The Sun 301

Chapter 301 - Manual Labor

?Nick took a deep breath and readied himself mentally.

The world hadn't felt real for the past day, but right now, Nick felt that the danger to his life was very real.

All the things that happened yesterday and today vanished from Nick's mind, allowing him to focus on the task at hand.

The hammer Nick had received was hanging from his toolbelt, and the two sacks were hanging from his back.

The first thing Nick did was to take one of the grips out of the sack, which wasn't as easy as he had thought.

The sack was hanging quite low, and Nick couldn't reach it just by moving his arm backward.

After a couple of seconds of fidgeting around, Nick noticed that the gap between the grips and the wall was wide enough for his ankle.

Nick put both his feet through the gap and let go of the grips.

The top of Nick's feet were pressing against the metal while his heels were pressing against the grips.

Keeping oneself straight in such a position would require incredible strength and put immense stress on one's body.

But that was exactly why the workers were level two Extractors.

While an Extractor's weight increased when they became more powerful, the increase wasn't really that big.
Nick was about 185 centimeters tall and quite muscular.
A normal person with his build would weigh around 100 kg, but Nick actually weighed around 160 kg.
That was extremely heavy for a normal person, but for someone with a body 50 times as powerful as the average male, this was barely anything.
After Nick let go of the grips, he "straightened" his posture and made sure that the sacks didn't slip off his body.
Then, he extended his right arm "upward" and took out one of the grips and nails.
At that moment, Nick noticed an issue.
He needed one hand for the grip, one for the nail, and one for the hammer.
If he just had to nail something to the ground, he could just position the grip, let go, and then hold the nail.
If he had to nail something to a wall, he could use gravity and hold the lowest point of the thing he was holding while also hammering in the nail at that point.
But here, things became difficult.
The grip was around 30 centimeters wide and could easily fall down.
Clink!

At that moment, Nick heard the sound of something metallic falling to the ground.
Someone must have dropped one of the grips.
Nick looked-
No!
"Hahahaha!"
Nick heard someone laughing from beside him, but he just kept focusing on the metallic "wall" in front of him.
BANG!
A gunshot rang through the atmosphere, and the sound of a body falling to the ground could be heard.
Nick didn't dare to look away from the metal in front of him.
"Never look away from the ceiling," the assistant said. "No matter what. Don't even look at where your tools are. If you drop a grip, ignore it and let it fall."
Nick took a deep breath.
This job was way more terrifying than working with Specters.
Some seconds later, Nick returned to solving the problem of how to attach the grips to the ceiling.

Nick held the grip to the spot where it was supposed to go and held the nail to its corner.
But when Nick tried to hold the grip to the wall with the hand holding the nail, it started to move and bend.
Nick experimented with holding the grip for over two minutes, and slowly, fear was giving way to frustration.
This was annoying.
'If I didn't need the hammer, this would-'
Nick's eyes widened.
Nick noticed that his ability had activated again, which gave him an idea.
He held the grip in the middle with his left arm.
Then, he held the nail on its wide back and moved it towards the hole.
EEEEeeeee!
The loud sound of metal pushing through metal appeared, but the sound became quite a bit quieter after half a second.
Half a second after pushing the nail into the metal, Nick's ability deactivated again.
The assistant was probably looking at Nick from below.
Nick had pushed the nail into the metal.

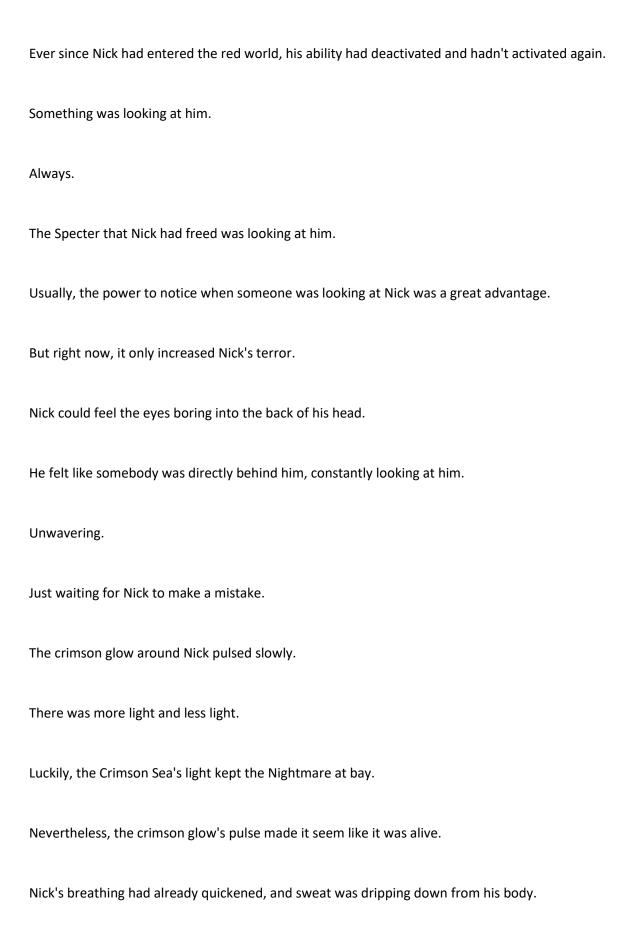
Something like this was impossible to do for normal people but not impossible for Zephyx Extractors. Even though Nick's ability had deactivated, his power was still strong enough to finish pushing in the When Nick was done pushing the nail in, he noticed that the wide head wasn't perfectly aligned with the holes of the grip, which made sense since the nail hadn't been pushed into the ceiling at a 90° angle. CRRR! Nick put his thumb onto the head and bent it so that it looked like it was hammered in straight. 'This probably works,' Nick thought. Then, he grabbed another nail and did the same thing on the other end of the grip. The last two nails were easily pushed in, and Nick looked at the finished grip. "Sir, is it okay like this?" Nick shouted without looking away. "Test it," Nick heard from below him. "I don't care how you did it. In the end, it has to hold." Nick grabbed the hold he had just fixed to the ceiling and let go of the other holds. He was now hanging from the grip with one of his hands, his entire weight on the grip.

Then, Nick slowly did some one-handed pull-ups.

