Kill the Sun

Chapter 1: Nick

"You should kill yourself."

lled with oily pipes, electrical wires, and broken walls, a young man sat on the ground with his back Inside a dirty alleyway to the wall.

His head was lowered as he lifelessly stared at the ground visible between his legs.

The sun was positioned in the middle of the sky, perfectly above this boy. Because of that, the alleyway was brightly lit.

"I know that it comes as a bit of a shock, but I genuinely think the best course of action for you in this situation would be to kill yourself."

The boy didn't lift his head as he heard these words.

At this moment, a dirty and disheveled rat was sitting on top of a small rusty box made of metal. The rat was lightly scratching its snout as it looked with widely opened eyes at the boy, trying to establish eye contact.

"Listen," the rat said as it jumped down from the box and slowly walked towards the boy. "We all know what happened. It's not like I'm suggesting suicide without a logical basis, you know?"

As the rat came closer, the boy's eyes suddenly gained life, and he looked at the rat with intensity.

The rat's eyes widened, and it went on its hind legs as it slowly retreated. "Calm down, Nick. I'm not going to hurt you," it said with a nervous smile as it stopped retreating. "Look at me. I'm just a rat. How am I supposed to hurt someone that managed to get through the Zephyx Extractor Exam?"

The boy, Nick, looked back at the ground.

When Nick just lifelessly looked at the ground like that, he looked like a frail homeless person, but when he just looked at the rat, his entire demeanor changed.

In fact, Nick's body was anything but frail. While he wasn't very bulky, his muscles were pretty de ned, which wasn't surprising, considering that he had trained for the last four years in hopes of nally getting out of the Dregs.

"Hey, Nick," the rat said, not daring to get any closer. "I know that you're still holding onto some hope, but we both know that believing in this ckle light of hope is just delusional."

The rat slowly moved around Nick's body, but it didn't dare to get too close to his body. "Over the last four years, you worked so hard on yourself. You trained every day, and you even committed some terrible acts just to avoid paying the Blood Tax."

"You didn't want to do these things, but you still did them. Why? Because you saw a way out of the Dregs."

"And you did it! You managed to get a spot in the Zephyx Extractor Exam for Ghosty's Lab, and you even managed to pass it!" the rat said with a lot of enthusiasm.

And then, the rat just sighed. "But your Zephyx Synchronizer was already attuned to a Specter. You managed to pass the exam, but Ghosty's Lab can't use a Zephyx Extractor with an already synchronized Zephyx Synchronizer."

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"And you know that they are not the only ones," the rat said as it stopped on Nick's right side. "No Zephyx Manufacturer will hire you like this. You know as well as I that all the companies have speci c Specters for their Extractors. Without the abilities from these Specters, you will either die very quickly or will cost the company more money than you bring in."

"So, what now?" the rat asked, looking at Nick with a sympathetic expression. "What's the plan now?"

"You don't have an education."

"You don't have contacts."

"You don't have a place to live."

"You don't even remember anything from before you were ten."

"You can't even join the gangs or any of their businesses since you vehemently refused to pay them their fees."

"There's no way out."

"Are you willing to continue living like this?" the rat asked with a sad and pained voice.

"I don't want to see you go through so much pain every day."

"Just stop."

The rat was carefully and slowly moving toward Nick.

As the rat moved closer to Nick, several pairs of eyes appeared behind the dark sewer grates in the alley.

They were watching everything with excitement.

Nick just continued looking at the ground.

"Don't you just want to rest?" the rat asked as it very carefully moved forward. "Every day, you sleep with one eye open, fearing that something or someone will attack you."

"You don't even have a single friend or family member."

"What's the point of ghting?"

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"What's the point of living like this?"

"And now, even your last hope is gone."

The rat looked with a sympathetic gaze at Nick.

"Trust me. I've talked to millions of people, and I know a hopeless situation when I see one."

"I can make it quick and painless. If you want, I can even pay special attention to some people you dislike."

"At least, like this, you can go out on your own terms instead of just starving to death."

"Your death would actually have a purpose."

The rat managed to get so close to Nick that it could even touch his leg.

The rats behind the sewer grates slowly and carefully stepped out, but they still remained at a great distance.

It was important not to induce a ght or ight response in their target. Adrenaline can bring momentary life to the black hole inside the chest of a suffering person.

