; a single clash had convinced him that the king had to die before he became something none of them could comprehend.

Listening, the Luminous King sank back into his throne, thinking deeply.

"This supposed king ..what is his name?" he asked at last. The answer came as one:

"The Demon King—Agaroth."

"Agaroth, is it..." The Luminous King exhaled. "If only that accursed Legendary Vessel had not fled us... we could have dealt with this wretch in his cradle."

Just the thought of that selfish woman frayed his temper. She had once been their brightest hope—but she had run, refusing to heed the Luminous King, declaring she would do only as she pleased.

Worse, she hadn't even bothered to hide. When he tried to drag her back by force, she crushed him and his strongest retainers, becoming an ungovernable force. They had been left with no choice but to leave her be, lest she turn and become their enemy.

The Legendary Vessel was their greatest regret—a stain upon their annals.

But recently, a new Vessel had been born—one purer than all before, a spark to rekindle the Luminous King's hope of mending past mistakes.

"What news of the Pure Vessel?"

The old king asked his retainers, hoping for a sliver of good news amid the flood of grim reports.

At the mention of Pure, the knights' eyes brightened on instinct.

"He's phenomenal. The Pure Vessel has mastered everything we've tried to teach him—on the first attempt, no less. He's still training in Fellwyn, and we intend to add him to the order as soon as he reaches his peak potential."

"Excellent," the king nodded, satisfied.

"Make sure he's ready before our next clash with the Demon King. The Pure Vessel may become our greatest weapon in this war."

Perhaps Pure's birth had been meant to counterbalance the rise of that so-called Demon King—as if nature itself had offered a gift to keep the scales even.

Agaroth was still at the dawn of his reign then, and the world had yet to grasp the scope of the catastrophe gathering over it. The Luminous King heeded his followers' counsel; the Lightbearers began immediate preparations, determined to marshal the stars themselves and bring Agaroth down before he could take root.

Rumors of Agaroth multiplied. Battle after battle without pause—and each fight made him stronger. A true monster, a vile thing clawing upward at a speed that defied sense.

All of it gnawed at the Luminous King, an ancient who knew the secrets buried in the elder annals.

"A beast that grows with every battle... a calamity no one has ever vanquished..."

The thought felt ill-omened—too much like something from a cursed age he tried not to remember. Just recalling it kept him from sleep.

"By the light... are we standing at the brink of another Odin?"

A chill premonition took root. All the more reason to destroy this new king at once—and a great share of that hope, he pinned upon the "perfect" vessel fate had granted them.

He could not know that, much like the Legendary Vessel before him, the Pure Vessel was about to attempt the forbidden—an escape from Fellwyn that would only deepen the coming storms.

#### Chapter 607: Pure Vessel (2)

Far from the war's clamor and the upheavals abroad, Pure Vessel and Broken Vessel still trained within Fellwyn, slowly raising their strength to the level required to chase what they'd set their hearts upon.

To achieve a miracle like the Legendary Vessel's, they needed staggering power. Fortunately for them, Fellwyn was the best place to seize it.

Lightbearers walked a distinctive path to grow stronger—the Path of Light. It forced the body to its limits, bearing unprecedented pressure to ignite a volatile surge that vaulted the user into higher realms.

To truly benefit from that path, one had to wield the Domain ..a birthright peculiar to the Lightbearers. The Path of Light was among the finest—and cruelest—training methods in existence, and Fellwyn provided the harshest environment to draw out its maximum yield.

In that pitch darkness, only the strongest, finest Vessels survived.

So, year upon black-walled year, Pure and Broken trained, striving for the power each needed to do what they intended.

Then, at last—after grueling effort—Broken Vessel's body erupted with might, his frame blazing with a great radiance.

A light that proved he had finally broken through and grasped a share of the strength he sought.

He collapsed to the floor, panting, but grinned with unfeigned joy and shouted:

"Finally! I did it!!!"

Across from him, Pure nodded, pleased in his own quiet way.

"With this, all the pieces are in place. We can move to the next step."

Broken Vessel — Rank SSS.

Stage One: Throne Beyond Existence (early stage).

As for Pure ..he had crossed that threshold long ago and climbed higher still.

Pure Vessel — Rank SSS.