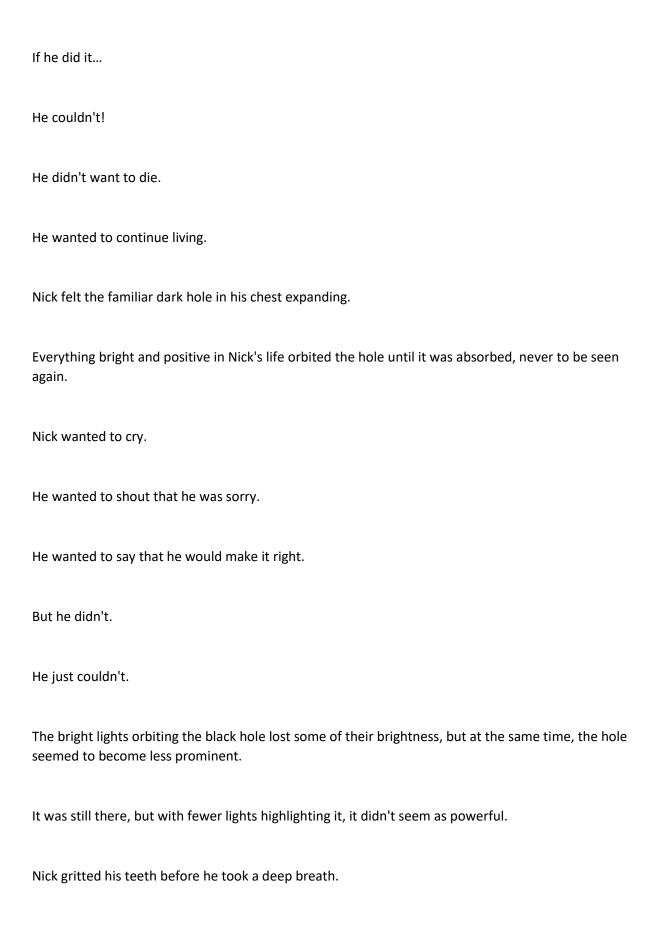
"Looks good," the assistant said from below Nick. "Fix all the others to the ceiling just like this, and you're golden." Nick nodded and returned to his normal position on the ceiling. After Nick had received his feedback from the assistant, more of the Extractors started to ask the same question. Meanwhile, Nick grabbed the next grip and fixed it to the wall the same way. The second one took only about a minute, but he became progressively faster and faster. Whooom. A green gleam appeared around Nick after he moved forward a bit. His Barrier had activated, which could only mean one thing. Nick had reached the end of the platform, and he was now entering the red world. Chapter 302 – Red World ?Nick took a deep breath and grabbed the next grip. He fixed that one onto the wall just like the other ones and continued moving forward. Two minutes later, Nick's entire Barrier was surrounded by red mist. Nick kept looking at the metal in front of him with a fixed gaze, but he could still see the mix of green and red in the corner of his eyes.

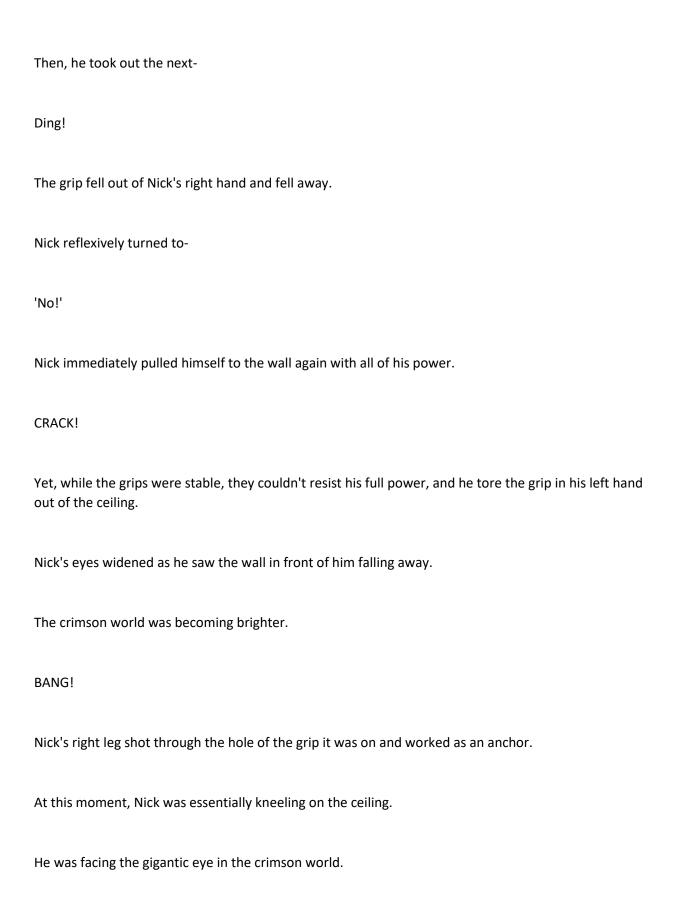
Without asking for it, an image of how he most likely looked right now appeared in Nick's mind.

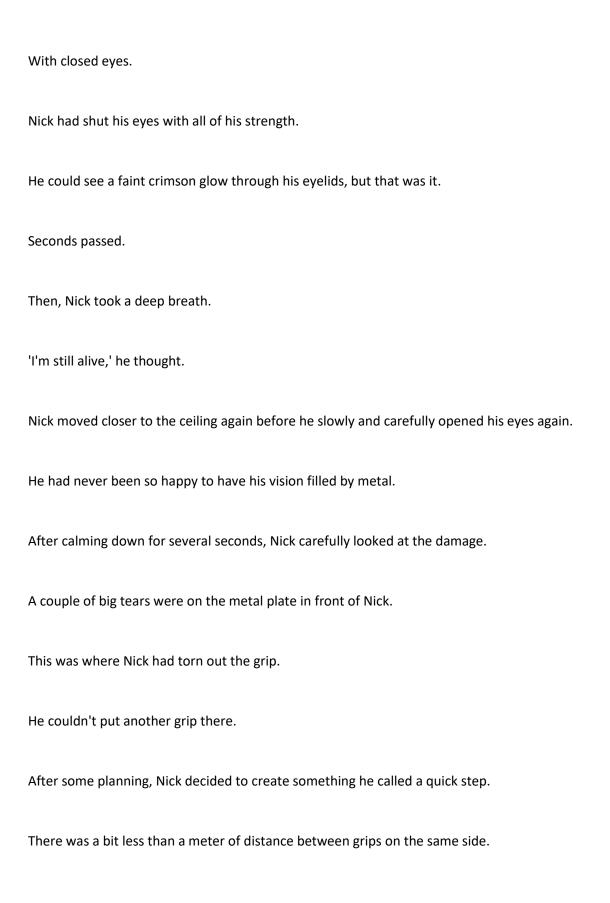
He was facing an endlessly "tall" wall of metal while he was "climbing" it by creating a long ladder.
The world around him was covered in red mist that seemed to blow towards the "wall".
And in the opposite direction
An endless domain of red with eyes in it.
An eye, over ten meters wide, was looking at Nick's back.
Its focus was unwavering, and its gaze intense.
It kept looking at Nick.
And looking.
And looking.
And looking.
Never turning away.
Never blinking.
As Nick kept moving, the huge eye kept following him.
Even though a world of mist was between them, the eye was very clearly visible.



