

Kill the Sun

Chapter 41: Quest for Food

"I might have a way to help you, but it won't be easy," Nick said with a thoughtful expression.

Horua opened his eyes widely in surprise. "You do?" he asked.

Nick nodded. "I mean, I'm the Chief Zephyx Extractor in a company, and we still need to optimize the Zephyx production of one of our Specters."

"Horua, would you be interested in becoming a Zephyx Extractor?" Nick asked.

Horua's eyes opened even more, but this time, with wonder.

"Me? A Zephyx Extractor?"

Nick nodded with a smile. "Why not?"

"But I just turned eleven," Horua said with a bit of nervousness.

Nick just laughed. "So? Why not start early? Even more, it's not even difficult to work with that Specter. You basically just have to fall asleep in its presence! Additionally, since your Zephyx Synchronizer hasn't been attuned yet, you should also get a nice ability from it."

"As long as you don't die, nothing bad can happen."

Horua looked at Nick like he couldn't believe what he had just heard. "Are you sure? Can I really become a Zephyx Extractor?"

"Of course," Nick said with a chuckle. "You will gain an ability, a stable job, and lots of money. You might not earn as much as me, but you will still earn more than everyone in the Dregs."

Horua started to jump up and down in excitement. "Thank you! Thank you so much! You're the best, Nick!"

Nick just laughed some more. He always enjoyed it when Horua was excited.

Due to Horua's bad situation, he was rarely happy.

Whenever Nick wasn't present, Horua was worried and stressed. He even had trouble sleeping due to all the pressure.

"Anyway, I apparently have three days of vacation for now, which means I can't take you there right now, but after my vacation is over, I'll take you to your future workplace."

"You're going to see a real Specter, Horua," Nick said with a laugh.

"Wow, a real Specter," Horua echoed in wonder.

The two of them talked some more, but a couple of minutes later, Nick left the house again.

Earlier, Nick had felt aimless. He hadn't known what he should do with his newfound freedom.

But now, that problem had been solved.

Nick could use his position to help one of his friends out.

'It feels good to do good deeds.'

'Now, since the problem with Horua has been solved, I should take a look at some houses in the Outer City!' Nick thought with excitement.

But before long, Nick stopped.

Grumble.

'You know, I'm actually quite hungry. I think I haven't eaten anything in like a day or so,' Nick thought.

'What do I want to eat today?'

'Rat?'

'Fly?'

'Some veggie cubes from the market? I can now buy a lot of them with my money!'

'I could also go with rust mushroom, but I don't really want to. It tastes a bit too acidic for me.'

'Although, the house does have a ripe colony of rust mushrooms, and if I don't eat it soon, it will turn toxic and start releasing toxic spores.'

Nick scratched the back of his neck.

'I should just check out the market,' he thought with a shrug.

Nick changed direction and walked towards the market of the Dregs.

As soon as he arrived, most people turned to him.

Why was a Zephyx Extractor here?!

Nick tried his best to ignore the stares, but they still pulled his mood down a bit.

In the end, Nick entered one of the shops at the side of the market.

He had only gone into some of them due to a job, but he had never bought anything there.

The things in these shops were just too expensive.

The shop Nick had entered had many different pieces of food lying around.

There was rat, cat, dog, fly, and bird, and they even had several different kinds of veggie cubes!

The selection was amazing.

"H-How can I help you, sir?" the owner of the shop asked Nick as soon as he entered.

"Hey, I'm hungry. Do you have anything good to eat?" he asked.

The owner of the shop looked with confusion and suspicion at Nick. "Ye-yes, but I'm not sure if my wares have the quality your tongue desires, sir," he said with a bitter smile.

Nick just waved his hand to signal that it wasn't a big deal. "Just tell me what tastes good in here."

The owner of the shop became more nervous. "Well, I made a new cauldron of veggie cube soup. I'm not sure if sir is interested in veggie cubes, though. Sir is probably more familiar with real vegetables."

"Real vegetables?" Nick repeated with surprise. "Oh, right! I totally forgot that there are supposed to be real vegetables somewhere! Do you have any?"

The shop owner became more nervous.

This Zephyx Extractor was acting very strangely.

Was this some kind of scheme or technique to get some information out of the shop owner?

The Extractor's conduct made no sense.

Nevertheless, the shop owner had no chance but to go along with it.

"Sadly, no, sir," the shop owner said. "No one in the Dregs would buy them due to the price."