Stage Two: Pulse of Chaos (mid stage).

Now both possessed enough strength to make things happen—and they couldn't afford to wait. If they grew much stronger, they would be drafted straight into the Vessels' order, a fate neither desired. They wanted freedom—nothing else.

So that night, Pure and Broken packed what little they had and launched a desperate bid to shatter Fellwyn's chains.

That dark training ground had been built more as a prison than a proving hall. Escape was brutally difficult—a pocket reality with a single way out, a gate guarded so heavily it was said to be unbreachable.

Pure and Broken didn't care.



In minutes, Vessels and wardens alike fell like flies as the pair cut through them at blinding speed.

Racing at the speed of light, the two moved as one.

"Remember, Pure—we have to finish this fast, before the commanders catch on. If the strongest Vessels intervene, our chances drop to zero!"

"I know."

Resolved to do whatever it took, Pure Vessel became a merciless engine of destruction that night.

Born with a blessed body that eclipsed his peers and gifts beyond comprehension, he unleashed the most potent Light-Soul and erased everything that stood in his way.

From childhood, Pure Vessel had been buried beneath mountains of expectation. For a long stretch of his life he thrashed only to fulfill others' desires—stripped of his own will, treated as nothing more than a weapon of mass destruction, meant to crush the Lightbearers' enemies and then be cast aside.

For a long time, he accepted that fate.

But after his fateful meeting with Broken, Pure began fixing his eyes on a freedom he had never dared to dream of.

His shattered friend showed him the road—and the goal.

All that remained was to make it real.

One after another the Vessels fell, and in Fellwyn's depths, his radiance became a killing spark that crawled up from the abyss.

Broken followed close behind, only to be stunned by what he witnessed.

A single look at the terrifying way Pure fought told Broken that his friend had been holding back enormously whenever the two of them crossed blades.

A flawless body; flawless control; flawless command of every martial art ever drilled into him—

and on top of that, the devastating Light-Soul aura that vaulted him higher still.

'Pure... I'm starting to understand why so many call you the greatest of the Lightbearers...'

It was talent from another world—and power that made the impossible possible.

Pure and Broken didn't know whether fortune favored them or whether the turmoil outside had thinned Fellwyn's strength, but the strongest Vessels were away, drawn to the demons' latest surge.

The war had pulled most of the peak fighters to the front, leaving Fellwyn deprived of much of its usual might. Few elites remained.

And against Pure and Broken, those few toppled in moments, unable to put up a real fight.

It was only a matter of time before the pair reached the exit at last—

the gate to the outer world, to the freedom both had craved.

But before that gate stood the final obstacle they were bound to face.

"This is..." Broken's expression darkened as recognition hit.

"He's the one who runs this damned pit. I think they call him White Vessel. Be careful, Pure—he's strong."

"You don't need to tell me. His presence says enough."

At the end of the path, the man who had spent his life as master of the abyss awaited them.

"Turn back, Pure Vessel. What you're about to do betrays your entire race."

White's voice was rough.

The curse of darkness still held, so neither Pure nor Broken could make out his features ..

but even in that choking black, a vicious scar stood out on his face.

White tried words first, though the killing intent pouring off him said he was ready to do it the hard way.

"I have no intention of retreating," Pure said flatly, shaping a blade of light into his hand, "and no intention of talking. Arm yourself. The fight has already begun."

He moved—and White met him, parrying with disconcerting ease.

"Fool of a Vessel! Do you not grasp what your people are suffering while you try to run from the duty on your shoulders?"

White's counterattack forced Pure back—proof of how formidable he was.

"The war rages. Our kin among the Vessels die every day—holding the line, buying you time to grow strong enough to become the beacon that leads us. And you dare throw their sacrifice away?!"

Furious, White crashed into him, and the two traded blows with absolute savagery.

## Chapter 608: Pure Vessel (3)

“I never asked anyone to throw their life away for me,” Pure answered, driving the Light-Soul to its limits. “They died by choices that were theirs. And likewise—”

He pressed in, every strike a verdict.

“—I will not fight someone else’s war, and I will no longer carry your expectations. Find another vessel to pack full of your selfish hopes.”

As those words rang out, Broken flashed in behind White.

