

Kill the Sun

Chapter 11: Where to Start?

Nick had no idea where to start.

Everything had been prepared, and now, they only needed a Specter.

But where could they even get a Specter from?

The big Zephyx Manufacturers had several people searching for Specters at any given time while Nick was basically alone.

Sure, there was also Wyntor, but it wasn't his job to find and capture Specters.

'Should I search for a Specter with minions? I mean, I know about the Blood Mosquito and the Parasite, but both of them are too powerful.'

'Wait, do weak Specters even have minions, or does that require a lot more power?'

Nick just scratched the back of his head as he stood in front of the warehouse.

'There are three kinds of Specters, and I can't even attempt to get any Force Specters. That only leaves Possession Specters and Physical Specters.'

'I really doubt that I would easily find a Possession Specter since the Zephyx Manufacturers love those. At least, that was what Wyntor said.'

'That means I have to find a Physical Specter.'

'But where?'

Nick scratched the side of his head.

'I mean, I heard the outside is basically filled with Specters, but everybody knows that the outside is extremely dangerous. Level two Specters are already able to damage the walls of the Containment Unit, while I can't even make a dent in them. Obviously, level three Specters would be even more powerful.'

'I don't think going outside of the city would be a smart idea.'

Nick sighed.

'Guess that means I'm stuck searching for a Physical Specter inside the city.'

Nick still scratched the side of his head.

The next moment, he turned towards the direction of the Dregs.

'Maybe I should just start asking around?'

After a couple of seconds, Nick just shrugged and walked towards the Dregs.

'Sure, why not?'

Wyntor looked through one of the windows at Nick, who was walking away.

'I hope he finds one,' Wyntor thought with furrowed brows.

'And I also hope the one he finds isn't too strong.'

After a while, Nick's surroundings became dirtier and dirtier, making him feel like he had come back home.

The Outer City had been a bit too clean for Nick.

It almost felt unnatural.

Eventually, Nick reached the marketplace where he had sat for months with his sign.

Today was not tax day, which meant that the marketplace was quite normal.

People were talking with each other but still keeping a safe distance.

After all, everyone could potentially be dangerous in the Dregs.

Nick scratched the side of his head again.

Eventually, someone just so happened to meet Nick's eyes, and Nick walked towards them.

The person Nick was walking to was a thin adult man who seemed like he regretted accidentally meeting Nick's eyes right now.

"Hey!" Nick said with a friendly tone. "I'm searching for a Specter."

Near the beginning, the man seemed annoyed and uninterested, but when he heard the word Specter, he became nervous.

"A Specter? Which one?!" he asked with worry.

"Ehm, I don't really know?" Nick said with uncertainty.

This confused the man. "What? But you just said you were searching for one!"

"I mean, yeah," Nick answered with an awkward laugh. "You see, I am a new Zephyx Extractor, and I'm searching for my first Specter, you know?"

When the man heard that, he calmed down a bit, but then, he became angry.

"Then stop talking like you lost a Specter! I thought I was in danger or something!" he shouted.

"Yes, yes, sorry and stuff," Nick said as he tried to sound nice. "So, you got any hints?"

"No," the man answered with annoyance, "and even if I had any, why would I give them to you? I would just tell the Investigators. At least they would give me enough money for the next couple of payments."

Nick could only sigh.

The Investigators were people who worked for Zephyx Manufacturers, and their job was to find clues about Specters.

Naturally, a couple of Zephyx Manufacturers had already opened some kind of service point where the residents of the city could give them clues regarding Specters.

And Nick?

What did Nick have to offer?

Literally nothing.

"Thanks anyway," Nick said with a sigh.

The man snorted when he heard Nick. Apparently, he was still a bit angry about the scare Nick had given him.

Nick left the man behind and went to a clerk from one of the stalls.

That clerk basically said the same thing.

He was annoyed that Nick was wasting his time with useless talk and told Nick that he would just go to the Investigators if he had some clues.

After asking a couple more people, Nick realized that there was really basically nothing he could gain from talking to the people.

They would all just contact the Investigators because of the money.

Sure, Nick could probably ask Wyntor for some money to pay the people, but how many people would actually trust Nick's words, and more importantly, how many of the clues would actually lead to Specters?

After over two hours of asking around, Nick still hadn't found a clue regarding a Specter.

Eventually, Nick just decided to patrol.

The people were of no help anyway.