"Oh, okay," Nick said. "Then, give me some of that veggie cube soup."

"Of course, sir," the shop owner said as he quickly walked over to a cauldron.

The owner took the lid off, and Nick could smell the aroma.

It smelled absolutely amazing!

The next moment, the owner took out a bowl made of rusty metal and scooped some of the soup out of the cauldron.

"That will be ten credits, sir," the owner said nervously as he put the bowl down on the counter.

Ten credits were 10% of the monthly tax.

Only rich people in the Dregs could afford to eat something this luxurious.

The majority of the shop's customers probably came from the gangs.

Nick took out the card he had received from Wyntor and placed it on the counter.

When the shop owner saw the card, he smiled bitterly.

"Sir, we can't trade with bank cards in the Dregs."

"I'm not allowed to collect the outstanding balance from the banks since I am living in the Dregs."

Chapter 42: Sightseeing

Nick exited the shop with a bowl of veggie cube soup in his hands.

When Nick had canceled the order after realizing that he couldn't pay, the owner said that the bowl was on the house.

As a practical person, Nick saw no problem with that and simply accepted happily.

Nick also told the owner that he could ask Nick for help if there was anything he needed.

After leaving the marketplace quite quickly, Nick looked at the bowl of veggie cube soup in his hands with wonder.

In the Dregs, the people mostly ate meat.

Rat, cat, dog, insects, and so on.

However, it was also necessary to eat some veggie cubes every now and then.

Veggie cubes were green cubes made of different vegetables, which could no longer be sold in the Outer City.

When vegetables started to go bad, the shops sold them to one of the gangs, which then collected them all, threw them into some kind of furnace, and cooked them until there was zero water left in them.

One cube weighed about a hundred grams and cost a credit.

It was expensive!

Because of that, the people in the Dregs only ate them once a week or so.

If they didn't, they would start to show various signs of malnourishment.

The bowl of veggie cube soup was beige in color, and there was some kind of oily layer on top, which seemed to have separated from the soup.

The cubes had turned into slimy and mushy bits that swam in the beige broth.

Nick could also see a couple of mosquito larvae swimming in the broth.

These were not the larvae of normal mosquitos but the larvae of the mosquitos that belonged to the Specter, the Mosquito.

The mosquitos of the Specter continually reproduced, and apparently, the Specter didn't mind if anyone ate the larvae.

In fact, they mostly could be found in the Dregs, and they were very healthy.

But they were also expensive.

The larvae from these mosquitos were much bigger than the ones from normal mosquitos.

Each one was around five centimeters long!

When Nick saw the soup, he knew that he was holding something of extremely high class in his hands.

'No wonder this thing is so expensive!' Nick thought with wonder.

'It has four or five larvae and probably over 300 grams of veggie cubes!'

'That's enough food for two to three days!'

Nick slowly pushed the bowl to his mouth and drank the warm broth.

The fat had separated from the water, and the larvae had a bitter and metallic taste to them.

The distant taste of vegetables could also be slightly discerned.

Nick closed his eyes in bliss.

It was amazing.

He had never eaten anything this good in his entire life.

'Also, what is this strong taste? I can't put my finger on it?'

'Wait, is that rust lick?!'

In Nick's mind appeared the image of a big rock standing near the edge of the city.

That rock was made from a magical mineral that could treat some special conditions that caused dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

The people just needed to lick the rock for a bit, and they would feel better.

Nick had heard some people refer to it as salt, but it was commonly known as rust lick since people licked it off a dirty stone.

'Putting rust lick into a soup. That's genius!' Nick thought.

'It tastes so amazing!'

Over the next hour, Nick slowly consumed the broth, and after he was done, he felt so incredibly good.

Nick felt like his body was telling him how happy it was.

'This is the life,' Nick thought in satisfaction. 'If I could eat this soup every day, I could die happy.'

A moment later, Nick yawned.

'Man, now I'm getting tired. Guess I should go back home and get some sleep.'

Nick stretched and turned to walk home.

After he arrived, Nick entered his room and fell onto his comfy plate of rust-free metal.

His entire body relaxed as he felt the comfortable embrace of sleep take him.

Several hours later, Nick woke up again, and this time, he felt awake and refreshed.

He slept amazingly!

After he woke up, he slowly scratched the back of his head in relaxation.

'Man, I feel great,' he thought with a yawn.

'So, what do I do today?'

After some time of thinking, Nick decided to look at the Outer City.