“Well said, Pure. Let’s drop him here and leave this cursed place—once and for all.”

Two-on-one, they fell upon White.

Snarling, he unleashed everything he had to subdue them.

Killing Pure was not an option; he mattered too much. Broken, though—White meant to end him.

But subduing Pure without killing him proved brutally difficult—especially when their levels were so close.

At first, White was certain he could put them down. But step by step, the pressure mounted; wounds accumulated—most of them from Pure.

Even though Pure was only midway through Pulse of Chaos while White had already reached its peak, Pure steadily overran him.

The way he fought—the light, the aura—

it all dragged up memories White had spent years trying to bury.

The scar on his face burned, a fresh pain from an old humiliation.

Pure reminded him far too much of that Legendary Vessel—the cursed one who had crushed him years ago and left that disfigurement behind as she walked away.

Sensing history about to repeat, White snapped—lost control—and poured everything into a killing strike meant to take them both.

It didn't matter.

The Light-Soul's radiance dwarfed his own, and it was only a matter of time before the two of them drove him to the ground.

Beyond Pure Vessel's overwhelming personal power, he moved in terrifying concert with Broken Vessel—who, though weaker, became a fierce pillar at Pure's side.

The result was the complete annihilation of White Vessel, one of the strongest Vessels alive.

And so they achieved their aim. Their feet crossed the abyssal gate at last, stepping into the real world and leaving Fellwyn's darkness behind them.

They had been so consumed by battle that they'd lost their grip on reality.

What brought it rushing back was the sting of cold that bit into them the moment they stepped out.

For long minutes they simply stood outside the gate, frozen in place, staring at the sight that awaited them.

At first they could hardly see; years in the dark had made them forget what other colors looked like.

But after several heartbeats—eyes reddened—they found themselves drinking in the expanse before them:

A blue sky, speckled with scattered moons and worlds; a land before them lush and green; air that was clean and gentle.

In the distance, they glimpsed a copse of resplendent golden trees, radiating a majestic pressure brimming with life.

“We did it,” Broken said, taking a step forward—

then hesitated, turning to Pure. Pure looked back, and both their eyes widened as they finally saw one another’s faces for the first time.

Both wore white hair. Both bodies were latticed with golden sigils.

Pure Vessel’s eyes were gold; Broken’s were sharp and violet.

Pure, clearly, was far more handsome—

which made Broken burst out laughing.

“So that’s what you look like, huh? Pure, you’re nothing like the great warrior I pictured! Haha!”

Pure smiled as well, words failing him.

Moments later, the two of them were sprinting across the new world they had entered.

Their bodies were superhuman—SSS-class—and in a blink they devoured impossible distances.

Carefully, skillfully, they hid their presence while they explored everything before them, utterly enthralled by what they saw.

They wandered for days without a destination, keeping as far away as possible for fear of pursuit.

The weather was cold; snow fell now and then, tickling them as it drifted down.

Sitting atop a high hill, they gazed up at the sky in silence until Broken smiled.

“What do you plan to do from here on, Pure?”

The question pulled Pure from his reverie; he hadn’t thought about it at all—too lost in the world’s beauty.

“I don’t know... but for now, I think I’ll just follow whatever I desire,” Pure said with a simple smile.

If he was hungry, he would eat. If tired, sleep. If he wanted to fight, he would fight.

That simple.

Broken nodded, smiling back.

“Not a bad answer... But to live like that, I say we follow in the Legendary Vessel’s footsteps—and start by choosing names for ourselves!”

He sounded excited. Pure looked puzzled.

“Names? ...I’ve never thought about that.”

“Then think!” Broken shot to his feet. “They’re essential. From now on, they’ll define who we are.”

Seeing how fired up Broken was, Pure chuckled softly.

“So what name did you pick?”

Beaming, Broken turned toward him.

“From this moment on, I’m not Broken Vessel. I am Orsted—the great warrior whose name will be carved into the minds of every living being in this world!”

Broken Vessel shouted it to the heavens, announcing himself to all creation.

Watching him, Pure found himself admiring the way his friend had chosen to live, and understood why the Legendary Vessel had made that her first act as well.

“Orsted, is it... Quite the name,” Pure said.

