

The Sun 201

Chapter 201 – Many Layers

Nick looked with wonder at the Shweeb.

The most powerful people in the past used to drive around in those?

Wyntor explained in detail how to operate the Shweeb, and Nick listened intently.

Eventually, Wyntor got into one and closed the door, and moments later, the Shweeb began to move forward.

Nick had already entered the Shweeb behind Wyntor's Shweeb and nervously moved his legs forward.

The pedal moved forward without any resistance, and in a panic that he might have broken something, Nick pedaled faster.

The Shweeb shot forward and quickly hit Wyntor's Shweeb.

Nick's heart nearly stopped.

Was Wyntor okay?!

How expensive were these Shweebs?!

Did he break them?!

However, Wyntor's Shweeb only shook from side to side a bit and continued moving forward as if nothing had happened.

When Nick saw that, he released a sigh of relief.

Luckily, these Shweebs seemed to be made of rather durable material.

Slowly, Nick went back to pedaling, and after a while, he entered a steady rhythm.

He was following behind Wyntor with a steady pace.

The sides of the Shweeb were made of some kind of material that Nick could see through but wasn't glass, and Nick could see himself climbing higher and higher.

Very soon, Nick reached a height that he had never been to before.

It was terrifying!

If the Shweeb broke, he would die!

The higher they climbed, the more anxious Nick became.

People were not supposed to live in the sky!

They were supposed to live on the ground, surrounded by metal.

A bit later, Nick saw an intersection coming up and became even more nervous.

Wyntor told him how to navigate the intersection, and Nick only hoped that he wouldn't make a mistake.

Nick put his hand on a lever to his right and moved it back.

Some seconds later, Wyntor's Shweeb moved towards the rail on the right, and Nick only hoped that he hadn't committed a mistake.

Luckily, his Shweeb also went to the rail on the right, relieving Nick.

Working with any of the Specters was less stressful and scary than driving this damn thing!

After some time, Nick and Wyntor went past the first layer of huge metallic circles.

And now, Nick could finally see the actual middle layer.

Houses!

Directly beside the gigantic pillars were huge houses made of brick!

The houses were absolutely gigantic!

Additionally, while the circles were metallic from the bottom, Nick couldn't see any metal while looking at them from the top.

The only things he could see were grass, trees, ponds, and pools.

One of these huge circles had a couple of mansions surrounding the gigantic pillar in the middle, and the outer parts of the circle were filled with greenery and water.

Every mansion also had a rail leading out of it.

That was probably where the Shweebbs of the rich people were stored.

Nick saw many children running around a little forest on one of the platforms, and he even saw them climbing the trees.

It was so alien and strange.

DUNK!

Nick's Shweeb shook, and his heart nearly stopped.

He had been so distracted that he hadn't noticed that he had gained speed, which resulted in him hitting Wyntor's Shweeb again.

Wyntor's Shweeb was pushed forward a bit, but it easily entered another rail and continued on.

Nick felt insanely nervous again.

What if he killed Wyntor?!

For a while, Nick only paid attention to the Shweeb in front of him until he got distracted again.

Nick looked upwards, and he noticed something amazing.

A blue sky!

About 80% of the area above Nick was made of blue sky, while the remaining 20% were just the rails for the Shweebs again.

Obviously, the "blue sky" was just the image reflected by the underside of the next layer of platforms, which was strange.

After all, the lowest layer of platforms didn't create this image of a blue sky.

But then, Nick got distracted by something else.

He saw people running on top of the rails!

Nick's heart almost stopped when he saw how fast the people were running.

Naturally, all of these people wore Extractor Uniforms, and since only Veterans and stronger could live here, they were all also quite powerful.

All of them were running at crazy speeds across the rails, and some of them were even jumping from platform to platform.

Yet, none of them fell.

They all seemed to move with confidence and ease at speeds that Nick couldn't even reach with his ability active.

It was almost like they were shooting through the sky.

Nick even saw one daredevil leaping from an upper layer of circles to a lower one, even though there were over a hundred meters between them!

DUNK!

Nick hit Wyntor's Shweeb again, and he took a deep breath.

Luckily, nothing happened.

The two of them continued driving, and after a while, they went up another layer.

That was when Nick noticed something.

Now, the "blue sky" above them covered over 99%.

This meant that the next layer had no streets.

After some minutes, Nick followed Wyntor onto that layer via a rail that went along the side of the huge structure.

As soon as they went past the layer, Nick's eyes widened.

Enormous!

There was an absolutely gigantic building, over 200 meters wide and long!

Nick immediately took note of the huge symbol adorning the front of the building.

It was a ball with a scratch.

It was Gemini's symbol!

Gemini was a Zephyx Manufacturer with three Experts, level four Extractors.

This was where Gemini was located!

That was when Nick took note of an even bigger building in the distance.

Gemini actually only occupied 20% of the layer.

The other 80% were occupied by the other building, and that building had the silhouette of a ghost on it.

Ghosty's Lab!

DUNK!

Nick hit Wyntor's Shweeb again, but by now, he had gotten used to it.

Nick kept looking at the two huge buildings, but before he had his fill, they vanished as Nick and Wyntor entered a new layer.

This time, there was only a single building.

It covered the entire layer and was over a hundred meters high!

It was ridiculously big!

Nick saw the symbol of a puppet on the front, which represented Anatomy, the second biggest Manufacturer.

However, Wyntor's Shweeb kept going upwards.

Nick knew where they would end up next.

Chapter 202 – Handshake

Nick and Wyntor kept ascending towards the next layer, and Nick knew exactly where they were going to end up.

As soon as they passed by the layer, Nick was greeted with... an entrance?

The two were now in a station for Shweebs.

Surprisingly, there wasn't a lot to see.

The station was only about a hundred meters long, and about 20 meters away from the rails was a normal entrance.

It seemed just like any other entrance to a warehouse, just bigger.

That was it.

Nick was a bit disappointed that he couldn't view the entire building of Kugelblitz.

'I guess the entire building is incorporated into the megastructure,' Nick thought. 'That's why I can only see an entrance.'

Nick looked away from the platform and saw that the rail continued upward.

That was probably where the upper layer started.

As Wyntor's Shweeb reached the end of the station, he slowly came to a stop.

Shockingly, Nick didn't bump into Wyntor's Shweeb.

The next moment, Wyntor's Shweeb opened, and he stepped out with practiced ease.

That was when Nick noticed a man walking up to Wyntor's Shweeb with a polite smile.

Wyntor nodded and walked past.

The man nodded back and entered Wyntor's Shweeb.

The man drove the Shweeb into an adjacent rail, which led to a huge gate with many small rails coming out.

A small part of the gate opened, and the man drove Wyntor's Shweeb into it.

'Is that where they store all the Shweebs?' Nick thought.

Dunk! Dunk!

Wyntor knocked on Nick's Shweeb and gestured for him to come out.

Nick nervously opened the door and tried his best to get out naturally.

Sadly, he just wasn't used to driving something like this, and his exit could be called awkward at best.