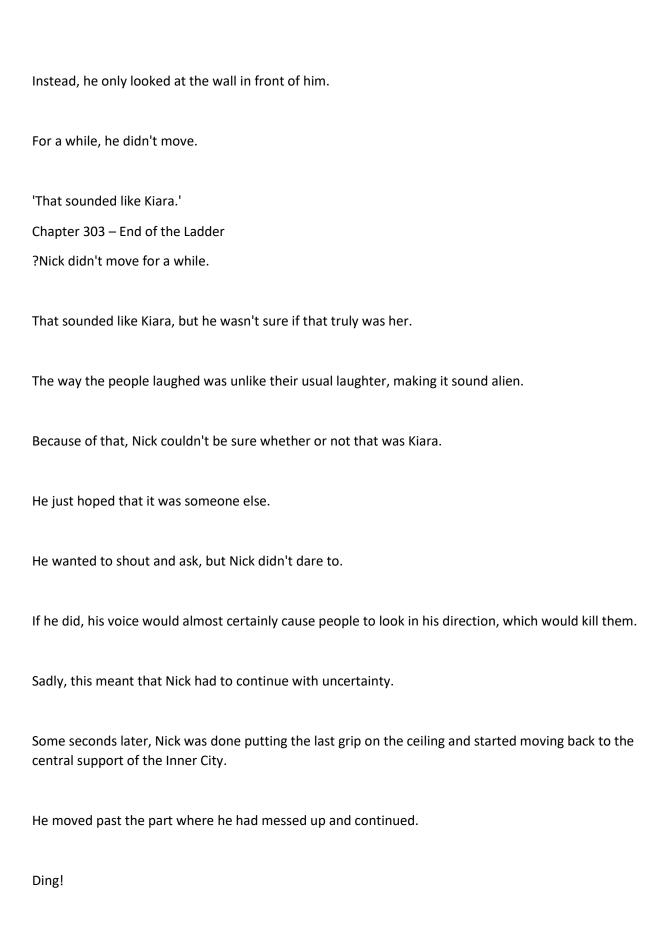


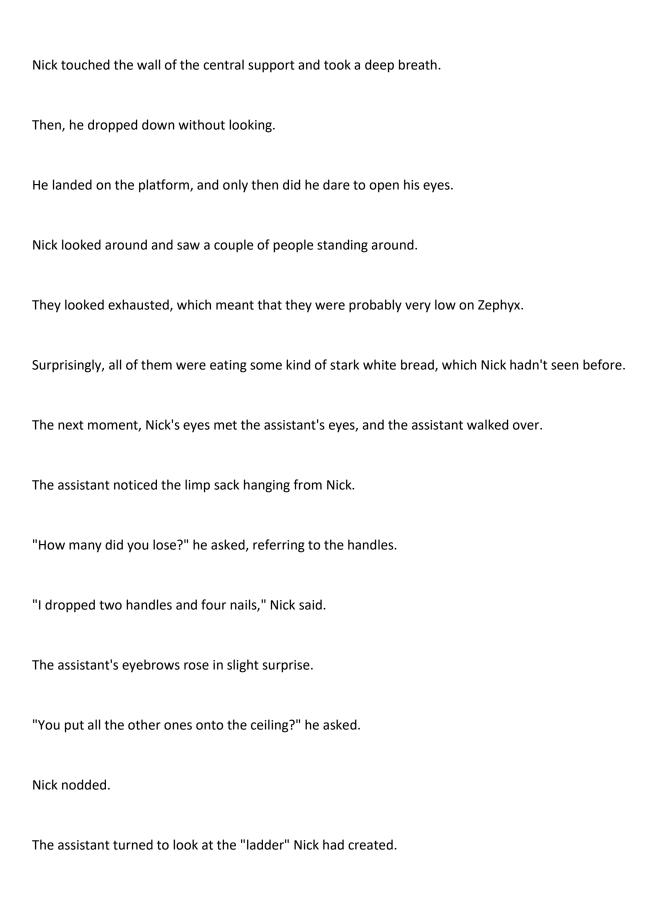


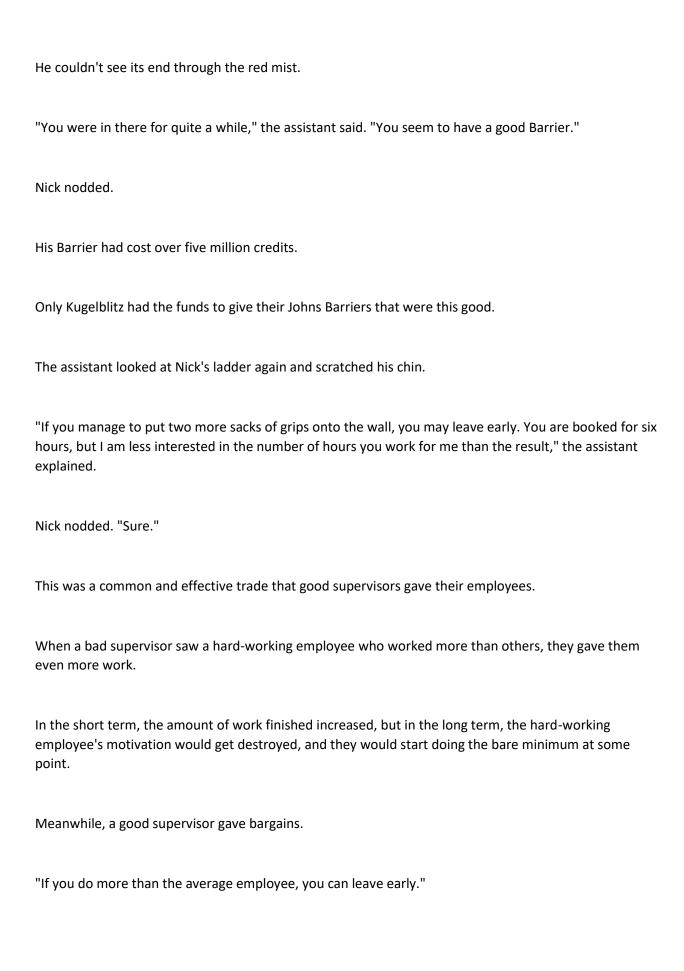




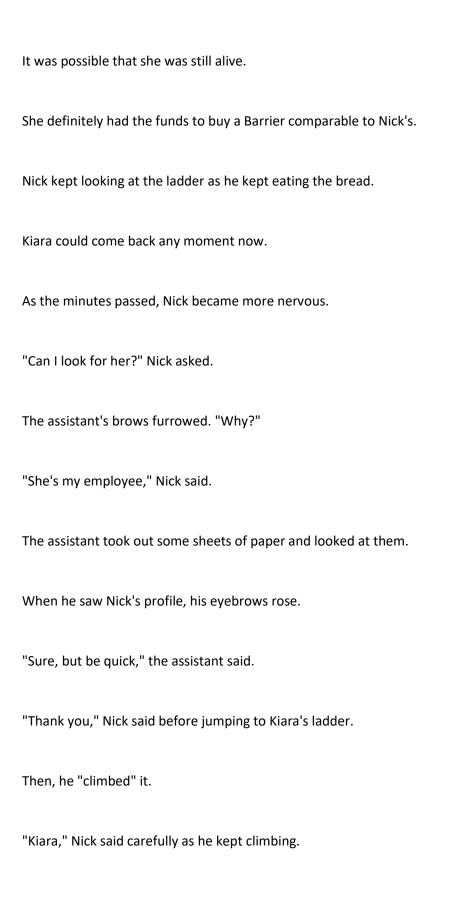
Nick decided to avoid the damaged part by putting the grip at 75% of the usual distance and then putting another one also at 75% of the usual distance.
Naturally, the grips on the other side mirrored the distance.
Like this, the distance between grips would be smaller for a couple of steps, but it would quickly return to normal after getting past the point.
He decided to do it like this since he preferred having more grips over having fewer grips.
After a bit of work, he was done fixing his mistake and took a deep breath.
Then, he continued fixing the grips to the ceiling.
Some minutes later, Nick noticed that he had lost around 40% of his Zephyx.
'I can survive for around 50 minutes in total in here,' Nick realized.
His left arm touched the inside of the big sack of grips for a bit.
'I have five more. I can finish putting them onto the ceiling. Then, I have to go back.'
Nick continued putting the grips onto the wall.
"Hahahaha!"
Nick's eyes widened.
He wanted to look over, but he refused to turn his head.