“Awesome, right? Now—your turn! What did you choose, Pure?”

“Haha... I haven’t chosen anything,” Pure admitted with a light laugh. “I never thought about it.”

Orsted scowled.

“What the hell? How are you going to claim your freedom while clinging to your old name?” he sighed. “With your cold personality, I doubt you’ll come up with anything good. You’re like this snow—cold, flavorless.”

Sitting together on that hill as snow fell onto their heads, Orsted’s words rang in Pure Vessel’s ears—



and he smiled faintly.

“In that case, from now on my name will be... Snow.”

“Huh?” Orsted blinked.

Snow’s smile deepened.

“I’m the cold, flavorless fighter. Simple and straightforward, right?”

No flashy title—just snow.

That was the name Pure Vessel chose for himself.

Snow.

...

...

...

A.N :

Another announcement, everyone.

I’m sorry for all the pointless rambling lately ..I’ve been dumping my worries on you a lot, and that’s kind of pathetic, isn’t it? Haha...

Anyway, here's the ridiculous thing I've realized: I'm ridiculously attached to my first novel, The Villain's POV ..so attached it's almost pathetic. It's like falling madly in love with a gorgeous girl, only to discover she's a damned whore who'll ruin you... yet you still love her, and no matter how hard you try, you can't get her out of your head. Pathetic, right?

Well... I don't think I can stop publishing it. I can't let it go. Even if it completely dies out, I'm going to keep releasing it all the way to the end! That's the decision I reached after thinking about it day and night.

And did you forget who I am? What do you take me for? In my prime I was dropping six chapters a day!

Writing two novels at the same time is nothing to me! Which means my second novel, The Last Legendary Weapons Master, is coming soon—and its release won't affect The Villain's POV!!

I'll give it everything I've got and make sure both are delivered in the best way possible. I hope you'll renew your faith in me and keep reading The Villain's POV, and I invite you to give my second novel a chance when it launches ..it'll be the peak of everything I've learned so far!

Thank you for reading my work, and I promise to keep striving to bring you the best.

## Chapter 609: The Legendary Vessel

Freedom has always been a coveted prize ..especially for those who've been robbed of it.

For Pure and Broken ..Snow and Orsted, to put it another way ..freedom was everything they wanted.

But freedom was nothing like what they'd imagined. Though they managed to escape and wander as they pleased for several days, Vessels soon began to hunt them in earnest—despite being tied up in a war against the demons.

News of the Pure Vessel's escape hit like a hammer: a fresh catastrophe no one wanted to relive after the fiasco of the Legendary Vessel in the distant past.

What followed was a relentless pursuit of Snow and Orsted.

It felt as if the Vessels would chase them to the ends of the world. The escape was broadcast to every Lightbearer on the planet, and suddenly the entire world seemed to stand against them.

The chase dragged on. Snow and Orsted scraped out victories by the narrowest margins, but both were nearing their limits. The chaotic way of living—always on the run, always looking over their shoulders—grew more suffocating than their bleak training days in Fellwyn.

To be hunted without pause... to live in constant fear of being seized at any moment...

They both knew that if the leading Vessels ..or the Luminous King himself ..joined the hunt, it would be over.

It was bitterly absurd: two SSS-class monsters reduced to fugitives.

On any other world, with power like theirs, they'd be treated like kings; no one would dare breathe too loudly in their presence.

But on Duskreach, the Lightbearers' home, SSS was only the starting line. There were plenty of beasts strong enough to face and defeat Snow and Orsted.

Alongside the Pantheon, the Lightbearers were among the mightiest races alive. This level of power was normal for them.

Under that pressure ..forced to live like criminals, sprinting from one ambush into another ..Snow and Orsted hit their ceiling... and found themselves following in the Legendary Vessel's footsteps once more.

She had escaped, long ago. No Lightbearer had been able to bring her to heel, and in the end they were forced to leave her be.

Snow and Orsted realized she might be their only ally on Duskreach ..a world that felt like a serpent coiled around their throats.

So they began to search for her.

At first they assumed it would be nearly impossible, imagining she was hiding somewhere remote and unfindable.

The surprise was that the reality was the opposite. The Legendary Vessel hadn't bothered to hide at all, as Snow and Orsted learned when they mingled with other Lightbearers and gathered rumors.