"Bumpy ride, huh?" Wyntor commented.

"Sorry! I'm so sorry!" Nick said with an almost panicked expression.

"It's fine," Wyntor said with a small chuckle. "I was expecting something like this. If I didn't have faith in the Shweeb's resilience, I wouldn't have let you drive behind me."

Nick still felt embarrassed, but he just answered with a nod.

"Excuse me."

Nick looked over and saw a man walking up to Nick with a polite smile.

"Yes?" Nick asked.

"I need your name," the man said.

"Eh, Nick."

The man nodded. "And your last name?"

Nick blinked a bit. "I don't have a last name."

The man also blinked in confusion, not knowing how to deal with this.

"He really doesn't have one," Wyntor said from the side. "He's my Chief Zephyx Extractor. Just book him as that."

"Of course, Mr. Melfion," the man said as he walked past him.

He also performed a polite bow in front of Nick, who just nodded back.

By now, Nick had gotten a bit used to people acting like this in front of him.

After all, he was a Chief Zephyx Extractor, and Dark Dream had plenty of clerks who acted exactly like this.

The man entered Nick's Shweeb and drove it through the big gate as well.

A moment later, Nick and Wyntor walked over to the entrance of Kugelblitz.

There were two women standing at either side of the entrance, and surprisingly, they both wore the uniforms of the city forces.

One would expect that Kugelblitz would have their own guards, but apparently not.

The city was guarding the entrance.

Yet, when Nick saw their emblems, his eyes widened in shock.

Those were Experts, level four Extractors!

They were as powerful as Julian and Albert!

Yet, they only stood in front of Kugelblitz's entrance!

"Mary, Winona, it's your turn?" Wyntor said with a smirk.

"Ha ha," the one to the right said with a sarcastic tone. "Laugh it up, Wyntor."

"Don't mind if I do," Wyntor said with a chuckle.

The woman to the left echoed Wyntor's chuckle, which made the woman to the right throw a side eye at her.

"We're here for the yearly meeting," Wyntor said after a bit.

"Oh, right. That's today," the one to the left said. "No one else has arrived yet. You're a bit early."

"I want to show Nick around a bit," Wyntor said, gesturing to Nick, who was diagonally behind Wyntor.

The two women looked directly at Nick with interested expressions, which made Nick feel a bit awkward.

"That's him, huh?" the one on the right commented.

"Sure is," Wyntor said.

Then, he pulled Nick forward and gestured to the right one. "That's Winona."

"And that's Mary," he said, gesturing to the left one.

"Eh, hi, nice to meet you," Nick said, extending his right arm for a handshake.

The two women looked at the outstretched hand and blinked in surprise.

But after a second, Mary stretched her own hand forward with a smile and shook it. "Nice to meet you!"

Winona furrowed her brows, but she also shook Nick's hand.

This was so bizarre to them.

A handshake is usually a form of greeting between two relatively equal parties.

The fact that they were shaking hands with an Initial John was very strange.

After all, they were Experts.

They were thousands of times stronger than normal humans.

They could jump a distance of over an entire kilometer without a running start.

If they put their minds to it, they could probably jump from one end of the Dregs to the other.

And yet, this Initial John was on a similar level to them.

Sure, just based on Nick's power, his status was barely higher than a normal clerk's, but the position of Chief Zephyx Extractor was extremely prestigious.

For example, the Chief Zephyx Extractor of the Spartans, who was just a Veteran, had a slightly higher status than just a normal Expert, even though their strength couldn't compare.

Technically, Nick's status was comparable to a normal Expert's.

Yet, it still felt so weird to them.

But on the other hand, it also improved their perception of Nick.

After all, Nick was bold enough to initiate a handshake with Experts.

When someone initiated a handshake, it meant that they were either on a similar level as the other person or higher.

An employee never offered their hand to their boss.

Their boss always offered their hand first.

Initiating a handshake meant either lowering oneself to speak at eye level with the other person or being at a similar level by default.

The fact that Nick offered his hand showed a lot of courage and boldness.

'Why did they look at me like that?' Nick thought. 'Isn't that how people in the Inner City greet each other?'

Nick had no idea.

He just thought that everyone greeted each other like this.

Chapter 203 – Floors

When Wyntor saw Nick shaking hands with Mary and Winona, he felt gratified.

He knew exactly what was going on in Nick's mind, but that didn't matter.

The fact that his Chief Zephyx Extractor initiated a handshake with two Experts was something to be proud of.

Not everyone had such guts.

"Mary, Winona, it was nice seeing you again," Wyntor said politely.

"Oh, of course," Winona said like she had just remembered something.

Then, she moved her hand behind her back and punched a button on the wall, which opened the entrance of Kugelblitz.

"Thank you," Wyntor said with a smile before nodding at Mary and entering.

Nick just nodded at the two of them as he walked by them, and they casually nodded back.

After Nick entered, the door behind him closed.

He was inside Kugelblitz, the biggest and most powerful Zephyx Manufacturer in Crimson Fungus City.

The owner of the only captured Demon, the Crimson Fungus.

A level six Specter!

And yet, everything around Nick looked so normal.

He had just entered a normal-sized corridor.

Sure, the corridor was quite long, but that was about it.

The only thing of note was that the corridor was completely empty.

It almost looked like the building was abandoned.

"Winona and Mary are working for Kugelblitz," Wyntor suddenly said.

"Huh?" Nick uttered as he looked at Wyntor.

"Just like any other Manufacturer, Kugelblitz also has to dedicate 20% of all Zephyx Extractors to the city. But as the strongest Manufacturer, Kugelblitz also has great influence over the city's politics."

"Because of that, they managed to implement a policy that two of their Experts who were dedicated to the city's forces would get to stand guard in front of Kugelblitz."

"Naturally, using two Experts for something as mundane as that is a huge waste, but handing them over to the city is already a waste."

"Might as well use 2% of their capabilities instead of 0%."

At that moment, Wyntor smirked. "Of course, nobody wants this job because it's so boring."

Nick had thought that Kugelblitz had to be insanely powerful since they were using Experts as mere guards, but now he realized that he had been mistaken.

Sure, Kugelblitz was still the most powerful Zephyx Manufacturer in the city, but they were not so crazy powerful that they would voluntarily use Experts as guards.

'But the initial impression I got is probably exactly why they are doing it,' Nick thought.

A moment later, Nick released a breath. "I got scared for a moment," he said in a half-joking tone.

Wyntor just chuckled a bit as he led Nick down the hallway.

"We're currently on the administrative floor," Wyntor said, gesturing to the doors in the hallway.

Nick looked at the doors and saw signs beside each one of them.

1.12, Herbert Pelekies, Janitor, Stefan Mean, Janitor.

1.14, Julia Rander, Janitor, Melinda Bauer, Janitor.

"A lot of janitors," Nick said.

"It's a big building," Wyntor answered.

Nick kept looking at the signs beside the doors.

Technician, technician, janitor, data entry, data entry, technician, janitor, assistant, assistant, transporter, transporter...