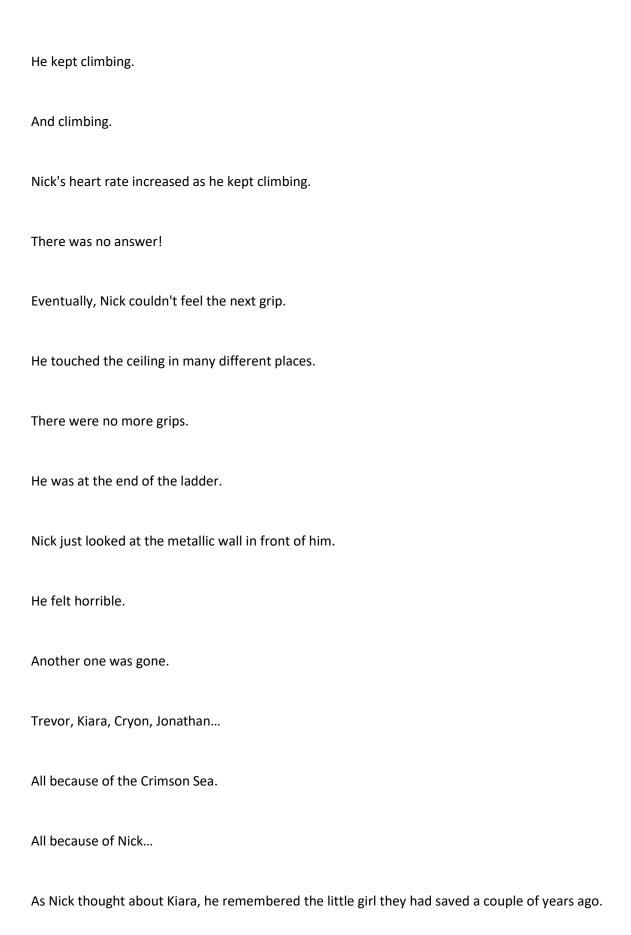


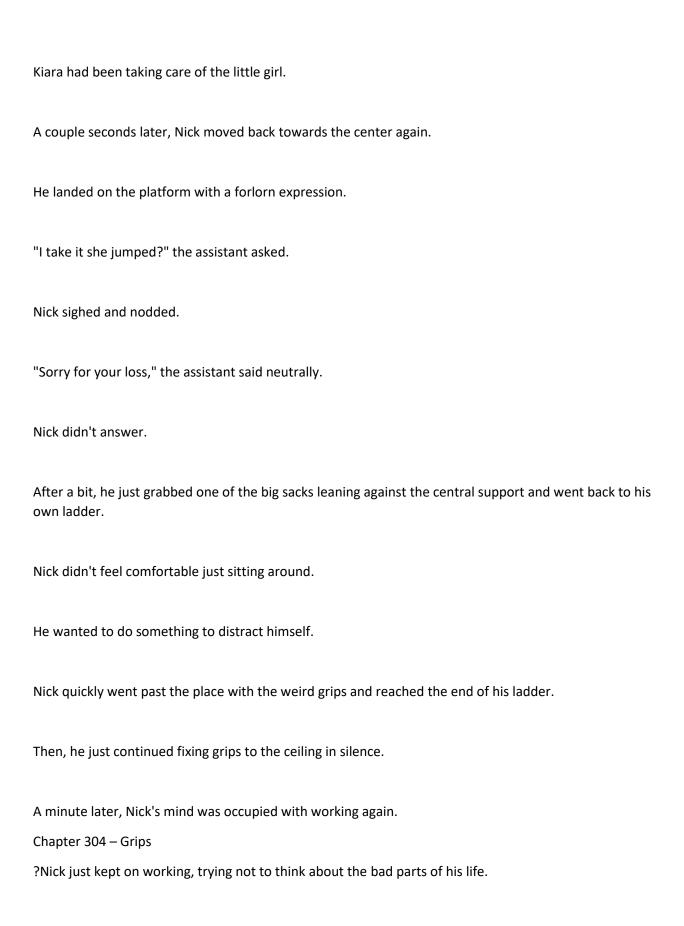




This created an incentive for the employee to work even harder, and they would also feel like their hard work was being seen and appreciated.
Naturally, Nick wasn't opposed to that offer.
The assistant shot Nick a short smile and handed him a piece of stark white bread.
"Eat this. It's sugar bread that has been treated with Zephyx. In around 30 minutes, you should have fully recovered," the assistant explained.
Nick took the bread and nodded before taking a bite out of it.
Nick's tastebuds were immediately assaulted with sugar.
People who had grown up in the Inner City might find this overpowering taste of sugar disgusting, but Nick loved it.
While Nick was eating the bread, he turned to look at the ladder that Kiara had created.
He couldn't see the end of it, and he didn't hear any hammering coming from there.
Was she truly dead?
"What about the girl working there? I heard laughter coming from there earlier," Nick asked the assistant.
"She hasn't come back yet. Either she is dead or has a very good Barrier," the assistant said.
Kiara was one of Dark Dream's top earners since she had an Adolescent all to her own.

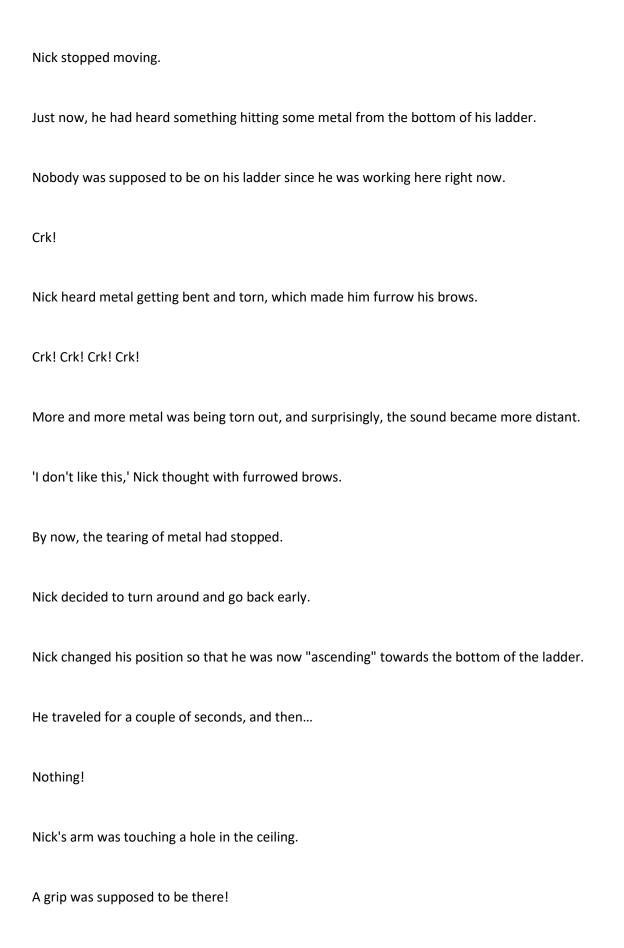






Whenever his mind wandered to the Spartans or his employees, Nick told himself that he had to be careful while working and not get distracted.
If he got distracted, he might actually die.
It took Nick about 25 minutes to empty the second sack of grips, and he turned around again.
'Do the others really have so many issues with the grips?' Nick thought.
'The assistant is willing to let me leave early after just putting three sacks of grips onto the ceiling. If I add the time it takes me to recover my Zephyx, fixing three sacks of grips to the ceiling barely takes me three hours. Not even, actually.'
'And our shift is supposed to go on for a total of six hours.'
The answer was: yes, it took everyone else that long.
First, not everyone was a Peak John. There were many Late Johns, a couple of Mid Johns, and even a few Early and Initial Johns.
Their Zephyx was used up much faster than Nick's.
On top of that, not everyone had an expensive Barrier.
A Mid John with an average Barrier could barely survive for ten minutes inside the red mist.
Additionally, their physical strength wasn't as high as Nick's.
They couldn't just push the nails into the metal with their hand.

