



# SHADOW ASCENSION

Ace Og





The city skyline glows with the last light of dusk, but a terrifying phenomenon dominates the sky. Cracks of jagged violet lightning tear across the heavens, revealing a swirling, dark abyss through a floating rift. This ominous gateway marks the beginning of an era, having first appeared a decade ago.



Below the menacing sky, brave hunters engage in desperate combat against monstrous beasts pouring from a shimmering portal. Explosions of fire magic light up the night, while sharp ice spears pierce through the air, showcasing the diverse powers some individuals awakened to protect their world. Many, however, remained ordinary, unable to fight back against the encroaching darkness.



Amidst the chaos, Kael Viren, easily identified by the F-Rank patch on his worn jacket, stands apart. He hangs his head, silent and dejected, as the harsh laughter and cruel words of other hunters echo around him. "Why is he even here?" one scoffs, while another remarks, "He's weaker than a civilian." Kael is known as the weakest hunter alive, a title that burdens him deeply.



Deep within a low-rank dungeon, the air is thick with the scent of damp stone, illuminated by the flickering glow of ancient torches. Kael and his team navigate the dim corridors, their leader reassuring them, "This is supposed to be easy. Stay sharp." However, their path soon leads to an unexpected sight: a massive stone door at the hall's end, covered in an intricate network of glowing ancient runes. A Hunter Mage voices their growing unease, noting, "This... wasn't on the map."



With a deep, ominous creak, the colossal stone door slowly grinds open, revealing the hidden chamber beyond. Inside, gigantic statues of armored knights stand guard, their forms imposing and ancient. Their eyes are dark and vacant, but their colossal weapons are ominously raised, hinting at a forgotten power now reawakened.



Suddenly, the statues' eyes ignite with a terrifying crimson glow, shattering the eerie silence. A hunter's scream pierces the air as chaos erupts, blades slicing through stone and the air filling with the sound of violent impacts. Massive swords crash down, and the stone floor splatters as hunters fall, overwhelmed by the reanimated guardians.



Amidst the brutal onslaught, Kael lies injured, desperately crawling away from the carnage, his body trembling. He watches in horror as his teammates are cut down, one after another, their efforts futile against the awakened statues. A chilling thought echoes in his mind: "I'm going to die... again... useless."



As a gigantic statue looms over Kael, its massive sword descending for the final blow, time itself abruptly halts. Everything freezes mid-motion, caught in an unnatural stillness. The world darkens for a moment, then a stark blue text materializes in the void: "SYSTEM INITIALIZING..."



A vibrant blue holographic window flickers into existence directly before Kael, its ethereal glow illuminating his terrified face. The message displayed is clear and momentous: "You have met the requirements. Would you like to become a Player?" Below, two options shimmer, [YES] and [NO]. With a trembling hand, Kael reaches out and presses the 'YES' option.



A blinding, radiant light erupts from Kael, engulfing him completely, and the descending statue sword shatters into countless fragments before it can even touch him. A new system screen appears, announcing, "Daily Quest Unlocked: Survive. Reward: Strength +5." Kael slowly rises, his eyes now glowing with a faint violet light, and a dark, ethereal mist begins to coil around his form like nascent wings. The few surviving hunters stare in stunned disbelief, one whispering, "His mana... it's rising?!" The weakest hunter has finally begun his extraordinary journey of leveling up.