There were so many people here!

And all of them were normal people!

After walking for a while, the two of them entered a larger hallway with doors only on one side.

Surprisingly, the doors didn't have any signs beside them.

"This is where we can get from floor to floor," Wyntor said. "Wanna see something interesting?"

Nick just nodded wordlessly.

Wyntor walked over to one of the doors and pressed one of the many buttons beside it.

DING!

Nick heard a sound, and the door opened.

What was behind the door?

An empty shaft.

Nick went to the edge of the shaft and looked up.

When he looked up, he felt some vertigo.

It was so long!

It was like the shaft extended into infinity!

At the same time, Nick saw that one of the doors two floors higher was open.

"This is a quick shaft for Extractors," Wyntor said before pulling Nick back.

BANG!

The door closed with a lot of power in front of Nick.

"You say which floor you want to go to," Wyntor said as he gestured to the pad with the many buttons, "and you simply jump from wall to wall until you get there."

"Of course, only Extractors can use it."

Nick looked with wonder at the closed door.

This was such a great idea!

He was already jumping from floor to floor in Dark Dream's building, but having such a shaft would make it even easier.

"But we're not going to use that," Wyntor said. "I'm not strong enough to use it."

Wyntor walked over to a different door and opened it.

And Nick was greeted with something very familiar.

Stairs.

Lots and lots of stairs.

"Let's go. We got a lot of stairs to climb," Wyntor said.

Nick followed behind Wyntor as they took the stairs.

When they reached the second floor, Wyntor gestured to the door. "That floor is for more regular employees."

On the third floor. "That floor is for the offices and break rooms for Extractors."

On the fourth floor. "Same thing again."

On the fifth floor. "And again."

"So many offices?" Nick asked.

Wyntor nodded as they kept climbing the stairs. "The offices are quite big, and they are spread over three floors to bring more security. If a Specter wants to escape, it needs to get through three floors of Extractors."

Nick nodded. "Makes sense."

On the sixth floor. "Training floor," Wyntor said. "It's for the few level one and level two Extractors Kugelblitz has. There are a couple of weak Specters and classrooms here."

On the seventh floor. "Adult Specters," Wyntor said.

Nick took a deep breath.

Dark Dream didn't even have a single Adult Specter.

Nick hadn't even seen one.

"More Adult Specters," "Wyntor said on the eighth floor.

"More Adult Specters."

"And even more Adult Specters."

Nick blinked in surprise. "Kugelblitz has so many Adult Specters?"

Wyntor laughed. "No, Kugelblitz just spreads all their Specters over a big area."

"When you have so many different Specters, you have to consider that some of the Specters' powers can influence Specters in adjacent Containment Units. That could result in mutations or the Specters communicating with each other."

"It's important to keep Specters with a very high affinity or very low affinity away from each other."

Nick nodded in understanding.

A couple of floors with Elders followed, level four Specters.

There were probably over ten floors filled with them.

After that, five floors with Fanatics followed.

Level five Specters.

And then, nothing.

There was no door on the next floor.

The same with the following floor.

And finally, there was a door.

"This one is for the Crimson Fungus," Wyntor said. "The Crimson Fungus is quite big, which is why it takes up several floors."

Nick took a deep breath as he looked at the door.

The Crimson Fungus.

The most powerful Specter inside the city, except for the occasional visit of Nurse Alice.

Chapter 204 – Specialist

Nick and Wyntor kept climbing floors.

The next couple of floors were for Extractors again.

Then, there were two more floors for normal personnel.

And finally, Wyntor stopped in front of one of them.

"This one is for meetings, managers, and owners," Wyntor said. "There are only two more floors above this one, and they are only for maintenance. This floor is essentially the last one of relevance."

Nick nodded.

The two of them had been climbing so many floors.

This building was absolutely gigantic!

Wyntor opened the door, and the two of them entered the hallway.

This hallway looked identical to the first one, which surprised Nick a bit.

Wasn't this where all the important people from the company stayed?

'I thought it would look more extravagant,' Nick thought.

As the two of them walked through the hallway, Nick looked at the signs again.

Meeting room, another meeting room, another meeting room, storage, meeting room...

Area manager.

"What's an area manager?" Nick asked.

"A level five Extractor responsible for several level four Extractors, which are responsible for several level three Extractors," Wyntor explained.

"There are five area managers. Two of them are responsible for all the level three Extractors via ten level four Extractors. The other three are responsible for only the level four Extractors."

"The remaining level five Extractors don't have any personnel responsibility and directly work with the level five Specters."

As he listened to Wyntor, Nick looked at the door with wonder.

A level five Extractor!

He had never seen one in his life!

This was someone who was even stronger than Albert, Julian, and the two women at Kugelblitz's entrance!

Next, Nick saw the office of another level five Extractor.

The sign said Specialist, which was the unofficial title.

Since this was not an area manager, this level five Extractor was working with Fanatics.

How scary were Fanatics?

Nick had no idea.

Clink.

Nick heard the sound of a closing door and looked forward.

A young man with blue hair closed one of the doors and walked down the hallway towards the two of them.

Nick took a deep breath.

A real Specialist!

There were less than 30 of those in the entirety of the city, and over two-thirds of them worked for Kugelblitz!

The man raised an eyebrow when he saw the two of them.

"Oh, Wyntor," the man said casually. "Here to see your dad?"

Wyntor smiled politely. "Yes, how have things been?"

"The usual, the bitch is being a bitch again," the man said.

Wyntor laughed loudly and politely.

Nick looked at Wyntor.

He had never seen Wyntor act this way before.

Wyntor always had a very polite but confident Aura around him.

But now, Wyntor looked like a child who tried their best to be polite to a visitor.

He was so different.

"And who is that?" the man asked, looking at Nick.

"That's my Chief Zephyx Extractor, Nick," Wyntor answered politely.

"Oh, eh, hi," Nick said.

Then, Nick's hand moved forward.

SLAP!

And Wyntor immediately slapped it down before it could even attempt to extend towards the Specialist.

Nick blinked in shock.

The Specialist saw all that, and his eyebrows rose.

If Wyntor hadn't gone through years of training about how to properly conduct himself, he would have turned completely red in the face.

'That's what I get for not telling Nick,' he thought.

"Oh, I see," the Specialist said with an amused chuckle. "You're from the Outer City, right?"

"Ah, yes, sir," Nick said carefully.

Nick had no idea how he should address the person in front of him.

"You might not know, but don't offer your hand to any Expert or stronger. They might get offended by that," the Specialist explained.

Nick's eyes widened in shock. "Why?" he asked.

"I'm sure Wyntor will explain it to you," the Specialist said before turning to Wyntor. "Anyway, have fun."

"Of course, thank you, and good luck!" Wyntor said.

"Thank you and good luck," Nick echoed Wyntor.

The Specialist just waved a bit as he walked down the hallway.

A moment later, Nick looked with confusion at Wyntor, who only sighed.

As they continued walking down the hallway, Wyntor explained the thing about handshakes.