Nick walked through several small and remote alleyways, and the floor became more and more unstable.

The Dregs were way too big for the number of people that lived here.

The issue was the amount of money in circulation and the available food.

Theoretically, if two people lived in one house, just this part of the Dregs could hold over 10,000 people.

Yet, there were barely 2,000.

Because of that, there were plenty of abandoned places in the Dregs.

Usually, there was no point in going there.

Everything worthwhile had already been looted and stolen, while Specters hunted humans, which meant that they were also more likely to be amongst humans.

And the abandoned Dregs basically didn't have any humans.

Yet, Nick was already out of options, and this was the best thing he could do right now.

Maybe a Specter had its nest and hiding place in the abandoned parts and only went amongst humans when they were hungry?

"Hey."

When Nick heard that voice, his brows furrowed.

"What do you want?" Nick asked in annoyance as he looked at one of the broken plates of rusty metal.

A moment later, the small head of a rat poked out of a hole in the plate.

"I heard you were searching for a weak Specter," the rat said with a grin.

"I am," Nick said.

Naturally, Nick knew exactly who he was talking to right now.

The Parasite.

The Specter that tried to convince him to kill himself.

"I know of a couple," the rat said with a chuckle. "Interested?"

Nick raised one of his eyebrows.

"I am," he said after some hesitation.

"Alright," the rat said with a grin.

"I want five bodies."

"Bring me five bodies that have not been killed by Nurse Alice, and I will tell you where you can find a fitting one."

Chapter 12: Morals

Nick scratched his chin for a bit.

The rat looked with interest at Nick.

"Not interested," Nick said after a bit.

"Oh, come on," the rat shouted, but it still didn't dare to leave its little hole. "It's just five bodies! You don't even need to kill them yourself!"

"No, killing is forbidden," Nick answered.

"So?" the rat asked. "Who cares?"

"I do," Nick said. "I am a real Zephyx Extractor now. I can't do such shady stuff."

The rat blinked very slowly.

"What?" it asked in a disbelieving and deadpan voice. "Extractors kill the most people. They can basically kill whoever they want. They just need to pay a fine for it."

Nick scratched the back of his head. "I mean, I get it, but I don't like it."

"It feels dirty."

The rat looked like it couldn't believe what Nick was saying.

"What are you talking about? I literally saw you kill that guy from the Insurance Gang and dump his body in the ruins!" the rat shouted.

"Ruins?" Nick asked.

"The sewers! The stuff below the grates you're walking on!" the rat shouted with annoyance.

"Oh, that," Nick said. "Yeah, I killed him, but that was because he was trying to collect information on me. It was self-defense."

"Self-defense? The guy was just looking at your house! You punched his face in before he could even do anything!"

"Yeah, like I said, self-defense!" Nick answered with annoyance. "He went against me, and I answered in kind."

The rat scratched on the grate below it with annoyance. "Okay, fine! It was self-defense! Then, go out and make some enemies and self-defend yourself into five corpses!"

"No," Nick answered.

Silence.

"Why?" the rat asked.

"I don't want to kill people that haven't done anything to me."

"I have morals, you know!" Nick shouted with a serious tone.

"Morals," the rat repeated with annoyance.

"Yes, morals," Nick answered.

"Okay," the rat said. "Then go purchase five corpses or something. Your employer looks like he has money."

"Can't," Nick answered. "We are not allowed to keep the corpses."

"Also, I heard that the entire city is basically looking for you, and if anyone found out that I purchased some corpses to hand them to you, the city would probably kill me."

The rat took a deep breath.

"Okay, okay," it said. "Anyway, my offer still stands. If you are ever interested in some information, just give me some corpses. I don't care where they come from. As long as they are human and have not been killed by Nurse Alice, I am fine with any."

"Anyway, good luck finding a Specter without me," the rat said with a snort before it vanished back into its hole.

When Nick heard that, he furrowed his brows again and scratched the back of his head.

He really didn't like his current situation.

Just now, the Parasite had given him a chance to find a Specter, but he had declined.

In the end, Nick could only sigh and accept his circumstances.

Of course, as someone who had lived in the Dregs for his entire life, Nick was a very practical person.

Naturally, he had considered the Parasite's offer seriously.

However, no matter how he reasoned with himself, Nick just couldn't accept helping the Parasite.

The Parasite was a Specter that killed a great number of humans.

Essentially, it was preying on the weak.