She had left her whereabouts in the open—and openly dared every Lightbearer to try.

“You want to drag me back and make me fight your stupid war for you? Fine. Beat me first, if that's what you want.”

For years, the Vessel commanders—and even the King—challenged her again and again to haul her back.

Every time, she wiped the floor with them and sent them away humiliated.

She was terrifyingly strong, wielding a destructive holy power that felt akin to the Light-Soul aura the Pure Vessel possessed.

She had taken her freedom by force.

Hearing these stories, Snow and Orsted were only more certain the answer they were looking for lay in her hands.

Without further delay, they headed for the place she was said to dwell.

It was a far-flung region on the very edge of Duskreach, a desolate land abutting a valley whose waters ran between ranks of towering mountains.

They called it the Valley of the End ..because beyond it, there was no more land.

It looked grim and barren, but looks deceived. The deeper they went, the more they found dozens of golden trees, each radiating inexhaustible life-force that let the valley bloom.

In that rugged place, plants flourished; the ground was carpeted in green, turning it into a cradle of life despite its harsh facade.

Snow and Orsted pressed on, awed—until a prickle of dread ran down their spines.

They had forgotten, for a heartbeat, that they were trespassing on the ground of the very Legendary Vessel they had longed to meet.

They hadn't expected to find her so quickly .. and the meeting was nothing like they'd imagined.

The great Legendary Vessel stood before them, and her stance was openly hostile, driving both of them a step back before they realized it.

"It's been a while since Vessels last dared to chase me," she said. "I thought I'd made myself clear. Perhaps letting you crawl away alive each time gave you the wrong idea—you think you can pester me whenever you please."

She descended the slope toward them, drawing a slim sword that usually hung at her hip.

She was slender, her figure almost unnaturally perfect. Her hair burned a fiery red ..a rare sight among Lightbearers, whose hair was typically golden blond or pure white.

Her face hid behind a golden mask; her clothes looked almost... human ..something out of a Victorian age unknown to Snow and Orsted.

It was a strange, foreign image ..but there was no time to marvel. She was intent on driving them off; they could feel the muted killing intent coiled inside the aura she gathered along her blade.

They raised their hands, hurriedly trying to explain that they hadn't come to fight her at all...

But the Legendary Vessel didn't give them time to speak. The instant she drew that strange, slender sword, the fight had already begun.

It could hardly be called a fight. For Snow and Orsted, it was a nightmare.

Though both had reached SSS class, they were crushed one-sidedly by the very Legendary Vessel they had long admired.

Her style was terrifyingly swift ..beyond tracking ..and her strikes were clean, fatal. Both of them realized she could have killed them from the very first exchange; she simply chose to spare their lives.

Their lives were the only thing she spared. She didn't hesitate to shatter their bodies, grinding them down until they were a miserable sight.

Orsted collapsed almost immediately, leaving Snow to face her alone.

He understood that words would never reach her, so he fought with everything he had, hoping—at least—that his blade would.

He poured out every drop of Light-Soul power his body could muster. He fought to the limit.

He still couldn't touch her. Yet the force he unleashed finally made the Legendary Vessel hesitate, their swords crossing thousands of times in mere seconds.

Each clash boomed like a nuclear blast, flooding the entire Valley of the End with a searing brilliance that seemed enough to banish every shadow in the world.

Snow endured. He was the Pure Vessel, after all ..the Lightbearer whispered to be the greatest in history, with talents and gifts far beyond his peers. And yet, in the end...

Even he was crushed before the Legendary Vessel. Still, despite his brutal defeat, he succeeded in drawing her attention.

Collapsed amid the valley's sacred waters, he looked up as the Legendary Vessel stood over him, her emerald eyes fixed upon him.

"This day keeps getting stranger," she said. "Two Vessels turn up after all these years ..and one of them wields the Light-Soul. Then you must be the Pure Vessel the rumors spoke of."

News of the Pure Vessel's birth had rocked all of Duskreach; even the Legendary Vessel had heard it. The moment she crossed blades with him, she knew.

Bleeding at her feet, Snow clung to consciousness and said what he had come to say.

"We followed in your footsteps. We escaped that darkness, too. We fled to reclaim the freedom stolen from us—the Vessels."