"So, when I offered my hand to the two women earlier, I was telling them that I considered myself to be on their level?" Nick asked in shock.

"Yes, but that's not incorrect. As a Chief Zephyx Extractor, it's not inappropriate to put yourself on the same level as an Expert. I didn't tell you since I wanted you to assert yourself in front of such powerful people," Wyntor explained.

Nick furrowed his brows. "You don't think that I would do that if you had told me?"

"I'm not sure," Wyntor said. "Nick, can we talk about this later? This is not exactly the right moment for this discussion."

Nick took a deep breath but nodded.

Wyntor was right.

This could wait.

They continued walking in silence, but while they were doing so, Nick remembered a couple of things.

'Right, Dark Dream is only a means to an end for Wyntor.'

'Wyntor started Dark Dream only to get enough money to buy enough shares of Kugelblitz to get his inheritance.'

'I think he needed about 20 million credits.'

'And if he sold Dark Dream to another Manufacturer, he could probably get that.'

'Maybe even more.'

Nick looked at Wyntor from behind.

'Is he going to sell Dark Dream soon?'

Then, Nick thought back to his interaction with Wyntor.

Several times, Wyntor had deliberately kept information from Nick to achieve some kind of goal.

This could be considered as manipulating him.

Wyntor also kept himself away from all the employees most of the time.

Did Wyntor actually truly care about Dark Dream?

Nick wasn't sure anymore.

The day before, he would have said yes, but now, he didn't know.

Some seconds later, Wyntor stopped in front of an office.

Nick looked at the sign beside the door and took a deep breath.

Vernon Melfion, Senior Director.

Then, Wyntor knocked on the door.

Chapter 205 – Vernon

Wyntor knocked on the door, but he didn't even wait for an answer and entered anyway.

Nick took a deep breath and followed Wyntor.

"Ah, Wyntor, glad you're here."

Nick heard the voice of a relatively young adult, which surprised him.

The voice sounded like it came from somebody between the ages of 20 to 35.

Wasn't this Wyntor's father?

A moment later, Nick saw a man sitting at a desk.

The man had blonde hair and looked to be in his late twenties.

Nick wasn't attracted to men, but even he could tell that this was probably the most beautiful man in the city.

He had perfectly white and smooth skin, and his hair was thick and voluminous. It almost looked like his strands of hair didn't cling to each other but hung individually from his head.

He looked athletic, but his build leaned more towards stamina and speed than raw power.

'That's not Wyntor's father, right?' Nick thought in shock.

"Hey, Dad," Wyntor said neutrally.

He didn't seem happy or sad.

He just seemed very nonchalant and normal.

'Wait, so that's actually Wyntor's father?!' Nick thought.

A moment later, Mr. Melfion stood up and walked around his desk.

He put his hand on Wyntor's shoulder and looked at Nick with a friendly smile. "You must be Nick, right? I've heard plenty about you."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Melfion, sir," Nick said as he did his best to recover from the shock.

Mr. Melfion just laughed. "No need to be so formal and uptight. You're my son's friend! Just call me Vernon."

Nick took a deep breath. His anxiety reduced, but he was still nervous.

Even though Vernon had said that Nick didn't need to be formal, he still didn't want to make a mistake.

"Thank you... Vernon," Nick said with an awkward long pause.

Vernon just smiled and held his hand out for a handshake.

Nick reflexively grabbed the hand and shook it.

Vernon's hand was surprisingly firm, but he wasn't using any power.

As soon as Nick touched the hand, he immediately knew that Vernon was vastly more powerful than him.

'He's definitely a Zephyx Extractor and not a weak one!' Nick thought.

"Did you find your way here all right?" Vernon asked.

"Dad, I'm here all the time," Wyntor said.

Vernon just smiled with embarrassment. "Oh wow, sorry. I accidentally slipped into corporate speak. It kind of comes with a new person being in my office."

Vernon threw a quick smile at Nick.

Surprisingly, that made Nick calm down quite a bit.

Of course, he knew that Vernon was a human like everyone else, but when one sat in front of incredible power, it was difficult to remember that fact.

Sure enough, Vernon was just a guy like any other.

He just controlled the biggest force of Zephyx Extractors in the city, owned enough money to buy the Outer City, and could tear Nick apart with two fingers.

But he was just a man.

"Did you show him around?" Vernon asked Wyntor.

Wyntor nodded. "I told him about the floors."

"You should've taken him to the training floor. I bet he would have loved seeing that," Vernon said.

Then, he turned to Nick. "Are you interested in seeing the training floor for Newbies and Johns? If you want, you can also stay for a while after the meeting and get familiar with it."

In truth, Nick was actually really interested in the training floor.

How did Kugelblitz train their powerful recruits?

"Thank you for the offer, but I have to return soon. I have a lot of work waiting for me at Dark Dream," Nick said.

"Of course, I forgot that you are a Chief Zephyx Extractor. I understand. Some other time, okay?" Vernon added.

"Sure," Nick answered with a nod.

After working for Dark Dream for nearly two years, Nick was no longer new to the corporate world, and he knew that Vernon was only being polite.

If Nick actually accepted that offer, Vernon would probably be a bit annoyed but would show him around anyway, just to be nice.

Or he would just tell Wyntor to do it.

"By the way, Nick," Vernon said, "have you thought about moving to the Inner City?"

"Oh, no, not yet," Nick said. "I also don't think I want to move there."

"How come? Do you like the bustling outside?" Vernon asked with a smile.

Wyntor didn't say anything and just walked to some kind of apparatus sitting on top of a small closet.

"It's more about Dark Dream being in the Outer City," Nick said. "I don't like being too far from my workplace, and I grew up in the Outer City."

Wyntor pressed a couple of buttons on the apparatus.

CRRRRRRRRRRRR!

The apparatus made a loud grinding noise, and Nick looked with shock at the apparatus Wyntor was using.

Why was that thing so loud?!

"That's just the coffee machine," Vernon said with a chuckle. "It's loud, but the coffee is worth it! Wyntor, make one for Nick as well!"

"Sure," Wyntor said casually. "You also want one?"

"I had mine already," Vernon said.

Wyntor just nodded.

The next moment, Nick saw brown liquid coming out of the machine and entering a cup.

"You're going to love this," Vernon said with a smirk. "No one has left my office hating my coffee."

Nick looked with confusion at the brown liquid coming out of the apparatus. "What's coffee?"

Vernon seemed a bit excited when Nick asked that question.

"An entire life without coffee," Vernon mused. "You are going to think that you wasted your entire life after drinking this!"

Nick just blinked a couple of times, not sure how to answer.

"Coffee is a beverage made by filtering water through ground-up and toasted coffee beans. It has a strong and bitter taste, but the caffeine in it wakes you up and brings color and excitement back into a dreary morning filled with work!"

"You see, the way this machine operates..."

Nick just kept looking at Vernon in silence as he kept going on and on about coffee, its effects, how it was produced, how the machine worked, and so on.

Nick had not expected that he would be listening to a lesson about some beverage when he had entered Vernon's office.