For the entire day, Nick went sightseeing in the Outer City, and he learned many things.

For example, he had learned how many different kinds of shops there were.

There were actually shops that sold expensive stones that had no other purpose but to look nice!

It was insanity!

Why would anyone pay money to carry a stone with them?

Nick had also learned that there were places where he could sleep without making them his home.

These places were called hotels.

Hotels didn't exist in the Dregs since there were more houses than people, but the same thing wasn't true for the Outer City.

After finding out about the hotels, Nick decided to rent a room for a couple of days and got Horua to come with him.

Nick didn't want to spend all his time alone, and he also wanted to have someone with him that he was familiar with.

Nick even visited several restaurants, but he didn't eat at any of them.

The prices were ridiculous for only a little bit of food!

Ten credits for 150 grams of meat?!

He could get that for free by just stomping on a couple of bugs!

The soup he had eaten the day before had weighed nearly a kilo, including the broth, and the ingredients had weighed over 400 grams!

Eventually, Nick got some physical credits from a bank, and he ate more of the veggie cube soup with Horua.

The day after that, Nick and Horua looked around the Outer City some more.

And finally, it was time to return to work!

It was time for Horua to work with the Dreamer!

Chapter 43: I Want

"It's great, isn't it?" Nick asked.

Horua just stood in front of the huge warehouse, his eyes filled with wonder.

A Zephyx Manufacturer!

He was in front of a Zephyx Manufacturer, and he was about to become an employee of one!

"Let's go in," Nick said with an encouraging smile.

Right now, it was early in the morning. Nick had decided to come during the afternoon because of Horua's sleep schedule.

It was better for Horua to sleep during the night, which was why they had arrived this early.

Working with the Dreamer might seem like rest, but it isn't actually rest.

Because of that, Nick wanted to get one session of work in before they went home to sleep.

The two of them entered the warehouse, and Horua looked at the huge wall of metal in front of him.

"Is that where it is?" he asked.

Nick nodded. "Yep. Sadly, I can't tell you any specifics without Wyntor."

Horua just nodded, showing that he understood.

A moment later, Horua noticed a tall man with light-brown hair sitting in front of a desk. Right now, there were many different sheets of paper on the desk, and the man was looking at them with furrowed brows.

"You're a bit early," Wyntor said with a smile, not looking up from the sheets of paper.

"Yep," Nick answered with a chuckle. "Also, I brought someone that I want to make into one of my Zephyx Extractors."

"Oh?" Wyntor said as he looked up from his papers.

Yet, when he saw the small boy, he furrowed his brows. "Are you talking about him?"

"Yep!" Nick said with a nod.

Nick pushed Horua forward a little bit, and Horua looked at Wyntor with respect and fear.

"Hello, sir, I want to become a Zephyx Extractor," Horua said, managing not to stutter.

Wyntor looked with an unsatisfied gaze at Horua.

"How old are you?"

"Eleven, sir," Horua said politely.

"Do you have any family?"

Horua was a bit surprised by the question, and even Nick raised an eyebrow in confusion.

"N-no, sir," Horua answered.

"I assume you are from the Dregs?" Wyntor asked.

Horua nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Are you a member of any organization or gang?"

"No, sir," Horua said.

"What's this all about?" Nick asked. "Why are you asking all of these questions."

"These questions have a purpose, Nick," Wyntor said without looking at him.

"Would anyone come searching for me if you died in here?" Wyntor asked.

This question made Horua quite nervous, and even Nick furrowed his brows.

However, Nick remained quiet.

"No, sir," Horua said with a bit of fear and sadness.

Wyntor continued looking at Horua with an unhappy expression.

"Nick, I need to speak with you privately," Wyntor said before standing up and walking behind the Containment Unit.

Nick looked suspicious and unhappy, but he just followed.

Horua was left alone in front of the Containment Unit.

"Nick, do you actually know what you're doing?" Wyntor asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Please elaborate," Nick said.

"He's a kid, Nick," Wyntor explained. "Just because you managed to withstand the Dreamer doesn't mean that everyone can. There are many cases of Extractors dying while working with a Specter that feeds on mentality when they actually shouldn't have."

"Too much stress can stop your heart or shut your brain down."

"I asked all these questions earlier because I wanted to make sure that no one would be searching for us in case the Dreamer killed him."

Nick furrowed his brows. "So, we can't employ him?" he asked.

"Technically, that's not my decision," Wyntor said.