They actually needed to use the hammers, and using the hammers in this position was very awkward, difficult, and time-consuming.
The average worker here only fixed 1.5 to 2 sacks of grips to the ceiling after six full hours.
Nick went past the spot with the strange grips and quickly reached the central support again.
He saw a couple of people recovering their Zephyx.
'Should I recover my Zephyx as well? I'm still at around 70%,' Nick thought.
Nick thought a bit about it.
Then, he grabbed one of the white breads, shoved it into his mouth, grabbed another sack of grips, and returned to work.
The bread would increase his Zephyx recovery while working.
It should easily be enough.
By now, Nick only needed 30 seconds to fix a grip to the ceiling.
Nick went past the part with the strange grips and quickly reached the end of his ladder.
Then, he continued working.
Ding.



Nick used his legs to balance and searched for the next one.
Also gone!
That was when Nick realized what had happened.
'Somebody is trying to kill me by trapping me here!' Nick thought. 'The sounds from earlier were them tearing my grips out of the wall!'
'I can't jump forward since the force of my jump would break the grips I am currently holding.'
'If I shout for help, people might not arrive in time, and I would probably also end up killing several other Extractors, which would put me in trouble.'
Nick moved his arm to his big sack and searched for grips.
'Seven left. I don't think that's enough to build a bridge back,' Nick thought.
'Additionally, the workers beside me haven't built as far as me, and the distance between ladders also increases since we are essentially traveling out from the middle of a circle.'
'Did they get here by jumping from another ladder to this one near the beginning, where the ladders are closer together?'
'Then, they probably moved forward and accidentally hit their hand on the space with the weird grips.'
'That made them abort their plan and destroy my ladder there instead of coming closer since I might have heard them.'

'Quite an ingenious plan,' Nick thought.
At that moment, the image of the tall man that Nick had punched shot through his mind.
'Is it him?' Nick thought.
Nick narrowed his eyes in anger.
'Sadly for you, I don't need the grips!'
The next moment, Nick turned into fog and shot forward.
Since he could adhere to the ceiling, moving like this wasn't difficult.
However, there was a reason why Nick hadn't turned into fog here before this moment.
Nick shot forward with all of his speed, and as soon as he came in contact with a grip again, he materialized.
Nick's face had turned white, and he looked insanely exhausted.
When Nick was in his fog form, his Barrier didn't work, which meant that the red mist was injuring him.
Additionally, Nick's defenses were insanely low in his fog form.
He had barely been inside his fog form for two seconds, and he had already lost over 50% of his Zephyx!
Naturally, as soon as he materialized again, his Barrier reactivated.

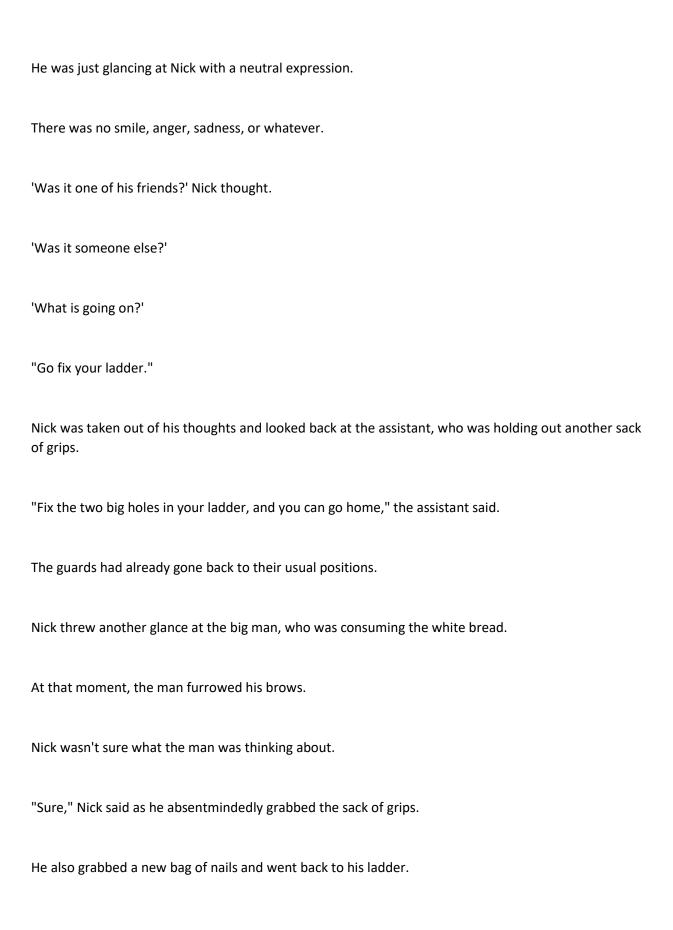
A moment later, Nick shoved his legs through the metal, giving him a very stable hold.
Then, he "stood up" and took out one of his spears.
Nick's eyes were closed, but he could envision the area in front of him.
Throwing a spear without vision wasn't anything new to Nick.
An instant later, he threw his spear forward.
BANG!
Nick heard the sound of his spear hitting something hard in the distance.
"AAAAaahahaha!"
The next moment, a scream appeared before turning into laughter.
The good thing was that no other laughter was ringing out.
The people in this shift had already experienced several deaths, and they had learned not to look around.
Then, Nick went back to grab the grips and walked forward.
Chapter 305 – Who?
?Nick traveled forward a bit, and a couple of seconds later, he noticed another hole.
One of the grips had been torn out of the ceiling again, but this one was different.

The others were torn out straight, basically just creating four long crevices near the edges, making them look rather symmetrical.
This one, on the other hand, was uneven.
Nick touched more of the ceiling in front of him.
Another grip was missing.
He leaned forward and found that a third one was missing as well.
Then, he stretched forward to the limit and found a grip.
He tested it out a bit and noted that it was still very stable.
Nick let go of the grips near his feet and used the distant grip to swing him to the other side.
'That explains things,' Nick thought with a smirk.
He could imagine what had happened.
The perpetrator had been walking back to the center when Nick's spear hit them.
Since Nick couldn't put a lot of power into the throw, the spear couldn't destroy the Barrier and was diverted to the Crimson Sea.
However, the spear's kinetic force was so strong that the grips the perpetrator was holding were torn out of the ceiling.

They started to fall, screamed, spun in the air, saw the Crimson Sea, laughed, and fell into the Crimson Sea.
'It was the voice of a man,' Nick thought. 'It was probably that tall guy from earlier.'
That also explained why the tall guy didn't blow up his little conflict with Nick.
He didn't want to ruin Nick's life by damaging his own reputation.
No, he wanted to kill Nick without damaging his own reputation.
At least, that was what Nick thought had happened.
Some seconds later, Nick reached the end of the ladder and dropped down.
He was immediately greeted by several guards glaring at him with their guns pointing at his face.
The assistant was behind the guards and also glared at Nick.
"We saw someone falling from your lane. Explain!" the assistant demanded.
Nick wasn't surprised.
The place with the funny grips was at the halfway mark of Nick's ladder, and the place from which the guy fell was near the first 20%.
He was probably not even five meters away from the platform when he fell.
"They tried to kill me first," Nick said without any guilt. "I only repaid the favor."