Chapter 206 – Chatting

"Dad, bring it to a close," Wyntor said as he put a cup of coffee in front of Nick.

Nick looked with surprise, interest, and a bit of awe at the cup of coffee in front of him.

Vernon had sung its praises for over three minutes, and based on what he said, this thing seemed to be just as magical as Recovery Liquid.

Vernon looked like he wanted to continue talking, but he just took a deep breath.

"Sorry, I got carried away," he said, a friendly smile back on his face. "I just like my coffee."

"No, no, it was interesting," Nick said quickly. "I never knew about beans and that they could be turned into liquid."

Vernon slightly furrowed his brows. "Well, it's technically not liquid beans."

Nick blinked in confusion. "Didn't you say it's bean juice?"

"It's not," Wyntor said from the side, interjecting before Vernon could work himself into another sermon about coffee. "It's water that filters through crushed beans. It's like if you keep water in a very, very rusty container for a while, and it starts to be rusty and disgusting."

"Except that this is actually good," Wyntor added.

"Oh, I get it!" Nick said in realization as he looked at the coffee.

When the water had left the apparatus, it had been brown, but when he looked at it in the cup, it looked deep black.

Changing color was quite magical.

"Don't you think sugar and milk would be better for his first time?" Vernon asked Wyntor.

Nick looked up in confusion.

What was sugar and milk?

Wyntor just dismissively waved at Vernon while he put some kind of white liquid into his own coffee.

Vernon just raised his eyebrows in surprise and looked with interest at Nick.

He saw Nick sniffing the coffee.

'This is so interesting!' both of them thought.

"There's nothing in there, right?" Nick asked.

"No, just coffee," Wyntor answered. "Just drink it."

However, Nick was still a bit apprehensive.

After looking at the black water, an image shot through Nick's mind.

An image of something that looked almost identical.

This coffee looked like the liquid of the sewers.

That was just as black.

'Just get it over with,' Nick thought.

"Well, okay," Nick answered.

Then, he lifted the cup by grabbing the bottom and took a big gulp.

Nick was immediately assaulted by a bitter taste, but he didn't mind much.

The insects and mosquito larvae tasted similar.

The bitter taste reminded Nick of the Dregs, and even better, it most likely wasn't unhealthy or poisonous.

Otherwise, Vernon and Wyntor probably wouldn't drink it.

Vernon's eyes slightly widened in interest as he saw that Nick's face didn't scrunch up due to the bitterness.

Nick took another gulp and sloshed it around in his mouth.

Sure enough, it was just water.

Bitter and black water.

Then, he just looked with interest at the remaining coffee in his cup.

It was an interesting taste.

He wasn't opposed to it.

"What do you think?" Vernon asked, almost nervously.

"It's... good," Nick said, looking at Vernon. "I like it."

Vernon smiled brightly when he heard that, and it was like his confidence exploded. "See? I told you it's great!"

Nick nodded.

"Wyntor, quick, I want to see what he thinks of it if we add some milk and sugar!" Vernon said with some excitement.

Wyntor just wordlessly grabbed Nick's cup and added some milk and sugar.

After some investigation, Nick decided to drink that as well.

But this time, he was stunned into silence.

So sweet!

Holy shit!

Fuck!

What the fuck was this?!

How was this so fucking good?!

It was like Nick's body cried out as it tasted the sugar.

Immediately, Nick got the urge to consume all of it and get even more!

Nick immediately downed it and looked at Vernon with widely opened eyes.

"This is amazing!" he said.

Vernon smiled in excitement and pride.

He knew that his coffee was amazing!

No one ever left his office without liking the coffee!

"I'll make you another cup," Vernon said as he stood up from his chair to walk to the coffee machine.

"Yes, please. Thank you!" Nick said.

For the next ten minutes, Nick and Vernon just kept talking about coffee while Wyntor just silently stood to the side, going through a couple of papers that Vernon had lying around in his office.

"Did you get a new Fanatic?" Wyntor suddenly asked without looking up from the paper.

Vernon smiled and looked at Wyntor. "Ah, you noticed?"

Wyntor nodded. "Big increase in Zephyx without a major change among the teams. I guess one of the Elders became a Fanatic."

Vernon just looked with pride at Wyntor. "Yep, the... oh, sorry, forget it," Vernon said while turning to look at Nick.

It seemed like Vernon wanted to talk about the Specter but kept himself in check when he remembered that Nick was also here.

They continued talking for five more minutes.

"Oh, right, I remember that we were talking about you moving into the Inner City earlier," Vernon said.

"I'm not planning on moving there," Nick answered casually. By now, he was fully relaxed and just casually chatted with Vernon.

"Why not?" Vernon asked.

"Because Dark Dream is in the Outer City," Nick said.

"Yeah, sure, but I'm talking about after that," Vernon said.

Nick furrowed his brows. "I'm not sure what you mean."

Vernon raised an eyebrow. "I mean, Wyntor is going to sell Dark Dream to Kugelblitz, and all of you will be incorporated into the training program for new hires."

"It would be a bit strange to have you living in the Outer City while you're working for Kugelblitz," Vernon said casually.

Nick took a deep breath.

Sure enough, his suspicions had been confirmed.

Wyntor was going to sell Dark Dream to Kugelblitz.

"You didn't tell him?" Vernon asked Wyntor after noticing Nick's reaction.

Wyntor casually sipped on his coffee.

Then, he put his coffee down and looked at Nick.

Chapter 207 – Seat

Nick looked at the desk in front of him with furrowed brows as Wyntor looked at Nick.

Then, Wyntor turned to Vernon.

"When did I tell you?" Wyntor asked.

Vernon's eyebrows rose in confusion. "Eh, you didn't."

"So, why do you think I'm going to sell Dark Dream to Kugelblitz?" Wyntor asked casually.

Vernon was taken aback, and his expression seemed like he had just heard the weirdest thing.

"Why wouldn't you? This is all about the inheritance anyway," Vernon said.

"It used to be," Wyntor said.

"So, it's not anymore?" Vernon asked.

Wyntor nodded.

Nick almost felt like he couldn't believe what he was hearing, and some hope appeared in his heart.

"What am I supposed to do with 0.05% of Kugelblitz?" Wyntor asked. "Sit on my ass and just watch other people do the work for me?"

Vernon chuckled a bit. "That's what everyone wants, isn't it?"

"Then, why are you in this office?" Wyntor asked. "Do you really need to be here?"

Vernon furrowed his brows.

Plenty of arguments shot through his head.

"I need to keep watch over my investment."

"I need to make sure that everything runs."

"It is my duty to oversee all of this."

Yet, Vernon was a very experienced and powerful businessman.

All of these arguments were disingenuous.

He could easily delegate all of his duties to the area managers and chief executives, and the company would not suffer one bit.

"You want something to do? That can be arranged. Having you in business planning would help us a lot," Vernon said.

Wyntor just chuckled. "Would you be proud of wealth that you inherited? Wealth and power that you had no hand in creating?"