Over the years, Nick had looked at the huge pyramid that symbolized the Inner City countless times, and whenever he saw the difference between it and the Dregs, he felt very similar.

Just based on how the tax system worked, Nick could tell that the rich Zephyx Manufacturers in the Inner City were preying on the weak and poor people of the Dregs.

This created a certain hatred for people who preyed on weaker ones.

If everyone could just give a little of their belongings, there wouldn't be so many dying people in the Dregs.

Naturally, Nick knew that this was a very naïve ideology. Something like this would never happen.

Yet, even if the ideology was naïve, it was still what Nick wished for.

Nick couldn't change the world, but he could live his own life after his own standards, at least.

And Nick wouldn't take advantage of the weak people.

Taking advantage of the ones in power, like the Gangs, sure, but not of the weak ones.

Would it be easier to just accept how the world was and go with the flow?

Of course.

'But I don't need things to be easy,' Nick thought. 'I'm strong enough to have morals.'

Nevertheless, Nick threw one last glance at the hole where the rat had just been.

He felt a bit of regret.

Someone with Nick's knowledge and strength could probably find five corpses without being found.

But in the end, Nick just couldn't do it.

So, Nick just continued walking through the alleyways.

Eventually, the metal below Nick's feet became so unstable that he had to stop.

By now, Nick was pretty close to the huge wall around the city.

Rows upon rows of silver cameras lined the top of the walls, and they were looking in and out of the city.

Naturally, several cameras were also pointing at Nick at the moment.

However, that wasn't anything unusual.

After a bit, Nick just turned around and left this part of the Dregs again.

Nick looked for a different abandoned part and continued his search there.

Hours passed.

Still nothing.

Nick returned home, ate something, and went to bed.

The next day, he continued searching.

Nothing.

The next day, he went and talked to different people all day.

Nobody had anything of value to say.

Nick also met an Investigator that day, who only laughed at Nick.

The Investigators had already found out that Nick was searching for Specters, and apparently, Nick had become a joke within their ranks.

They found it quite hilarious that some unknown guy from the Dregs was searching for Specters while he was up against several huge companies with hundreds of employees.

Nick didn't talk to the Investigator.

Another day passed.

Another day passed.

Another day passed.

Nothing.

Nick found absolutely nothing.

Yet, Nick didn't give up.

He still continued searching.

There had to be something, somewhere!

If Nick didn't find something, his future would become grey and empty again!

Nick wanted to make something of his life, and for that to happen, he needed to find something.

He wouldn't give up!

No matter how long it took!

Chapter 13: Job Offer

Nick kept going to the marketplace and asking people for several days.

By now, many people were already telling him that they knew nothing before he could even ask his questions.

Constantly getting rejected by everyone didn't feel great, but Nick knew that he had to keep at it.

There had to be some weak Specters somewhere in the city.

Of course, the Inspectors also kept ridiculing Nick.

Yet, Nick never truly reacted to the ridicule.

He just kept on asking around and searching.

Ten days after Nick had started searching, some small things started to change.

The people had assumed a more neutral stance instead of directly telling Nick to go away.

On top of that, the Inspectors actually stopped making fun of Nick.

The reason for that was that the Inspectors were actually a bit impressed by Nick's grit.

Not many people could continue doing something after getting shut down by literally everyone around them.

Another two days later, one of the Inspectors actually stopped in front of Nick.

It was a middle-aged man with black hair and a goatee.

His build could be described as athletic. He wasn't thin, but he also wasn't fat.

"Nick, right?" the Inspector asked.

Nick just furrowed his brows and walked past the Inspector.

"Hey, wait a minute! I'm not here to ridicule you," the Inspector shouted.

Nick turned around and looked at the Inspector with a raised eyebrow.

"I've heard from my people that you have been searching for a Specter for about two weeks," the Inspector said. "They are talking quite a lot about you. Near the beginning, it was mostly jokes and ridicule, but by now, quite a few of them actually admire your tenacity."

Nick just nodded. "Thanks. Is there anything else?"

The eyebrows of the Inspector rose, but the next second, he just chuckled a bit in amusement. "So curt and off-putting. Well, you are from the Dregs, after all."

Nick didn't like the condescending tone of the Inspector and just turned around to walk away.

The Inspector just chuckled a bit.

"Want a job?"

Nick stopped walking, and his brows furrowed as he turned back to look at the Inspector. "A job?"