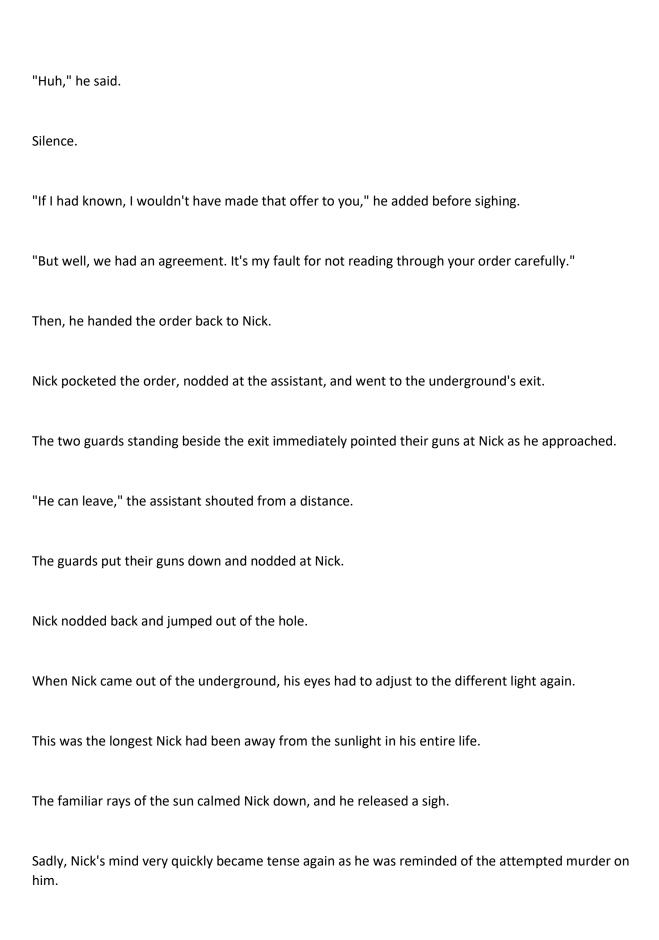
"What happened?" the assistant demanded.
"I was building my ladder when I heard several noises of tearing metal," Nick said. "I turned around to check and found several grips on my ladder missing. I had no way back. I'm certain that these grips didn't just fall out randomly."
"How did you manage to get back?" the assistant asked.
"My ability, which I will not reveal," Nick said.
The assistant looked at Nick for a while longer.
"Wait here. Don't let him leave!" the assistant ordered.
The next moment, he jumped up and quickly moved down Nick's lane.
Naturally, the assistant was also a Zephyx Extractor.
Nick just looked at the guards in front of him.
Over two minutes passed.
And then, the assistant came back and landed on the platform.
He looked at the guards and motioned for them to put their guns away.
"The story checks out," the assistant said.

"We also heard the sounds of metal you were referring to. Additionally, I found the place with the missing grips, and I also found the ladder being continued behind it."
"Lastly, there was no reason for anyone to be on your ladder. He probably didn't worry about coming out of your ladder since nobody pays attention to who comes from which ladder."
"I am comfortable with dropping this issue," the assistant said.
It was not surprising that the assistant managed to reach the place where Nick had been left to die.
Since he had gotten this job, it most likely meant that he had some kind of ability that allowed him to traverse the underside of the city without the grips.
However, Nick wasn't really paying attention to the assistant.
Right now, Nick was looking at someone with a surprised expression.
Near the central support, someone was eating from a piece of white bread.
It was the tall guy!
'But, didn't he die just now?' Nick thought in shock.
'I heard a man's scream, and he's the only one with a motive!'
'But then, how can he be here?!'
As Nick looked at the man, the man glanced back.
Nick couldn't tell what the man was feeling or thinking.

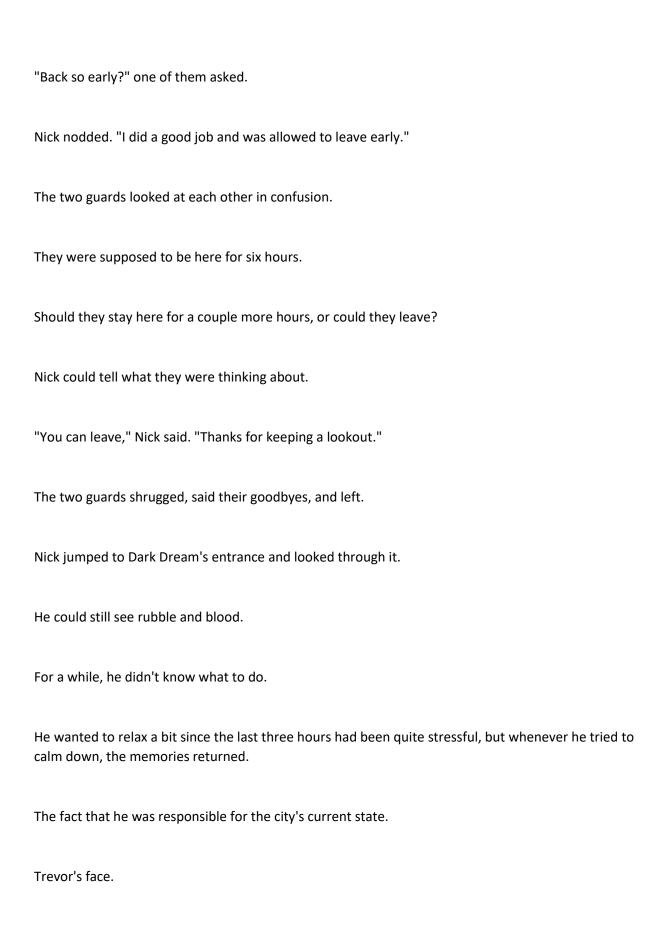


'Who tried to kill me?' Nick thought. 'The Spartans have been my only enemies, but they have been destroyed, and I am certain that they don't know that it was me who destroyed their headquarters.' 'It's also not some kind of powerful Extractor since only Johns are working here.' 'I also don't think it's some kind of old enmity or whatever since everyone is still busy adjusting to their new lives. It would be very strange if anyone chose this moment to get rid of me.' 'Who was it?' 'Who wants me dead this time?!' Sadly, Nick couldn't think of anyone. The only two suspects were the tall man and the woman from the Spartans, but none of them could have been it. The tall man was still alive, and the voice of the person who fell down wasn't nearly girly enough to belong to the woman. Nick had no idea who would want him dead and why. Chapter 306 – End of the Shift ?While Nick was fixing the holes, he kept thinking about the person who had just tried to kill him. Right now, the ever-present black hole in his chest was covered by a red film of anger. Anger was a very good distraction from pain.