"Not your decision?" Nick asked with a raised brow.

"I am the president and CEO. I don't deal with personnel issues unless they are directly related to me," Wyntor said. "You are the Chief Zephyx Extractor. It is your duty to build a team of capable Zephyx Extractors and assign the Specters to them."

"If you want to employ this boy, you are free to do so."

"However, if something happens, that's on you."

"If the Dreamer accidentally kills him, it is your fault, and you have to take responsibility and deal with the aftermath."

When Nick heard that, he felt his chest tighten.

Just now, the image of a dead Horua shot through his mind.

"I need to talk to him again," Nick said.

"Alright," Wyntor answered neutrally. "If you decide to employ him, tell me, and I will give you our standard contract."

"Does he know anything about the Dreamer or how we obtained it?"

Nick shook his head. "No."

For some reason, Wyntor's eyes seemed to show some relief.

"Good."

The next moment, the two of them walked to the front of the Containment Unit again.

Wyntor went back to his desk while Nick went over to Horua.

Horua looked with anxiety at Nick.

"Listen, Horua," Nick said. "I want you to know that becoming a Zephyx Extractor is not without its dangers."

"If you decide to become a Zephyx Extractor, you might undergo a short period of horrifying pain."

"The pain might become so bad that you could die."

Horua took a deep breath when he heard that.

"Your survival is not guaranteed, Horua," Nick said with a serious expression. "But if you manage to survive, you will become a Zephyx Extractor here."

"But you might also die."

"Are you sure you want to become a Zephyx Extractor here? It is not too late to turn around," Nick said solemnly.

Horua seemed quite worried as he looked at the ground.

Naturally, he was very scared.

"I will do it!" Horua said as he looked into Nick's eyes with desperation.

"There's nothing left for me in the Dregs."

"My parents are dead!"

"I've never had siblings!"

"I don't have a family!"

"I don't have friends except for you!"

"It's now or never!"

"Nick, I want to make something of my life!"

Nick kept looking at Horua with a serious expression.

"Are you sure?" he asked again.

"I am sure!" Horua answered. "I am strong, and I have a lot of willpower! I can deal with pain!"

Some seconds passed.

And then, Nick nodded.

"Wyntor, give me the contract."

Chapter 44: Horua and the Dreamer

Wyntor looked at Horua, sighed, and handed Nick two sheets of paper.

One of them was an NDA, which made sure that Horua wouldn't tell anyone about the company's secrets, and the other one was the employee contract.

Nick took the NDA and started to read it to Horua.

"Nick, you don't have to read it to me. I can read myself," Horua said.

Nick's eyes widened in surprise. "You can read?" he asked in shock.

Horua nodded. "Father taught me when I was young."

"Well, okay," Nick said as he handed the NDA over.

Horua read through everything in just a couple of minutes and nodded.

A moment later, he signed it.

"You have no questions?" Nick asked in surprise.

"I just can't tell anyone about anything specific, right?" Horua asked.

"Eh, yeah, sure. That's about it," Nick said.

Horua nodded and grabbed the actual contract.

After reading through it, Horua became shocked.

"I get to keep 10% of what I produce?!" he asked. "Isn't that a lot of money?"

Nick also looked at the contract since it was different from his own.

Sure enough, Horua got to keep 10% of what he produced.

This meant that he would get 500 credits per session with the Dreamer.

Nick asked Wyntor about the specific split of revenue.

"As the CEO and president, I get 20%," Wyntor said.

"10% go to you."

"10% go to the specific Extractor that produced everything."

"60% go to the company as funds."

Initially, Nick was a bit confused.

If Horua got 10% and Nick got 10%, then wouldn't Nick earn just as much as Horua?

Wasn't he the Chief Zephyx Extractor?

But then, Nick realized that he would get the money without actually doing anything.

And if he himself worked with the Dreamer, he would get just as much as Wyntor.

'So, if I get more Extractors, I get even more money. It's like other people are doing my work!'

However, Nick also wasn't super comfortable with that.

'I am essentially taking money from someone without doing anything. Isn't that like stealing? I mean, I didn't do anything.'

Nick looked at the Containment Unit.

'Although, I came up with the way to work with the Dreamer, and I was also the one that negotiated with it.'

'So, I guess, in a way, I actually did do something?' Nick thought with uncertainty.

'I dunno. I mean, okay, but it still feels a bit weird,' he thought as he scratched the back of his head awkwardly.