"Yes, as an Inspector," the Inspector said. "Even though you don't know the nuances of finding clues of Specters, your tenacity and grit are commendable."

"Teaching someone how to do something isn't difficult. Teaching them how to gain tenacity and grit is."

"I'm offering you a position as an Inspector in my team," the man said. "Interested?"

Naturally, Nick was interested.

Sure, he had already signed a contract with Wyntor Melfion, but his relationship with Wyntor was strictly business.

"I already have an attuned Zephyx Synchronizer. Is there a way for me to become a Zephyx Extractor in the future?" Nick asked.

The Inspector's eyes rose, and he looked at Nick again.

Only now did the Inspector take conscious note of Nick's formidable muscles.

He had heard that Nick was a new Zephyx Extractor, but after looking more closely at the business Nick was in, the Inspector could just shake his head.

There were only two people in there, and one of them was Nick.

They didn't even have a Specter.

In essence, Nick wasn't even an official Zephyx Extractor at this point. After all, he hadn't extracted even one unit of Zephyx.

There were several people in the Dregs with attuned Zephyx Synchronizers. There were not many, but there were definitely over ten.

It wasn't unusual for someone to come into contact with a Specter.

Yet, none of these people could become actual Zephyx Extractors.

It took way more than just that.

So, the Inspector hadn't considered Nick special.

But after meeting Nick face to face, the Inspector realized that Nick actually didn't seem weak.

He had tenacity, a strong body, guts, and willpower.

He could actually become a Zephyx Extractor.

Sadly...

The Inspector could only sigh. "While it happens occasionally, Inspectors don't often become Extractors, and the few ones that do don't have attuned Synchronizers."

"I can't make the decision on that, but based on my personal experience, I would say the chances are very low."

"Sorry."

Nick furrowed his brows and looked at the ground.

Even though Nick had just essentially heard that he wouldn't become a Zephyx Extractor, he was still a bit tempted to accept the offer.

What was Nick's goal in life?

Right now, Nick only wanted to have a nice future.

He didn't want to worry about money.

He didn't want to constantly be on guard because somebody might break into his house to kill him.

Nick just wanted an easier and more colorful life.

Nick knew that an Inspector didn't come close to an Extractor in terms of payment and status, but it was a solid job, at least.

That was something that no one living in the Dregs could claim to have.

While the lowest-ranking Inspectors didn't live in the Inner City, they definitely could live in the actual Outer City.

Normal houses.

Normal food.

Normal work.

It was already a major step up from living in the Dregs.

And yet...

"I'm sorry," Nick said with a sigh. "I can't accept."

"Can you tell me why?" the Inspector asked.

"I don't exactly know why," Nick answered. "I only know that I want to give life my best shot."

"I actually want to see if I can capture a Specter and become a real Zephyx Extractor."

"If I don't try, I will forever regret it."

"And if I fail, I can still accept, right? It's not like this is only a one-time offer," Nick explained.

The Inspector sighed. "No, it isn't. Naturally, if you want the position, just tell any of the local Inspectors."

Nick nodded. "Then, thank you for the offer and for understanding. I'm genuinely sorry that I can't accept at this moment."

The Inspector nodded. "No problem," he said.

"Then, have a good one," Nick said as he turned around to walk away.

As the Inspector watched Nick turn around, he seemed to struggle with something.

It was like an inner conflict was currently taking place in the Inspector's mind.

For a while, the Inspector just looked at Nick.

When he saw Nick walk up to a person he had already asked twice in the last ten days, the Inspector sighed again.

"Nick, come over here," he said, waving Nick over.

Nick stopped and looked back at the Inspector.

After a bit, Nick turned around and walked up to the Inspector.

"Yes?" he asked.

The Inspector scratched the side of his head with a bitter smile.

"How important is this to you?" the Inspector asked.

Nick furrowed his brows. "Pretty important. It's my life, you know?"

"How good are you in dark places?" the Inspector asked.

Nick looked to the side.

The Nightmare, one of the five level nine Specters, was omnipresent, and whenever anyone entered a dark place, the Nightmare would start to poison their minds with doubt, hatred, anger, and all manners of negative emotions.

Everyone avoided the dark.

"It's difficult to resist," Nick answered.

"Can you survive for an hour without any major trauma?" the Inspector asked.

Nick furrowed his brows again.

He didn't answer for a while.

"Not sure."

The Inspector looked at Nick with concern for a couple of seconds.

But then, he sighed.

"I know where you can find a Specter."

