

## VILLAIN 61

Chapter 61 61: Story Divergence

"We are on the brink of great change."

Ashol Eduardo stood amidst the massive crowds, watching as blind faith consumed them.

He cast a glance at the man beside him—a figure so still, so detached, that even his eyes seemed void of light.

"For better... or worse."

Bloodmader's response made Ashol pause.

"Isn't this what you wanted, Raphael? The war you've longed for is finally upon us."

Bloodmader shook his head.

"I never desired war, Ashol. But sometimes... it is the only way."

With that, he turned to leave.

Ashol's voice followed him.

"Where are you going?"

The director stopped for a brief moment.

"To finish what I started. I will lead the charge—I'm returning to the border."

"Are you certain about this?"

Ashol clasped his hands behind his back, speaking with an air of indifference.

"The temple is in a precarious state. Leave now, and you may come to regret it."

Bloodmader simply smiled before vanishing, his voice lingering in the air—

"Do not underestimate the temple, Ashol."

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-Frey Starlight's Pov-

I sat at my desk, tapping my fingers against its surface, lost in thought.

A few minutes ago, I had received a call from my sister, Ada. I hadn't expected it to be anything important.

Once again, I was wrong.

"Disaster."

This was a catastrophe.

I had always known that even the smallest change could disrupt the course of events—but I never imagined it would escalate this much.

The Church had moved far earlier than expected.

And with that... the war I had dreaded was arriving ahead of schedule.

At this rate, I might end up caught in it myself.

A whirlwind of thoughts threatened to consume me, but I snapped myself out of it with a sharp slap to the face.

"Calm down... It's not like the war will start immediately."

They would need at least a year to prepare—to locate the hero.

After all, that so-called "hero" was currently here, within the temple.

That gave me just enough time. Enough time to escape this world.

With my mind made up, I left my room. Hunger gnawed at me.

I had considered visiting Shahin, but indulging in too much spicy food would ignite an entirely different kind of war—inside my stomach.

So, I opted for something else.

As I wandered through the temple streets—now eerily quiet in the wake of recent events—I found myself enjoying the crisp air and silence.

"Let the strong handle the empire's protection. I need to focus on what must be done."

Too many eyes were on me.

If their suspicions continued to grow, it would only be a matter of time before I was eliminated.

And I needed to find the true contractor—on my own.

Luckily... a name surfaced in my mind.

Whether it was the right one or not—the days ahead would reveal the truth.

But for now—

"Time to fill my stomach."

Reaching the restaurant district, I seized the opportunity to enter one of the city's most renowned French establishments.

Normally, a place like this would have an endless queue, but today, the path was clear.

The moment I stepped inside, a rich, tantalizing aroma filled my senses.

The grand dining hall stretched before me—tables draped in pristine white linens, the golden glow of chandeliers casting a warm, elegant light.

The place was completely empty.

I moved forward at my own pace, but as I did, I noticed a girl sitting at the first table.

With her youthful features and striking green hair, she was devouring a perfectly cooked steak with enthusiasm.

At the sound of approaching footsteps, she froze, lifting her head.

For a brief second, our eyes met.

She still had the piece of meat in her mouth—until it slipped from her lips.

"F-F-F-Frey Starlight?!"

Her face drained of color as she scrambled backward, nearly toppling over.

I frowned.

"Who is this?"

With trembling hands, she fumbled through her pockets before pulling out a book.

"Stay back!"

I immediately recognized it.

The Holy Scripture of the Church.

And this girl... Emilia Atarax?

A student from Class A.

I sighed at her exaggerated reaction.

"Why are you shoving that ridiculous book in my face?"

I took a step forward. She instinctively took one back.

"S-Stay away!"

So much for a peaceful meal.

"Spare me the nonsense. I'm just here to eat."

She didn't seem convinced. The faint glow forming around her arms made that clear.

"Please... don't kill me."

Tears welled up at the corners of her eyes, making her look even more like a frightened child.

I ran a hand over my face.

Did I really create such a foolish character?

"Kill you? Do you seriously think I'm an assassin?"

She believed every rumor she heard.

She had probably listened to the countless whispers about me.

Even so, she refused to lower her guard.

I needed to end this quickly before we both got thrown out.

"You don't believe me? Then let's do this."

I stepped forward.

The light around her body flared, shining with even greater intensity.

"No! Stop!"

I didn't.

Standing just a step away, she finally unleashed a wave of divine energy from her hands.

A golden aura engulfed me, its presence undeniable, cleansing, purifying.

Yet... nothing happened.

The reaction Emilia had been expecting... never came.

So this was the Lord of Light's power—the force those fanatics followed so blindly.

I exhaled deeply, motioning toward myself.

"See? Nothing."

She was a Saint Candidate for the Church.

The Lord of Light's power directly opposed demonic aura.

If I had been a true contractor, the signs would have been undeniable.

Yet here I stood—untouched.

Emilia's expression twisted in shock as she murmured—

"Nothing... happened?"

Foolish girl.

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After that absurd encounter, I found a seat far away from Emilia.

I indulged in a variety of dishes, savoring every bite.

This place could easily earn three Michelin stars if it existed in my world.

But nothing compared to Shahin's cooking.

I was midway through my meal when I caught Emilia sneaking glances at me from across the room.

When our eyes met again, she spoke without thinking—

"Are you really... not one of them?"

I took a sip of my soup before replying, indifferent—

"Come closer if you want to talk."

She was seated at the farthest corner.

Honestly, if not for my enhanced senses, I wouldn't have even heard her soft voice.

I resumed eating, sensing her hesitation.