"Our positions are different," Vernon said with a neutral voice. "You can't argue matters of taste with people with vastly different pasts."

"I'm not," Wyntor said. "What's there to argue about when we have the same taste in this thing?"

"Are you saying that you're not happy with the inheritance?" Vernon asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Happy or unhappy isn't relevant," Wyntor said. "Having or not having isn't important."

Vernon remained silent as he looked at Wyntor with interest and skepticism.

"Initially, I only did this for the inheritance," Wyntor said, "but things have changed."

Vernon just listened.

"When I saw Dark Dream taking form and becoming bigger, I felt so accomplished. This little thing that I created with Nick was growing bigger and more powerful."

"I had more things to do, and I could feel that my decisions and actions had a great impact on the lives of others, mostly my employees."

"I've never felt anything like this before, and I don't think I want to give this up."

Then, Wyntor smirked.

"At least not until I have a similar level of power and responsibility somewhere else."

Wyntor grabbed his own cup and also took Nick's cup before walking to the coffee machine.

"Now, if I got a seat on the board of directors, things would be different," Wyntor said with a devious smirk.

"A seat on the board of directors," Vernon repeated with a flat tone.

Wyntor put the dirty cups beside the coffee machine and went back to his earlier spot.

"Are you serious?" Vernon asked.

"I am," Wyntor answered.

"This is not some kind of trick to gain my sympathy or something?" Vernon asked.

"Do I look like Ardum?" Wyntor asked.

"You do. You're brothers," Vernon said.

Wyntor's smile dropped as he looked at his father without amusement.

"Yes, yes, just a joke," Vernon said with a small chuckle.

Wyntor rolled his eyes.

"Yes, I'm serious," Wyntor said. "I'm not interested in the inheritance. At least not while you and mom are still alive."

Vernon leaned back in his chair as he rubbed his chin in thought.

"So, you want to earn your money," Vernon said. "Because we both know that you're not getting a seat on the board of directors with 0.05%."

"You have to have at least 5% of equity in the company."

"To buy that, you would need to exchange about 50% of something the size of Ghosty's Lab. That's wealth that even I respect," Vernon said.

"I know," Wyntor said casually.

Vernon just looked at Wyntor for a while.

While he was doing so, he was reminded of his own past.

Vernon had been hired as a Zephyx Extractor in a company that didn't exist anymore.

At one point, he lost his job after messing up while working with a Specter.

Sometime later, he got scouted by a much smaller Manufacturer, and he joined as their Chief Zephyx Extractor.

Many years later, he gave the job to someone else since he noticed that he was much more talented in the business end of things.

Of course, that Manufacturer was Kugelblitz.

Back when Vernon joined Kugelblitz, Kugelblitz was barely worth as much as Solace was worth today.

Vernon often looked back on his life with a fond view.

He was happy where he was today, but he also missed the days of rapid progress a bit.

He had been so full of energy back then.

Vernon looked at his coffee machine.

Nowadays, the most exciting part of his day was drinking his coffee.

He just sighed.

"Are you sure about this?" Vernon asked, looking at Wyntor.

Wyntor nodded. "I thought long and hard about this."

Vernon sighed again.

"I made you work so hard for the inheritance, and now that I can finally give it to you, you don't even want it anymore," Vernon muttered.

"Just give it to Samar," Wyntor said. "She's already basically your assistant."

"She's an Extractor, not a businesswoman," Vernon said.

"Even better," Wyntor answered. "At least she has the power to back up her wealth."

Vernon snorted a quick laugh before sighing again.

After that, he looked at Nick.

"Well, seems like you don't need to move to the Inner City anymore," he said with a bitter smile.

"And I was so excited to have someone who shares my passion for coffee."

Chapter 208 – Meeting Room

Nick didn't immediately answer Vernon and just looked at Wyntor.

Right now, Nick wasn't sure how to feel.

On one hand, he was so happy that Wyntor wasn't selling Dark Dream, but on the other hand, Nick felt guilty.

He felt like he had betrayed Wyntor a little bit.

Although, it couldn't really be called a betrayal.

After all, Wyntor had made clear that he had only created Dark Dream for his inheritance.

Earlier, when Nick had heard that he would be joining Kugelblitz and entering their training program, he had felt bad.

Sure, Kugelblitz was amazing and powerful, but Nick would definitely lose his position as Chief Zephyx Extractor.

He wouldn't even become an area manager or team leader.

He wouldn't even be a "normal" Zephyx Extractor.

He would just become a trainee.

From Chief Zephyx Extractor to trainee.

That would be a brutal drop in status.

Even more, Nick most likely wouldn't have the resources to work on his powers fully.

Would Kugelblitz have caught the Fog just for him?

No, definitely not.

They also wouldn't have given Nick two personal trainers like Manela or Reynold.

His weapons also wouldn't have been as good.

Sure, Nick's path toward the third level would be without problems since everyone in Kugelblitz reached that level, but then, he would just become a normal employee.

Even more, Nick would have to unveil his ability to the upper level of Kugelblitz, and he wasn't sure if they were willing to put effort into researching his power to give it a good evolution.

They might even decide to turn Nick into a spy.

Sure, Nick's skillset was quite good for a spy, but he didn't want to be one.

Metaphorically speaking, Nick's personality was like light, but his skillset was like darkness.

He wouldn't be happy with being a spy or assassin or whatever.

And now, he wouldn't need to be.

Nick enjoyed working with his colleagues and improving Dark Dream.

Nick couldn't help a small and peaceful smile forming on his face as he looked at the table.

Even though Vernon hadn't known Nick for long, he was experienced enough to tell what Nick was thinking about.

"Wyntor is a good boss," Vernon told Nick.

Nick just nodded.

Wyntor didn't show any reaction.

The next moment, Vernon looked at a small thing he was wearing on his wrist.

"It's a bit early, but I think we can already start going to the meeting room," he said as he slowly stood up.

Wyntor also stood up and put the scattered sheets of paper back into an orderly pile.

Nick nodded and followed Vernon to the door.

"Are you going to represent Kugelblitz today?" Nick asked.

"Yes, I volunteered," Vernon said with a laugh. "I want to see Wyntor in action."

"What's there to see?" Wyntor asked with boredom. "Dark Dream is not truly part of any of this. We don't even give the city any Extractors."

"You two are part of the meeting, and that's all that counts," Vernon said.

Suddenly, Vernon stopped moving and opened a random door.

"We're already going to the meeting room," he spoke into the room.

"I'll join you later!"

Nick heard the soft voice of a young woman coming out of the room.

"Sure," Vernon said before closing the door and continuing walking.

Nick knew that every Zephyx Manufacturer was represented by the Chief Zephyx Extractor and an owner in the meeting, and since Vernon was taking part as the owner, it meant that the voice had most likely belonged to Kugelblitz's Chief Zephyx Extractor.

'She sounded quite young,' Nick thought.

'Vernon also seems quite young, even though he has several adult children.'

'Does the increased longevity of Zephyx really have such a strong effect?'

The more powerful one became, the longer they could live.