"And it shouldn't be that powerful."

Chapter 14: The Dreamer

Nick and the Inspector walked to the side into an abandoned alleyway.

Nick was highly interested in what the Inspector had to say.

After nearly two weeks, Nick had finally found a clue!

When they arrived in the alleyway, Nick just nodded at the Inspector.

The Inspector looked around.

"I'm not supposed to tell you about this," the Inspector said. "Information regarding Specters is top secret."

"Why are you telling me?" Nick asked.

"Well, there are a couple of reasons."

"First, I feel like I should help you a bit. I kind of feel bad for you when I see you try this desperately to find a Specter."

"Two, the Specter isn't being hunted by the Manufacturers anyway. This means that nobody would really miss it."

"And third, I don't fully agree with my employer's goal," the Inspector explained.

"Their goal?" Nick asked.

The Inspector nodded. "There are many Specters that we know about but don't capture. There are multiple reasons for that."

"Sometimes, it's incredibly difficult to find the actual location of the Specters. The Parasite is a good example. The entire city is after the Parasite, but nobody managed to track it down."

"Another reason is that some of the Specters are incredibly difficult to contain, and it's even more difficult to keep them contained. While there are Containment Units that can keep some Force Specters contained, there are still some of them that can't be contained."

"For example, outside the city is a Specter we call the Swallowing Swamp. It's just a huge swamp that's several kilometers wide. In order to contain that, we would need to commit monumental amounts of resources to it, which wouldn't be worth it."

"Some Specters are also just too powerful. Nurse Alice is a great example."

"And then, there are Specters that are living in places that are too difficult to get to. The one I'm going to tell you about is part of that category."

Nick became quite interested. "Where is it?"

The Inspector pointed at the floor, or more specifically, at the darkness beyond the metal grates everyone was walking on.

"The sewers," the Inspector said.

Nick also looked at the ground.

Since the floor was essentially made of metallic grates, everyone could see and smell the sewers.

In a way, the sewers didn't really look like sewers.

In truth, just a couple of meters below the grates, there was just a sea of horrible and dirty water.

If anyone broke a grate and fell through, they would fall for about ten meters and then plummet into a deep pile of water filled with piss, shit, waste, garbage, and so on.

There were cases where some of the victims were rescued, but most of them died quickly.

In general, the people started to puke violently, which often made them accidentally swallow more of the water. This increased their panic, and they started to rapidly splash around.

Oftentimes, they hit some kind of old and rusty nail, which then cut them open.

Additionally, the Parasite's minions, the rats, often piled onto the victim.

Falling into the sewers was a terrifying death.

Even more, not all of the floor was made of grates. There were also plenty of places with plates instead of grates.

If one had exceptionally bad luck, one might fall into a dark part of the sewers.

At that point, the Nightmare's influence also attacked them.

"In the sewers?" Nick asked.

The Inspector nodded.

Nick's heart rate increased, and he had to take a deep breath.

"Where is it exactly?" Nick asked.

"Are you really willing to jump into the sewers?" the Inspector asked with concern.

Nick took another deep breath.

Nick imagined himself standing in front of a hole, looking at the murky and dark liquid below.

Just the stench would make a normal person retch.

Jumping into that...

The mental image was horrifying.

To be honest, Nick hesitated a while.

It wasn't easy to jump into something like that.

The only good thing was that nobody would be seeing Nick down there, which would allow him to keep his unique ability active.

This meant that drowning or getting pricked by a sharp piece of metal was no real concern.

Nick's body became five times as powerful when no one was looking. That also meant that the durability of his skin and muscles increased.

As long as he didn't ram into a metallic spike jutting out of a solid wall with all his force, Nick wouldn't get wounded.

The rats also weren't that big of a problem.

Yes, the Parasite had a lot of rats, but every rat was valuable.

The rats would be able to overwhelm Nick, but Nick would take many of them with him.

Nick was quite sure that it wouldn't be worth the trade.

So, while the sewers were incredibly disgusting and horrifying, they were not actually a danger to Nick.

However, two other things would still prove to be very dangerous.

One, the Specter itself, whatever it was.

No Specter was weak, and Nick needed to overwhelm the Specter, catch it, and bring it back to the surface.

Two, the darkness.

The sewers were dimly lit at best, and there were also many places that were completely dark.

The darker the place, the greater the Nightmare's influence.

The Nightmare's powers affected every single human in the world.