After a few moments of internal struggle, she finally relented, making her way toward my table and sitting across from me.

I gestured to the feast before us.

"Eat whatever you like."

She seemed taken aback.

But even a fool could tell—she had been staring at the food, not me.

A smirk tugged at my lips as she hesitated.

"Looks like the Church doesn't pay you well."

"Shut up! We don't take more than our share... Excess is a sin."

It was obvious she wasn't entirely convinced by her own words. So, I decided to push her a little more.

"Excess, huh? But I don't think I'll be able to finish all this food. Wouldn't it be wasteful to throw it away?"

Giving her a reason to eat, she hesitated for a moment before picking up her fork and reaching out for the food.

"If you put it that way... I guess there's no choice. Yes, wastefulness is a sin too..."

Seeing the blush on her face and her childlike expression, I felt an urge to tease her even more. The girl in front of me was the closest thing to a child—making her all the more endearing.

We sat together for a while, eating in relative silence. At first, she ate hesitantly, but it didn't take long for her to drop the pretense and reveal her true self, savoring the delicious food without restraint.

I wasn't worried about the cost—given my status in the Starlight Family, she could eat as much as she wanted.

Perhaps she grew uncomfortable under my gaze, because she suddenly decided to change the subject.

"Tell me, do you believe in the Lord of Light?"

Hearing her question, I leaned on my left hand.

"And why do you ask?"

She looked away, unable to maintain eye contact for too long.

"Well... You didn't react to the holy power I unleashed on you earlier, so I thought maybe you were a secret believer."

"Hmm..."

Her words gave me pause, stirring old memories I had written down long ago.

Leaning back in my chair, I finally answered.

"The Lord of Light exists, without a doubt. But I don't follow the Church."

I was about to continue, but she suddenly cut me off.

"Then you are a good person after all!"

"Hey, don't interrupt me."

She pouted at my reaction but ignored me completely, her previous wariness now gone.

Did she really trust anyone affiliated with the Church so blindly?

If so, her future looked bleak.

I glanced out the window, murmuring to myself.

"The Lord of Light, huh?"

He was real, that much was certain. The Holy Sword Vermithor was undeniable proof of that.

But to worship him as a supreme being?

That was the biggest nonsense I'd ever heard.

In the first place, neither humans nor demons were the only creatures inhabiting this vast universe.

Somewhere beyond our lands, other entities—just like us—struggled to survive. And they were the ones holding back the High Seat Demons.

That was the only reason our world still stood.

The so-called Lord of Light was merely one of those entities.

Nothing more. Nothing less.

And yet, the people of this empire remained oblivious.

I was lost in thought, barely aware of the girl sitting across from me—until a few unexpected words dragged me back to reality.

"At least you're better than Feyrith..."

"Huh?"

I immediately turned to face her.

"What did you just say?"

Emilia hesitated, taken aback by my reaction, but repeated herself nonetheless.

"I said you're better than Feyrith."

Her words surprised me.

Why mention Feyrith now, of all times?

"Why him, specifically?"

Emilia was naive—too naive. She kept talking, unaware of whether she should be saying any of this.

"Well... You and Feyrith are the only ones mentioned in the rumors."

I frowned at her response.

I had suspected Feyrith more than anyone else—but I hadn't expected others to do the same.

Pausing to gather my thoughts, I asked,

"Did you ever test your holy power on him?"

She nodded.

"Yes. Miss Sophia personally asked me to do it after the last Target Test... but nothing happened."

She placed a finger on her lips, deep in thought.

"But... am I even allowed to tell you this?"

I left her to her own musings as I processed the information.

So I wasn't the only one suspicious of Feyrith...

Even the professors had their doubts.

But the fact that he resisted Emilia's holy power left only two possibilities—

Either he was truly innocent...

Or his contract was so strong that a low-tier Saint Candidate like Emilia couldn't detect it.

At that moment, I smiled.

It had to be the latter.

Feyrith was most likely the leader of the contracted students within the temple—the same role Frey held in the original events.

But I couldn't be certain just yet.

Rising from my seat, I turned to leave.

Emilia was still mumbling to herself when she noticed.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm heading out. Eat as much as you want—the bill's on me."

I waved at her before making my way outside.

After settling the payment, I stepped out into the night.

It was already late, so I quickly returned to my room.

Time was running out, so I pulled up my Quest List, hoping to find new missions to help me reach the 10,000 Achievement Points I needed.

But when I checked the list, I was utterly dumbfounded.

[Side Quest]

Kiss one of the Elite Class girls. The reward increases depending on the girl in question.

...

Was this system seriously giving me a quest like this?

A kiss? What was this, some kind of high school romance story?

I sighed, mulling it over.

Honestly, the difficulty of this quest depended entirely on who I chose.

If I went with someone like Adriana, I could probably get away with it—though the reward wouldn't be much.

But if I attempted it with Seris or Sansa...

I didn't even want to think about the consequences.

For now, I'd keep this mission as a last resort and focus on defeating Ghost instead.

He was the only one left, and he had already given me 750 points after all.

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I couldn't sleep that night, so I found myself heading to the Dueling Grounds.

To my surprise, I wasn't alone.

Clana Starlight was there, along with a few students from Class A... and Feyrith himself.

It suddenly made sense why the training grounds were always empty when I came. I had only ever visited them in the mornings.

Training in a crowded space was annoying—but perhaps this was a good opportunity to observe Feyrith up close.

Grabbing a training sword, I walked toward one of the dummies and started practicing.

I focused on my movements, ignoring the people around me.

But for some reason...

A strange chill crept down my spine that night.