Eventually, Nick stopped thinking about all of the moral ramifications and just watched Horua sign the employee contract.

"Good," Nick said with a bright smile as he handed the signed contract to Wyntor, who wordlessly put it into a briefcase beside his chair.

"You're now officially one of my employees!" Nick said with a bright smile.

"Happy to meet you, boss!" Horua shouted with a bright voice as he performed a cute salute.

Nick put his hand on Horua's head and ruffled his hair a bit.

"Alright, then, let me tell you about what we do here and what your job will be."

Horua nodded and listened with excitement.

Over the next minutes, Nick told Horua everything he knew about the Dreamer.

"So, I just have to sleep beside it?" Horua asked in surprise.

Horua had thought that his work would be much more difficult than just sleeping.

"Yep," Nick said with a smirk. "The Dreamer will even help you fall asleep!"

"Although, you still have to be careful! After all, it is a Specter."

Horua blinked. "Nick, what am I supposed to do if it decides to attack me?"

Nick didn't answer for a while.

Right, what was Horua supposed to do?

Even Nick could die if the Dreamer decided to attack.

What could the little Horua do?

"Eh, it probably won't happen," Nick said with a nervous chuckle. "It knows exactly that it can't just kill you. It wouldn't be in its best interest."

Horua looked worried again.

"Anyway, I think I should introduce you," Nick said as he walked towards the Containment Unit.

"To whom?" Horua asked.

"Whom?" Nick asked. "You mean who, right?"

"No, it's whom," Horua answered. "To whom will you introduce me to."

"What, why? What even is whom?" Nick asked.

"I don't know, but my father always corrected me," Horua said. "Anyway, to whom?"

"The Dreamer," Nick said.

"Wait, what?! Now?!" Horua asked nervously.

Nick nodded. "Yep."

Horua looked around nervously, but he eventually followed Nick. "Well, you're the boss."

Nick nodded and opened the employee door to the Containment Unit.

A couple seconds later, Nick and Horua entered the Containment Unit.

Horua was standing a bit behind Nick, but as he looked past Nick's torso, he could see the Dreamer.

The black owl was standing in the corner of the room, looking into Nick's eyes.

Nick had narrowed his eyes and was looking back at the Dreamer.

A bit later, the Dreamer turned its head and looked at Horua.

When Horua saw the Dreamer look at him, a cold shudder of terror shook his body.

These eyes!

For some reason, Horua felt like he was about to die!

This thing was dangerous!

He had to leave!

He had to run!

Nick noticed Horua's reaction and grabbed his arm before he could run away.

Horua just kept looking at the Dreamer as his body leaned back, ready to run away as soon as he could.

The Dreamer didn't show any reaction.

"Horua!" Nick shouted aggressively.

Horua's body shook, and his terrified eyes looked at Nick.

"You are now a Zephyx Extractor! You have to be brave and meet the danger head-on!"

Horua took a deep breath and tried to calm down.

However, when he looked at the Dreamer again, his fear exploded once more, and he tried to pull himself out of Nick's grip.

"Horua, what's going on with- Argh!"

Nick's question was interrupted by Horua biting Nick's hand.

Naturally, Nick let go of Horua, and Horua ran out of the Containment Unit in terror.

Nick furrowed his brows and looked at his slightly bleeding hand.

'What the hell is wrong with him?' Nick thought.

Nick looked at the Dreamer.

The Dreamer looked back.

"I'll be back soon."

Then, Nick walked out of the Containment Unit.

Chapter 45: Liability

Nick left the Containment Unit and saw Horua trying to open the door of the warehouse.

"Horua!" Nick shouted with anger as he ran over.

When Horua heard Nick's angry voice, his entire body shuddered before freezing.

Nick quickly arrived behind Horua and forcefully turned him around to face him.

Horua looked into Nick's eyes with terror.

"What's wrong with you?!" Nick shouted.

"I-I-I," Horua stuttered. "N-No. No! I can't!"

"Horua!" Nick shouted again. "Get a grip! It's just the Dreamer! It didn't even do anything! It just looked at you!"

The Dreamer's dead eyes shot through Horua's mind again, and his body shuddered.

"Horua!" Nick shouted again.

Horua was forcefully pulled out of his terror by Nick's shout. "Nick, I changed my mind! I don't want to be a Zephyx Extractor anymore! I want to go home!"

Nick looked with shock at Horua. "What? Why? You said you were willing to face the danger head-on! You said you have willpower and want a chance to make something of your life."