In the end, both he and she had suffered the same fate—made into repositories for the hopes of an entire race. But both had been selfish, and bold enough, to cast those hopes aside.

Snow and Orsted wanted the same thing.

"This world is ruled by strength. With enough power, we can make our hearts' desires real. That's how you've lived free all these years—because you are the Legendary Vessel, the strongest Lightbearer alive."

Because she was strong enough to crush anyone who stood against her, she'd lived as she pleased, not as others wished. That was the overwhelming power Snow and Orsted sought.

“Please ..teach us how to become stronger. How to surpass the level we’re stuck at.”

“We’re vessels, just like you. We ran from our fate to win our freedom.”

They pleaded with her to train them, to forge them into something strong enough to live by their own laws.

The Legendary Vessel saw the resemblance between them and the Pure Vessel. She grasped their intent. And still, she refused them outright.

“I’m not taking disciples. I’ve no time to waste on the two of you .. especially you, Pure Vessel. Your very presence will only bring me more trouble with that damned Luminous King.”

Even so ..despite her refusal she allowed them to remain in the Valley of the End.

“No one ever taught me how to grow stronger. I did it myself. That’s how I’ve survived all these years. If power is what you want, you’ll have to find it on your own. You can stay here—no Vessel will dare step into this place while I’m around—but that’s as far as my help goes.”

She was a strange woman, yet kind enough to give them a refuge in her domain, despite knowing almost nothing about them.

It felt as if those green eyes of hers could see straight through their souls.

She let them stay ..but warned she would kill them if they approached her dwelling without permission. And there was one more thing.

“I heard you call me the Legendary Vessel. That’s a name I discarded long ago. If you’re going to address me from now on, use my real name.”

Before she left, she gave it to them—the name she’d carried all these years.



“My name is Audrey. Just Audrey ..no titles, no honors. You’d best remember it, unless you want it to be the last thing you ever hear in your life.”

It was a strange meeting, and the start of a stranger relationship ..between Snow and Orsted and Audrey, who had lived in seclusion, chasing a purpose no one else understood.

And yet, the days in the Valley of the End would always bring a quiet smile to the Pure Vessel’s face when he remembered them. Perhaps they were the happiest days of his life—on the eve of the darkness and calamities the future still had in store.

#### Chapter 610: The Red Moon’s Descent (1)

In the Valley of the End, for a time, three of the strongest Lightbearers made that place their home.

Three Vessels who had cast off their given names and chosen to live by their own laws, leaving the burdens forced upon them behind.

The Legendary Vessel—Audrey, as she called herself—was the lodestar for both Snow and Orsted: a woman who did as she pleased and possessed the strength to make it possible. To their eyes, she was dazzling.

For a long while, Snow and Orsted dogged her steps everywhere, begging her to take them as disciples, and each time she refused ..after beating the two of them black and blue. She seemed harsh, but that wasn’t the truth of it. She let them remain in the Valley of the End, shielding them from the Lightbearers who hunted them.

She wouldn’t teach them, yet the three still spent countless hours together—hunting, eating, talking about the world and its ages. Audrey, especially, was deeply informed. She told them about the Great Ones, the shapers of history, about the legend of Odin, and the first appearance of demons and Lightbearers.

Audrey was a riddle, and at first Snow and Orsted couldn’t grasp what she was after. Now and then she would leave the Valley for long stretches and then return out of nowhere.

In those periods, Snow and Orsted trained day and night to grow strong enough to stand near her level.

She never interfered, but watched from afar ..her gaze lingering most on Snow. The Pure Vessel lived up to every rumor: a monstrous talent she had only ever seen once before in her life. The bearer of the Light Soul ..the most destructive force a Lightbearer could wield. If he matured properly, Audrey knew he would reach her...and perhaps even surpass her.

He implored her again and again to become his teacher, but she refused each time; she had her own plans and no time to spend on Snow.

They didn't know what her goal was ..until one day, during one of her absences, they slipped into the place where she spent most of her hours, searching for her secret.

What they found stunned them: piles of charts and scattered records everywhere—notes on every corner of the vast cosmos and every race within it. Those records could not have been gathered overnight; Audrey had clearly spent years collecting them.