However, that effect only became apparent after one became an Expert.

The effects of increased longevity weren't very strong for level three or weaker Extractors.

Nick had heard that an Expert would still be in fighting condition when they were already over a hundred years old, which was crazy!

Most people in the Dregs died in their thirties, and only very few people managed to reach their fifties.

The fact that Vernon looked so young while definitely being above 60 meant that he was, at least, an Expert.

Yet, even the Chief Zephyx Extractor sounded so young.

How long did it take to become a Hero, a level six Zephyx Extractor?

Nick had already needed two years to become a John, and becoming a Veteran would take even longer.

How long would Nick take to become a Veteran?

Five years?

Ten years?

What about becoming an Expert?

20 years?

Specialist?

30 years?

40 years?

A Hero?

The Chief Zephyx Extractor had to be at least 100 years old.

And yet, she sounded so young.

Nick looked at Vernon, who was walking in front of him.

Vernon looked like he was in his late 20s or early 30s.

It was so strange to come to terms with the fact that these old people looked like young people.

After a bit of walking, the three of them entered a meeting room.

It was big!

There was a huge and long table in the middle of the room, and there was probably space for over a hundred people on that table!

Even more, Nick had no idea what the table was made out of.

It seemed much... softer? Nick wasn't sure what word to use.

It was still hard, but it felt a bit soft and warm.

"Nobody's here yet, just as expected," Vernon said as he walked to the end of the table.

Yet, before he reached the end, he grabbed one of the chairs and sat down.

Surprisingly, as the representative of Kugelblitz, he didn't sit at the head of the table.

However, he sat near the corner.

The head of the table could fit over five people, but essentially, Vernon sat beside the head.

"Your places are over there," Vernon said, pointing diagonally toward the other end of the table.

Wyntor wordlessly walked over and grabbed a seat near the end of the table.

Then, he gestured for Nick to take the seat beside him, which was directly adjacent to the bottom of the table.

"Sorry, but it's policy during the yearly meeting," Vernon said with a bit of embarrassment.

"I know," Wyntor said.

Naturally, Nick knew what this meant.

The people were arranged based on the prestige and power of their company.

As the owner, Wyntor sat in front of Nick.

The same thing would be true for Kugelblitz.

Vernon would be sitting in front of the Chief Zephyx Extractor.

As the most powerful Manufacturer, Kugelblitz would take the highest seat, while Dark Dream would take the lowest.

Yet, surprisingly, the head and the bottom of the table were empty.

Who would sit there?

Chapter 209 – Aria

The three of them continued talking for a while more, but it was slightly more awkward since Vernon was essentially on the other side of the room.

"By the way, Nick," Vernon said. "Don't get surprised when I act like an arrogant asshole in the meeting. I have to do that since, officially, Kugelblitz can't act like it's on the same level as any other Manufacturer."

"I understand," Nick said. "Thank you for warning me."

Nick understood that, officially, Kugelblitz couldn't act all buddy-buddy with a Manufacturer like Dark Dream.

Nick looked at the big clock hanging on the wall inside the room.

'About 20 more minutes to go before the meeting,' he thought.

At that point, the door opened, and Nick looked over.

He was quite excited about meeting all the powerful people in the world.

After the door opened, Nick saw a young and beautiful smiling woman with blonde hair.

She looked to be in her early 20s, and just like Vernon, her skin and hair were flawless.

As soon as she entered, Nick felt his heart stop, and the light in the room focused on her.

He felt like she was the source of all the light in the room with her beautiful smile.

Nick had never seen anyone this beautiful, and he was completely stunned.

When she entered, she threw a quick and polite nod at Nick, and Nick just answered in kind, but his nod was awkward.

"Hey, Aria," Wyntor said nonchalantly.

"Hi, Wyntor," she answered with a motherly voice as she walked over to Vernon.

Then, she sat down beside Vernon.

'So, she's Kugelblitz' Chief Zephyx Extractor,' Nick thought as he took a deep breath.

"How did it go?" Vernon asked casually.

Aria just sighed. "As Koran always says, the bitch is being a bitch again," she said.

Vernon laughed loudly. "I'm so glad I handed that job over to you."

"It's not all bad," Aria said with a chuckle. "It can also be a lot of fun."

"Right?" she asked as she suddenly turned to Nick.

Nick felt his heart rate speed up as soon as Aria addressed him.

"Eh, yes, I guess?" Nick answered.

"Are there any Specters you have issues with?" Aria asked. "You naturally don't have to tell me any specifics since that's confidential."

Nick thought about the Specters they had.

"Well, there's no reason to keep the Fog a secret since everyone knows about that one," Nick said.

Wyntor didn't interject.

Everyone knew that Dark Dream had the Fog.

"Force Specters are always troublesome," Aria said. "What's the issue with the Fog?"

"You have to be stronger than it to escape from its grasp, and you have to be in its domain to work with it," Nick explained.

"That's an issue with most Force Specters," Aria explained. "Force Specters are not very smart, and they basically use all their power whenever they can."

"Either they keep someone restrained, or they start attacking them with all their force. Either way, Force Specters almost always need very powerful Extractors."

"But based on what I just heard, you're actually in luck with the Fog. You can just send an Extractor in and then send a strong Extractor in to get them out when it is time. At least they don't have to resist the assault of the Fog," Aria said.

Nick nodded. "Yeah, sadly, that's always me since I'm the only one strong enough for that."

Aria's eyes widened a bit.

Then, she leaned back.

"Right, I forgot that you guys are THIS new," she said. "A Specter that needs the Chief Zephyx Extractor to personally become active. I only have to get involved very rarely, and there are only two Specters that would do that."

"Luckily, only the bitch requires me to go to her frequently, but it's also not that frequently," Aria said with a chuckle.

By now, Nick got very interested in whatever bitch they were talking about.

That thing seemed to be a huge issue.

"Your name is Nick, right?" Aria asked.

"Oh, yes," Nick said.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Aria," she said with a smile from the other side of the room. "I'm a bit far away for a handshake. Hope you don't mind."

"No, no, it's fine!" Nick answered.

For a while, Aria talked with Nick and Wyntor about just random things.

She was almost like an aunt who was interested in her nephews' little projects.

Some minutes later, the door opened again, and everyone looked over.

Nick saw three men walking into the room.

One of them was older and neatly dressed.

One of them was middle-aged and dressed casually.

The last one...

'Hey, I know that guy!' Nick thought.

Nick remembered this guy and his entourage walking through the Dregs every couple of weeks several years ago.

The guy had brown hair and wore a nice suit, and every couple of weeks, he would stand on a podium in the Dregs and talk about how he was going to improve the lives of the people living there.

He would make it so that none of them had to be hungry anymore, and so on.

Yet, nothing ever happened.

He just kept talking and talking, but nothing actually happened.

Sure, he sometimes donated some food, but it was only once every couple of weeks and less than five kilos for the entirety of the Dregs.

Nick also remembered that the guy always asked the people to vote for him in some kind of election, but Nick had never really paid any attention.