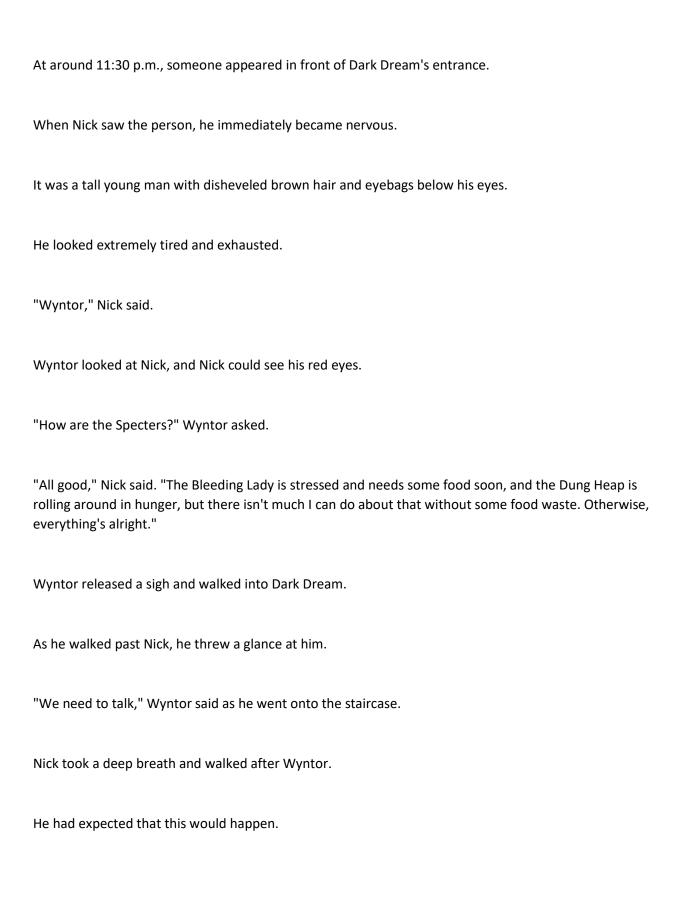
After around half an hour, Nick managed to create a ladder leading around the damaged part.
The metal plates where the old grips had been were just too damaged and unstable, which was why Nick had made a way around them.
Finally, Nick returned to the center and told the assistant that he was done.
"Let me check," the assistant said before quickly moving down Nick's lane.
Around 30 seconds later, he came back and nodded at Nick.
"Good work. You can leave. We'll see each other again next week," he said.
At that moment, Nick furrowed his brows. "Next week?"
"Yes," the assistant said. "Do you think this was the only time you were working here?"
"Yes," Nick said, "the order said so."
The assistant also furrowed his brows.
Then, he held his hand out.
"Show me."
Nick took the order out and handed it over.
The assistant read through it, and his eyebrows rose in surprise.



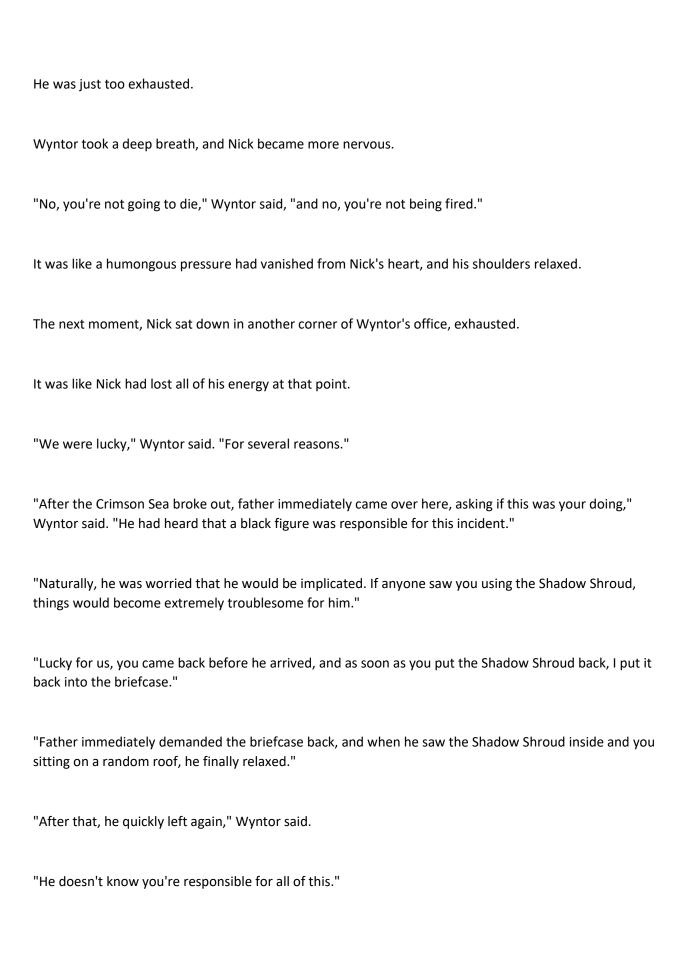
'Was it only one guy, or is a group behind this?' Nick thought as he walked towards the exit of the megastructure. As Nick continued walking, he noticed that the guards kept glancing at him warily. He was guite sure that it wasn't because of him specifically but because of his identity as a level two Extractor. He remembered that the guards had already been quite firm when Nick had shown up for the first time. Something like this hadn't happened in the past. The guards generally seemed like relaxed protectors, but ever since the Crimson Sea appeared, the guards seemed like soldiers whose job it was to suppress the people. 'But it's probably only for Johns,' Nick thought. 'All the Johns are being sent to work in an extremely dangerous location, and there have probably been instances where some of them tried to resist.' 'They are probably wary of all level two Extractors, fearing that they might act out.' As Nick left the megastructure, he saw the guards looking at him warily. Nick didn't engage in any conversation with them. A couple minutes later, Nick arrived at the bottom of Dark Dream and looked up. The two Veterans guarding Dark Dream were leaning against the wall. One of them noticed Nick and woke up the other one.

