

VILLAIN 74

Chapter 74 A Battle to the Death (2)

Sansa was panting, struggling to recover from the relentless battle.

Feyrith, adjusting to his monstrous form, barely managed to string together proper sentences.

But then, his expression twisted when he looked at me.

He grabbed me by the hair, lifting me up with burning rage in his eyes.

"You... Tell me, what the hell is so funny?"

Even with my bloodied face, my smile never wavered.

Sansa was just as confused.

Our loss was obvious.

But Feyrith couldn't accept it.

He kept shouting, spitting his frustration in my face.

"Answer me, damn it! Look!"

He pointed at himself, still screaming.

"All those brilliant attacks of yours? Already healed. Your strength? It's been fading since the start, and yet you still failed to kill me. Unlike you, I grow stronger with every passing second!"

"That sword you take so much pride in? It did nothing! Against the blessing granted to me by the High Devil Astaroth... you are NOTHING!"

He wasn't wrong.

An awakened Rank A was beyond me—even with Balerion.

I could hold my own in brief skirmishes...

But a fight to the death?

Impossible.

"You knew all of this already... So tell me—why the hell are you still laughing?"

"Heh... Man, I already told you..."

I took a deep breath, summoning the last remnants of my strength.

"You talk too much."

In an instant, I broke free from his grip, shifting into my stance.

Balerion swung back, ready to unleash one final, all-or-nothing strike.

"Ten Thousand Steps of Shadow: Infinite Darkness."

Feyrith's world was swallowed by shadow as my devastating slash tore through him—along with the coliseum behind him.

My hands trembled violently. If not for Balerion merging with me, I would have dropped it.

That was my last attack.

I still had an endless reserve of aura inside me... but my body had reached its limit.

In front of me, Feyrith lay amidst the rubble, a massive wound stretching from his neck to his abdomen.

If I had been just a little stronger... I could have cleaved him in half.

But fate was cruel.

I watched as his flesh pulled itself back together, his organs slowly realigning, black runes pulsating across his body.

His regeneration had slowed to a crawl—but I could no longer take advantage of it.

"Haha... Look at you, Feyrith. Even with all that power, you're still lying at my feet... Pathetic."

Slowly, he rose again, his wound still struggling to close.

"Let's see how long you keep laughing..."

A massive, blood-red blade formed in his grasp.

It was so large that he had to drag it behind him as he approached.

With his half-severed neck and blood-soaked body, he looked more monstrous than ever.

"So, what now, Frey Starlight? Another hidden technique? A trump card? What's your next move?"

I simply raised both hands.

"Now? I surrender."

Silence.

Both Feyrith and Sansa stared at me, dumbfounded.

"Why so surprised? Isn't this the perfect time?"

"What the—"

Feyrith started to speak, but I cut him off.

"Not you. I wasn't talking to you."

At that moment, Feyrith's shadow deepened.

And from within it, a figure emerged.

Dark serpents of shadow writhed around him, and in his hands—two terrifying daggers, completely consumed by the power of darkness.

With a single slash of his daggers, Ghost sent Feyrith's head soaring through the air—his body finally succumbing to the damage I had inflicted.

"Huh?"

As his severed head spun midair, Feyrith's mind struggled to process what had just happened.

Memories flooded his consciousness—his life, the choices that led him here, the moment everything spiraled out of control.

He didn't even know where Ghost had come from.

Didn't see him move.

Didn't understand how his head had separated from his body.

Lying on the cold ground, his fading gaze landed on a familiar figure.

"San... sa..."

And with that, life drained from his eyes.

I collapsed onto the ground, struggling to catch my breath.

"Damn... if that hadn't worked, I have no idea what I would've done."

This had been my last resort.

From the start, I knew I couldn't defeat Feyrith—not as I was. He was simply stronger.

But I wasn't alone.

We weren't just a Swordsman and a Wave Controller... We had an Assassin.

Ghost had been lurking in Feyrith's shadow all along, waiting for the perfect moment—the moment I had created for him.

If given the right setup, Ghost was unstoppable.

My role was simple: weaken Feyrith enough for him to land the killing blow.

And now... it was over.

Everyone lay on the ground, exhausted, except for Ghost.

He stood still, eyes locked on Feyrith's mutilated corpse. Then, he turned—his gaze shifting to my left hand.

Or rather... to Balerion.

At that moment, my sword faded into its tattooed form.

I placed a finger over my lips.

"Let's keep this between us, yeah?"

Ghost nodded before stepping forward to help me up.

"Didn't expect you to pick up on my signal."

"How could I not? With the amount of killing intent you were throwing at me?"

"You're sharper than you look, Frey Starlight."

I dropped down beside the princess, who was barely clinging to consciousness.

Ghost, noticing her condition, pulled out a few healing potions.

Both Sansa and I drank eagerly, our bodies mending at a visible rate.

Finally, she managed to speak.

She turned to me, exhaustion written all over her face.

"Thank you, Frey... for saving me... for everything."

I hated hearing those words.

I waved her off quickly.

"No need to thank me. I wasn't the only one who saved you—we took him down together."

"But—"

"No 'buts'... Oh, and if you're really grateful, forget what you saw here. I mean this."

I tapped the tattoo on my hand.

Sansa nodded immediately.

"Good. Then we're all set."

The distant roar of explosions continued, shaking the ground above us—the battle outside was still raging.

"Things aren't looking great up there."

Hearing Ghost's remark, I tilted my head back before refocusing on him.

"What's your plan?"

"I'm heading up. My brother needs me. What about you?"

I gestured toward Sansa.

"I've got unfinished business. Can I count on you to watch over the princess?"

"I don't need protection."

Sansa scowled, but I simply chuckled and pressed a finger against her side.

"Drop the act. Your wounds may be healed, but your strength hasn't recovered. That's the price of burning through your aura reserves."

Both Sansa and Ghost shot me strange looks.

Because, of course, the same logic applied to me.

"Don't give me that look. I can still fight for a while before I'm done."

"Frey... Are you sure you're not a hidden Contractor yourself?"

Ignoring the question, I raised my fist toward Ghost.

"Forget that. Ghost, how about a round of rock-paper-scissors?"

What followed was Ghost and Sansa's reaction—their faces twisting in confusion.