It didn't matter how strong someone was.

Whether they were a normal person or one of the most powerful Extractors in the world.

All of them were affected by the Nightmare equally.

Power didn't matter.

Only mental fortitude mattered.

Nick would need to resist the Nightmare's influence for a prolonged period of time while also actively searching for the Specter.

Nick only looked to the side.

'He said that the Specter should be on my level, which means it's a level one Specter.'

'For a level one Specter, someone has to jump into the sewers and resist the Nightmare's influence. I can imagine that it wouldn't be worth the effort.'

Nick remained silent for several seconds.

"You know," the Inspector said.

Nick looked back.

"Maybe I misrepresented my reasons for helping you a bit," the Inspector added.

"The reasons I mentioned earlier still hold true, but the order might not be the most accurate."

"The thing I'm actually most concerned about is the last reason."

Nick only looked at the Inspector.

"When we find such a Specter," the Inspector explained, "my employer makes a risk assessment. Is it worth to go after it? What are the dangers? What is the potential profit?"

"Since this is only a level one Specter, it obviously isn't worth it. Because of that, we are just going to ignore the Specter."

"That is until it becomes a level three Specter."

Nick narrowed his eyes.

"You're saying that they want the Specter to feed on the population of the Dregs until it becomes a level three Specter?" Nick asked.

The Inspector looked to the side.

"Well, my employer is a business, and all businesses are made for profit. When there is no profit to be gained, we don't get involved."

"My employer isn't letting the Specter live just so that it can become more powerful."

"My employer just doesn't get involved since it's not worth it."

"My employer is not responsible for keeping the city safe. It's a business, not a charity. It's not my employer's job to protect the people."

Nick's demeanor didn't improve. "And if your employer told the city about the Specter?"

The Inspector didn't immediately answer.

"The city might do something about it," the Inspector added.

"But they would need to pay quite a hefty sum in return."

"Also, maybe one day, the Specter might become profitable enough to catch."

Nick didn't need to hear more.

Naturally, the Inspector wasn't allowed to speak ill of his employer, which was why he was wording it this vaguely, but Nick basically got the gist.

The Inspector's employer was willing to feed people to the Specter until it grew more powerful.

And the Inspector didn't like that.

Which was why he was telling Nick about it.

Earlier, Nick had still been on the fence, but now, not anymore.

"I'm doing it," Nick said.

The Inspector looked into Nick's eyes for a while.

The Inspector saw that they were filled with a bit of fear but also a lot of conviction.

The Inspector took a deep breath.

"It's called the Dreamer."

Chapter 15: Jumping In

Nick and Wyntor stood in front of a destroyed street.

The Inspector had told Nick everything he knew about the Dreamer already, and Nick had also informed Wyntor.

As always, the sun was in the middle of the sky, and yet, the sea of toxic waste still seemed dark.

This part of the Dregs was abandoned, and the road had broken into many pieces, creating a sort of ramp towards the sewers.

Nick chose this spot since he also needed a place from where he could return.

At this moment, Wyntor was holding his nose with a white handkerchief, and he looked with disgust and concern at the dirty and grimy water.

The two of them looked at the disgusting water washing across the broken and lowered metal plates and grates for several seconds.

"And you're sure you want to accompany me?" Nick asked as he looked at Wyntor.

Wyntor didn't immediately answer.

"You really don't have to," Nick added. "As the Chief Zephyx Extractor, this is my job, not yours."

Wyntor just kept looking at the disgusting water.

He took several deep breaths.

Then, he started to retch and cough.

Yet, Wyntor kept looking at the dirty water.

A moment later, his legs shook a bit.

And finally, he sighed.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"It's fine," Nick said with a nod. "It's not your job."

"Nick, I'm really genuinely sorry," Wyntor added. "I honestly want to go with you, but I just can't."

"I don't have the courage."

"Sorry."

"It's fine, dude," Nick said with a bit of annoyance. "You can just stay here until I return. If I am accompanied by something that's attacking me, you can help me with that."

"I will," Wyntor answered with a nod.

After Nick had signed the NDA, Wyntor had also told Nick about his ability.

As one of the heirs to the Melfion family, Wyntor had received something to protect himself.

Wyntor's Zephyx Synchronizer was also already attuned to a Specter.

However, the ability the Specter gave people was not something that was very useful for a Zephyx Extractor.

It was basically only good for running away from someone.

Nevertheless, it was still very good at what it did.