He had been too busy surviving, like 90% of the Dregs.

As soon as the three of them entered, they bowed politely to Nick, Wyntor, Vernon, and Aria before taking their seat...

At the bottom of the table.

Nick looked to his side.

He now sat directly beside the three of them.

Two of them noticed Nick looking, and they just smiled back politely.

Nick blinked a couple of times and whispered in Wyntor's ear.

"Who are those?" he asked.

"Representatives of the common people," Wyntor answered. "We have one guy representing the common people of the middle layer, one guy representing the lower layer, and one guy representing the Outer City."

"They've been added to the meeting several years ago so that the common people have an opportunity to make their opinions known."

Nick looked with surprise at the three of them.

The common people had representation?

That was good, right?

"Of course, they don't have any power whatsoever," Wyntor said.

Nick was deflated rather quickly.

"Anyone of them that interjects in the meeting without being asked to gets replaced by the next one."

"Their job is to be here, watch, and keep the actual contents of the meeting secret."

Chapter 210 – Nick Nick

Nick could only sigh.

And here he was, hoping that not everything was doom and gloom.

How mistaken he had been.

Surprisingly, Aria, Vernon, and Wyntor continued talking like the three people at the bottom of the table weren't there.

It was like they were just air.

But that wasn't even everything.

Two of the people took out some kind of square object with many small sheets of paper in it and started reading.

Nick had seen binders with sheets of paper in Wyntor's office, but these squares seemed to be a bit different.

The sheets of paper didn't seem removable, and they were all covered in writing.

Then, Nick remembered something that he had once heard.

Was this a book?

He had never seen a book!

Nick just looked with wonder at the book that one of them was reading, making the reader feel quite uncomfortable.

"It's a book," Wyntor said after noticing Nick's interest. "It has words in it."

"I know that," Nick shot back with a bit of annoyance.

On the other side of the room, Aria was chuckling, and Vernon was looking at Nick with interest.

Someone that didn't know what a book was...

This was so interesting and unique!

All three of the representatives took out some things to occupy themselves with.

It seemed like they didn't even pretend to pay attention or take this seriously.

Then, the door opened again, and two people walked in.

The two of them wore grey uniforms with the emblem of an expanding room on their chest.

Nick immediately recognized them by their color and the emblem.

The Spartans.

The Spartans were a new company of three Veterans who left their old Manufacturers to create a new one.

Nick had heard about them two years ago, and back then, they hadn't had a level three Specter yet.

He wondered if they had managed to capture one by now.

Both of the Spartans looked quite similar. They both seemed to be in their late 30s or early 40s, and they seemed quite serious.

One of them had grey hair, and the other had black hair.

In a way, they looked a bit like brothers.

The two of them looked at Vernon and Aria, giving a respectful greeting.

Aria and Vernon just gave two short nods without any smiles, and Aria wordlessly pointed at two chairs near the end of the table.

But compared to the last meeting, they were not directly beside the bottom of the table.

There were a couple of empty seats between them and the bottom.

Wyntor stood up with a polite smile, and when Nick saw that, he copied Wyntor's demeanor.

"Nice to meet you. We're Dark Dream, and we're taking the lowest spot of the meeting this time," Wyntor said with a smile.

The Spartan with the black hair raised an eyebrow.

Then, he extended his hand across the table for a handshake.

Wyntor had to lean quite a bit across the table, making his position awkward, while the Spartan kept a straight back.

This position was a bit humiliating for Wyntor.

Then, the other Spartan offered his hand to Nick in the same way.

Nick had already noticed what was going on, and he didn't like it one bit.

However, Nick had to be respectful and accept the hand.

But he also didn't want to bend over backward for them, almost literally.

So...

Nick sat on top of the table, scooted forward, and shook the hand while having a straight back.

Cough, cough, hugh, crk.

Vernon sounded like he had just inhaled a cup of coffee with his lungs, and Aria looked at Nick with surprise.

Wyntor saw what Nick was doing, and his face became a bit red.

But then, he covertly gritted his teeth.

And sat on the table the same way as Nick.

Now, all four of them could shake hands with straight backs.

The two Spartans looked at Wyntor and Nick with confused expressions.

They looked like they were deciding whether Wyntor's and Nick's actions were smart or insulting.

In the end, their serious expressions returned, and the handshake ended naturally.

On the other end of the table, Vernon scratched his face with his hand, covering most of it.

However, behind his hand was an amused smile.

Aria did her best to keep her laughter in check.

She found this quite hilarious.

"John Keyweather, CEO," the man with grey hair said.

'John?' Nick thought. 'Then, wasn't he John the John when he was a John?'

'Is that why he's so angry all the time?'

Sure enough, everyone had a history of past trauma.

"Kallum Sondur, Chief Zephyx Extractor," the one with black hair said.

"Wyntor Melfion, CEO."

"Nick... Nick, Chief Zephyx Extractor."

The two looked at Nick in surprise.

Nick Nick?

John Mayweather felt a slight feeling of companionship with Nick Nick, almost making him feel bad about asking Nick to assume such a humiliating position.

Meanwhile, Vernon moved closer to Aria and whispered in her ear. "This is going to be a fun one."

Aria nodded with a smile.

John and Kallum took their seats on the table, and then...

Silence.

Nobody was talking anymore.

Nick also noticed that Aria and Vernon seemed different from before.

They appeared much more serious and hard to talk to.

A minute later, the door opened again, and two people walked in.

It was a slightly older lady with grey hair and a younger woman with blonde hair.

The younger woman looked a bit similar to Aria, but there was a certain kind of purity missing.

The two of them were wearing yellow uniforms with the symbol of a candle.

They were obviously from Solace.

Solace had several Veterans and even an Expert, but they didn't own an Elder Specter yet, which made it difficult for them to continue growing.

The two from Solace shook hands with the two from the Spartans, and then, they focused on Nick and Wyntor.

The older woman smiled brightly as she bent over the desk to meet Wyntor in the middle.

"Nice to see you finally here, Wyntor!" she said.

Wyntor smiled as well and met her in the middle for a handshake. "Nice to be here, Ramona."

The Chief Zephyx Extractor offered Nick a handshake in the same position, meeting him in the middle.

Nick happily accepted.

"Hera Marion, Chief Zephyx Extractor, nice to meet you," she said with a slight smile.

"Nick Nick, Chief Zephyx Extractor, nice to meet you," Nick answered.

Wyntor wanted to look at Nick, but looking away now would be disrespectful.

'Is he actually intending to introduce himself like this? Why?' Wyntor thought.

Meanwhile, Nick just awkwardly smiled.

'It's weird when everyone has a first and last name. If I just say my first name, they might think I'm trying to close the distance, but I don't have a last name.'

'I gave myself Nick as my first name. Might as well give myself a last name as well.'

'The only thing I regret is that I didn't come up with a better one, but I already started with Nick Nick, and now I have to walk to the end with it.'

'From now on, I am Nick Nick, the Chief Zephyx Extractor of Dark Dream!'