Horua just shook his head wildly. "No, I can't! I will die! I can feel it! I will die!"

"I don't want to see this monster again!"

"It will kill me, Nick!"

"I can feel it!"

"It will kill me!"

"Horua!" Nick shouted again as he shook Horua's little body a little. "Calm down! You have to calm down!"

Surprisingly, shouting at Horua to calm down actually seemed to work, and Horua took a couple of deep breaths.

"Nick, I can't go back in there! I will die! I know it! I feel it!" Horua pleaded.

Nick looked with furrowed brows at Horua.

"Come on, Horua," Nick said with a calmer voice. "It's just a big owl. You will go to sleep, have a little nightmare, and you will wake up rich."

"Even more, you also get an ability since your Zephyx Synchronizer will get attuned to the Dreamer," Nick explained.

"Just one little session with the Dreamer would forever change your life for the positive! Don't throw this opportunity away!"

Horua didn't immediately answer, and he just looked at the ground in front of him.

Silence.

As the seconds passed, Horua's breathing quickened, and his body began to shudder again.

"No!" Horua said with conviction as he looked into Nick's eyes. "I'm not going back in there!"

Nick looked at Horua with a concerned expression. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure!" Horua shouted.

The next moment, Horua looked back at the ground.

"Can't we just go back home, Nick?"

Nick took a deep breath.

"I have to talk to Wyntor," Nick said.

"Thank you," Horua said quietly as he only looked at the ground in fear and shame.

Even though Horua felt fearful, he also felt like he had disappointed Nick.

Horua wanted to face the Dreamer, but whenever he thought of the Dreamer's eyes, his body and soul refused to interact with it in any way.

Nick walked over to Wyntor and sighed. "Sorry, but Horua resigns."

Wyntor put the sheets of paper down and looked at Nick with a serious expression.

"The kid is a liability," Wyntor said.

Nick sighed. "I know. Sorry for wasting your time. I've always seen how brave he was, and I thought that he could work with the Dreamer. After all, the Dreamer is basically just a big owl."

Wyntor wordlessly looked into Nick's eyes with an emotionless expression.

"I thought he could handle it," Nick added. "But in the end, he is just a child."

Nick sighed. "I should have known."

"This is my fault."

"Sorry."

Wyntor kept looking at Nick.

A couple of seconds of silence passed, and Nick became a bit uncomfortable under Wyntor's emotionless gaze.

"I think you didn't understand what I meant, Nick," Wyntor said.

Nick looked with a bit of confusion and worry at Wyntor.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Nick, why do you think I asked the boy about his family, friends, and social circle?" Wyntor asked.

Nick's heart rate increased, but he didn't say anything.

"Because of you," Wyntor explained. "If things went sour, I want the consequences to be as little and unimportant as possible."

"I have no issues with letting an experienced Extractor resign. They have experience and are an adult. They know what it means to break an NDA."

"But he's just a kid. You saw what happened when he saw the Dreamer."

"Kids don't know what they feel or think most of the time. They don't have enough experience to evaluate themselves objectively."

"You saw how motivated and excited he was when he told you that he would change his life and work with the Dreamer, but as soon as he met him, he ran away in fear."

"The same might happen with the NDA."

"Of course, the punishment for breaking the NDA is death, but the boy isn't an adult yet. He might believe that he will get away with it as long as he makes the other person promise that they won't tell anyone else."

"At that point, the damage is already done."

Nick's chest tightened in anxiety, but he did his best to seem calm.

"So, what's your plan?" Nick asked. "How can we solve this issue?"

Wyntor wordlessly looked into Nick's eyes again for a while.

Nick's heart rate increased even more.

"How about making him sign another contract?" Nick asked. "One that makes it even more difficult to break the NDA."

"What about sending Pator to keep an eye on Horua? I will even pay for it with my own money!"

"What if I just continue living with him until he becomes ready to face the Dreamer for real?"

Wyntor didn't answer.

He just kept looking at Nick emotionlessly.

"Nick, the boy is a liability."

"His continued existence is a danger to the company."

"There are only two ways this will go."

"One, he does not leave this warehouse and becomes an official Zephyx Extractor by working with the Dreamer."

"Two, I will make Pator escort him home, and on the way home..."

"The boy will accidentally fall through the grates in the Dregs."

"But he will be dead before he hits the water."

"I will not put my company in the hands of an eleven-year-old child's ability to keep a secret."