While Wyntor couldn't capture any Specter on his own, he could still debilitate and weaken it.

Naturally, Wyntor had received that ability for two reasons.

First, his parents wanted Wyntor to have something that could protect him.

Second, they didn't want Wyntor to become a Zephyx Extractor, and the best way was for Wyntor's Synchronizer to already be occupied with a relatively useless ability for Extractors.

"If I see anything attacking you, I will immediately support you," Wyntor said with conviction.

Nick just nodded.

"Also, since I'm not accompanying you, I might as well give you these," Wyntor said as he took out three long tubes of glass.

Nick looked at them with furrowed brows. "What's that?"

"Arclight," Wyntor answered.

"And how will that help me?" Nick asked. "Everyone knows that artificial light sources don't help against the Nightmare."

"This is different," Wyntor said as he pointed at the three long tubes. "Each one is harvested from a level three Specter. They actually help against the Nightmare."

This surprised Nick quite a bit.

"Be careful with them," Wyntor added. "Each one costs around 10,000 credits, and they only work for a minute each."

"If you feel like you can't handle the Nightmare's influence anymore, just break one of them. An area of light will appear around you, but it will dissipate after around a minute."

"The Containment Unit and building already consumed most of my budget, and I can't afford more of these Arclights without jeopardizing our daily operations. Use them when necessary."

Nick looked at the three glass tubes with newfound appreciation and bound them to his thigh.

"Thanks," Nick said.

"Good," Wyntor said with a nod. "I hope everything turns out well for you."

"Thanks," Nick repeated.

Then, Nick took a deep breath.

At the same time, Wyntor turned around.

In order for Nick's powers to activate, Wyntor also wasn't allowed to see him.

For the next couple of seconds, Nick took several deep breaths.

Finally, Nick put on some diving goggles that Wyntor had bought him and jumped forward.

Nick could have just walked into the murky pool of water, but he feared that he would turn around if he came into contact with a bit of the liquid.

So, he decided to directly jump in.

SPLASH!

The splash was noticeably more lethargic and subdued compared to the typical splash of water.

It was just too viscous.

Thanks to his ability, Nick easily jumped forward for over five meters without needing a running start.

As soon as Nick touched the murky liquid, all his senses fired at the same time.

Nick felt several small pieces of cloth touch his skin.

He had also hit two small but solid objects, which were quickly pushed away by his body.

The next moment, Nick felt how incredibly sticky the liquid was.

In a way, it felt like the liquid was trying to trap him in place.

Some of the liquid went into Nick's ears and nose, and he had to do his best to resist the urge to vomit.

Disgusting.

All of Nick's body shouted at him that this was disgusting.

It was so bad.

However, instead of immediately panicking, Nick remained motionless in the liquid first.

He knew that he had to get acclimated.

Nick had already pulled his knees to his chest to make the surface area of his body as small as possible, but his body was still violently shaking.

He wanted to throw up so badly.

He just wanted to push his head above the surface and scream.

Yet, Nick just remained stationary.

For several seconds, Nick didn't move.

During these seconds, he felt several small pieces of cloth get caught by his body.

Finally, Nick slowly extended his body.

As he felt his chest and thighs come into contact with the liquid, his body shuddered again.

And then, Nick slowly swam upwards.

Splash!

Nick's head broke the surface, but he didn't immediately open his eyes. He knew that he was wearing diving goggles, but he had still closed his eyes.

Over the next seconds, Nick slowly opened his eyes as he looked upward.

Brown and green liquid was sparkling as the light of the sun shone through them.

Nick saw small pieces of bandages, and he even saw a couple of small pieces of bone on his diving goggles.

Piss, shit, bandages, bones, teeth, blood, rotten meat, insects, poisons, splinters, rusty metal, puke.

Together with water, all of that was creating the pool of liquid Nick was currently in.

A moment later, Nick slowly wiped his goggles, mouth, and nose clean.

Or, at least, as clean as he could.

Finally, Nick took a deep breath.

Surprisingly, the smell didn't feel as bad as before.

But that was the only positive thing.

"Nick, is everything alright?" Wyntor shouted, still turned away from Nick.

Nick took another deep breath.

"I'm fine," he answered.

"Good," Wyntor shouted back.

"I'm going to search now," Nick shouted.

"Good luck!" Wyntor shouted back.

The next moment, Nick took another deep breath.

And then, he swam forward, towards the endless depths of the sewers.