It wasn't hard to see why. Her annotations made it plain: Audrey was searching for something—or rather, someone.

She confirmed it later, once the three of them had grown closer. She didn't say much, only that he was important to her—more important than anything. The way she spoke made it sound like love. She said he existed somewhere out there in the wide universe, and she was certain of it.

So she kept searching. How powerful must those feelings be, to spend a lifetime scouring the cosmos for a single person?

Her aim seemed impossible. The world was too vast to be measured. But neither Snow nor Orsted dared belittle it. She was their inspiration—and their savior. Thanks to her, they had escaped the Lightbearers and the Vessel commanders. That alone was enough.

And for Audrey, the two were the only companions she had ever truly made as a Lightbearer.

In time, the three began to treat one another like family, and Snow and Orsted grew far stronger.

Everything was as it should be. Perhaps those were the happiest days of the Pure Vessel's life ..the days he lived under the name Snow.

Two years passed like that, long enough for Snow and Orsted to believe their hard-won freedom and quiet days might last. But on a bleak, starless night, life reminded them that no joy endures forever.

In a valley that had held only three souls, a fourth appeared.

A baleful presence—calamity from nowhere.

Audrey was away that day. Only Snow and Orsted remained, training as always. They didn't sense him until the last instant—until he was standing right before them.

One look into those crimson eyes, and both of them understood: disaster had arrived.

"How unexpected," the demon's voice rang in their ears. "I never imagined the Vessels could be so careless as to leave the Light-Soul bearer wandering alone ..no escort, as if begging me to come and kill him myself."

They braced to fight.

"Who are you?" Snow shouted, forcing every shred of strength into his limbs beneath the pressure radiating from the newcomer.

At first the figure wore a long black cloak. A moment later the cloak tore free, revealing a suit of crimson armor—and a strange weapon that seemed a sword one moment and a spear the next.

The demon who, at that time, held the Fifth Seat among the High Demons—the Red Moon, Crimson.

“The Lightbearers offered me nothing but boredom.”

“As for you, Pure Vessel—the one everyone sings about—I hope you can put on a better show.”

Crimson, the Red Moon—a damned demon who rose in step with the Demon King, Agaroth.

A colossal monster with terrifying potential, he climbed the ranks of the Seventy-Two High Demons faster than any before him.

He was a walking catastrophe, and the battle became a waking nightmare.

They say Crimson’s laughter carried for leagues, and every clash between his great spear, the Kingslayer, and Snow’s blade triggered natural disasters that reshaped the Valley of the End.

Orsted backed his friend, but even together they were utterly overwhelmed. The fight was one-sided.

As the brutal struggle wore on, Snow and Orsted took grievous wounds; death drew near ..especially for Orsted, far weaker than Snow. Desperation dragged the Pure Vessel back to his roots as he tried to wrench more power from the Light Soul within him.

He managed a worthy fight—he even wounded Crimson—but the gap in raw power was far too great.

The inevitable followed. Snow could scarcely protect himself, let alone Orsted.

In a single, pitch-black instant ..one that blew Snow’s eyes wide as Crimson’s laughter thundered through the valley—Snow saw that dreadful spear, the Kingslayer, punch through Orsted’s chest. His only friend ..the one who had stood with him always.

The strike was fatal, saturated with a kind of aura that unmade anything living. Orsted died in seconds, unable to speak a word. Lightbearer blood slid down the spear and splashed across Crimson, who bathed in it.

“Tick-tock, tick-tock, Orsted is on the clock! And you, Pure Vessel, appear to be nothing but talk!”

Crimson’s mockery and Orsted’s death shattered something inside Snow. With a raw, wounded howl, he hurled himself at Crimson again, fighting with everything he had.

It was a bitter struggle—a desperate war of attrition.

Light clashed with Crimson’s shadow, deepening to a dark red. Auras surged skyward and collided like a flood.

Miraculously, the Pure Vessel dragged out power beyond his stage...but the result did not change.

Broken and bleeding, Snow hung limp. Crimson hoisted him by the throat with one hand. The demon had taken some damage, but his strange crimson armor had swallowed most of what Snow threw at him, leaving him in far better shape. Snow, by contrast, was a ruin.