This had to be done methodically, slowly, and carefully.

"Just lay down, okay?" the rat said slowly. "I am going to lightly touch your leg now. Don't be afraid. I won't do anything."

The rat slowly extended its claw to touch Nick's leg.

BANG!

st hit the rat, turning it into a bloody paste. A powerful

An instant later, all the other rats ed back into the sewer.

Silence.

The st unclenched and took hold of the smashed rat.

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Ithy, old, and disgusting brown sack and put the rat into it. Then, he took out a

A moment later, Nick straightened his back and took a deep breath.

"This sucks," he said, his voice a bit deeper than the average man's.

But then, a small smile formed on his lips as he lifted the dirty brown sack.

"But at least dinner is secured."

Suddenly, Nick's eyes narrowed as he shot up to his feet.

He glared down one of the alleyway's exits.

Just now, a muscular man wearing a black coat and black hat had appeared near that exit.

At this moment, Nick could see a mysterious smirk adorning the man's lips as he looked at Nick with amusement.

"What do you want?" Nick asked with a harsh and threatening voice.

Nick had seen many people, and he knew that someone that was acting like this wasn't up to anything good.

"I don't buy drugs, miracle cures, Specters, Zephyx, or whatever you have to sell," Nick said.

A moment later, Nick's eyes widened a bit, and he put the brown sack behind him. "I'm also not selling you the rat!"

The man looked slightly taken aback, but he started chuckling in amusement.

"Your rat? You think I'm after your rat?" he asked with a smirk.

Nick eyed the man suspiciously. "I'm not buying anything! Also, it's rude to enter someone's home unannounced."

"Home?" the man repeated in confusion as he looked around the alleyway.

After looking for a bit, the man saw a small shack made of bits and pieces of discarded and rusty metal.

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The man took a deep breath and sighed before his black hat vanished, revealing his handsome face.

There were a couple of covert wrinkles on the man's forehead, and Nick could also see a couple of individual grey hairs among his usual black hair.

The man just chuckled a bit. "You asked me what I wanted," he repeated.

"Well, you could call me a scholar," the man said with a smile as he looked at Nick. "I study Specters. More speci powers Specters can bestow to humans."

"I said I'm not buying anything!" Nick shouted.

The man took another deep breath and released a sigh.

"I am a consultant to many Zephyx Manufacturers, and Ghosty's Lab is one of them," the man said as he slowly lifted his right index nger.

The next moment, a ball of bloody tools made of metal materialized above his nger. The tools were rapidly circling above the man's nger.

When Nick saw that, his jaw nearly hit the oor, and his eyes shone.

"You're a Zephyx Extractor?!" he asked in shock.

The man chuckled. "In the past," he said as the tools vanished again. "Nowadays, I am just a researcher."

Nick still looked with wonder at the man.

A Zephyx Extractor!

Nick gulped.

"Okay," he slowly said. "So, what do you have to sell?"

The man snorted in amusement. "I'm not here to sell anything."

"I'm here because my friend at Ghosty's Lab contacted me. They don't know what kind of power you've attained or from which Specter it comes. My friend knows that I am interested in these things, which was why he told me about you."

Nick became nervous when he heard that.

cally, the

That sounded like some evil experimentation stuff!

When the man saw Nick's apprehensive expression, he nearly groaned.

"I'm not here to hurt you!" the man half-shouted with annoyance. "I'm just here to look at how your powers work. I will even refer you to some Zephyx Manufacturers if your power proves to be useful!"

"This is a good thing for you!"

Nick was taken aback, but his expression quickly morphed into one of skepticism.

Help?

A good thing?

In the Dregs?

Not even children would believe that!

"And what do you want in exchange?" Nick asked.

"In exchange?" the man repeated. "Do you even have anything that can interest me?"

Nick struggled to think of something.

"Nothing in this world is free," Nick said with suspicion. "Something advertised as free will very quickly turn into something that's not free after some time."

The man's expression turned deadpan. "Oh my fucking god," he said in exasperation.

Suddenly, the man appeared in front of Nick.

BANG!

The man hit Nick's head, and Nick fell to the side, unconscious.

"Is it so hard to accept that someone just wants to help you?!"

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Silence.

The man took another deep breath and sighed.

SHING!

The bloody tools from earlier appeared in front of him.

"Now, let's see what kind of power you have."