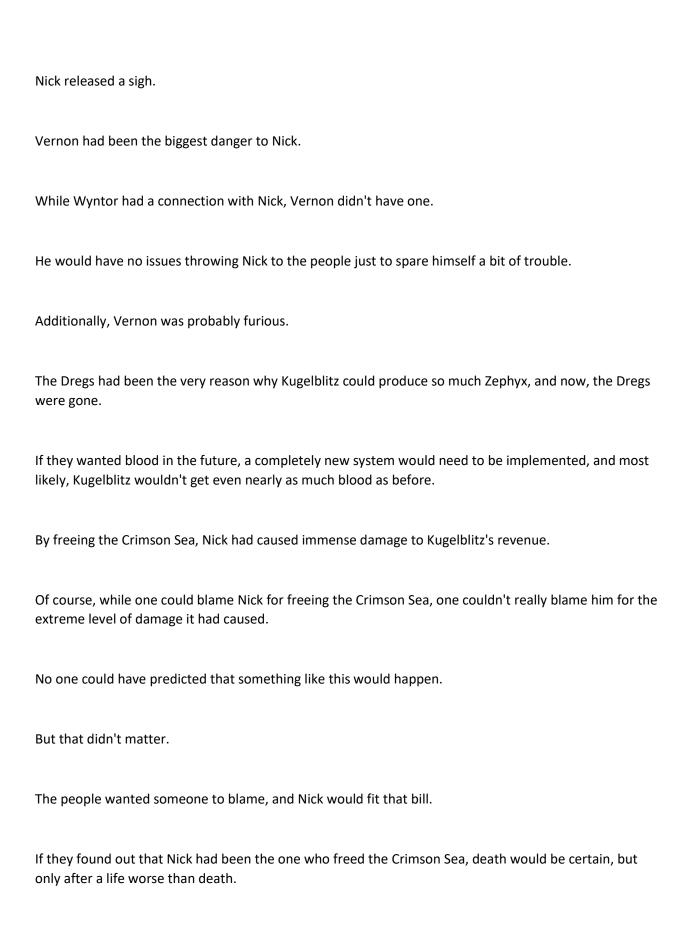






Wyntor knew that Nick had been inside the Spartans' building yesterday, and he also knew of Nick's capabilities.
Wyntor definitely knew that Nick was the reason why the Crimson Sea had broken out.
Nick had no idea what Wyntor had planned.
Chapter 307 – Nick's Fate
?Nick followed Wyntor up the staircase and into his office.
When Wyntor opened the door to look into his office, he sighed.
Everything was messed up.
He walked forward and lifted something out of the rubble.
The coffee machine.
He turned it on and sighed in relief when he saw that it was mostly undamaged.
For the next minute, Nick watched Wyntor making coffee.
This was amongst the longest minutes Nick had ever experienced.
Wyntor walked over to the place where his chair usually was out of habit but stopped when he saw that it wasn't there.
In the end, Wyntor gave Nick a coffee and sat down in one of the corners.
Usually, Wyntor would never do something like this since his image was important to him, but right now, he just didn't care anymore.









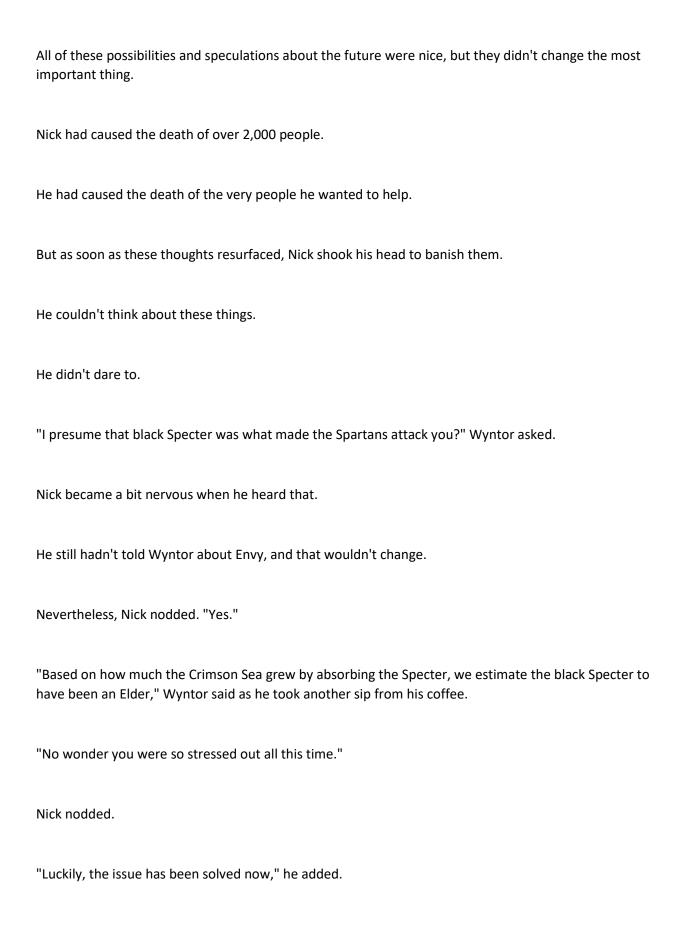




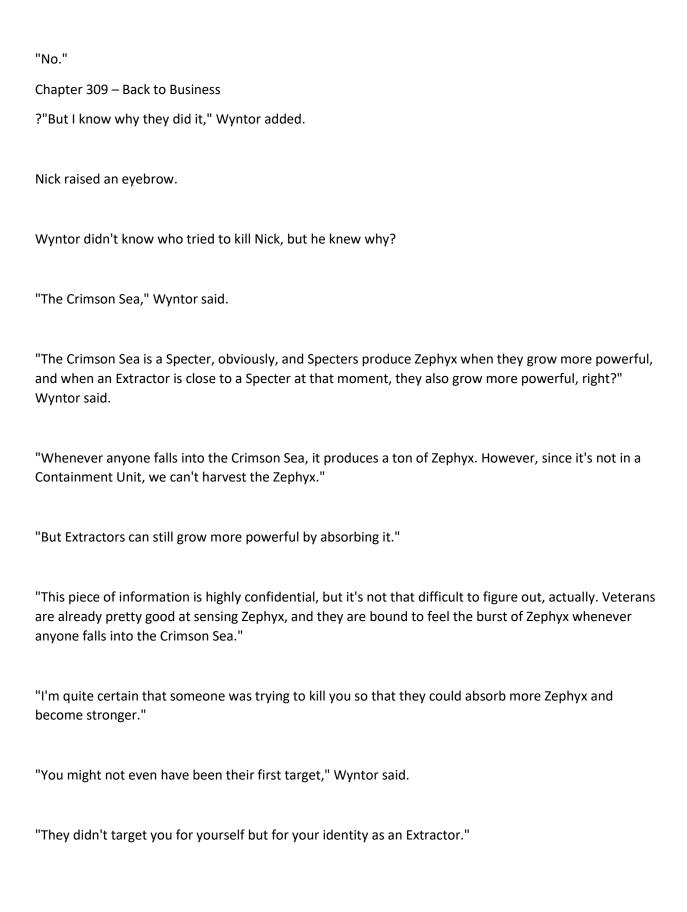
For just an instant, a thought appeared in Nick's mind.
'Did the death of around 2,000 people improve the quality of life for thousands more?'
'Is that such a bad trade?'
But before Nick could think more about these things, Wyntor said something.
"Now, I need to know what happened yesterday in detail. Don't leave anything out," he said.
Nick looked back at Wyntor and nodded.
Then, he told Wyntor everything that had happened.
Wyntor wasn't surprised when Nick confirmed that he had released the Crimson Sea.
He had expected as much.
However, Wyntor was very surprised about a different thing.
The sheer scale of damage Nick managed to inflict on the Spartans, even without the Crimson Sea.
Nick had entered a tightly guarded building with five Veterans, 20 Johns, 20 Newbies, and many guards, while Nick was just a John.
And as a normal John, he managed to kill a Veteran, several Johns, and tens of normal people.
On top of that, Nick managed to free several Specters without raising the alarm.

This was absurd.
In an open conflict, causing the enemy this much damage would require sacrificing about as many Extractors as Dark Dream had in total.
But Nick hadn't sacrificed anything.
He had done all of this on his own.
It was almost like Nick was a one-man army.
Wyntor had never heard of any Extractor causing that much destruction in relation to their power.
It wasn't even close!
An Extractor was already extremely powerful if they could fight against five other Extractors on the same level.
But Nick
Nick essentially destroyed an entire Manufacturer that was vastly more powerful than all of Dark Dream.
Wyntor would have never thought that the dirty boy from the Dregs could have such immense talent.
In Wyntor's mind, Nick's worth outweighed the worth of all of Dark Dream's Zephyx Extractors combined.
As long as he had Nick, Dark Dream would rise.

When Nick was done retelling what had happened, Wyntor told Nick about the things that he hadn't seen. For example, how the city tried to contain the Crimson Sea, what the Spartans' people said, and what had happened in the Inner City when everything became chaotic. When Nick heard about the black figure coming out of an armlet, his eyes shone. 'That must have been Envy's servant,' Nick thought. And when he heard that Envy's servant fell into the Crimson Sea, he released a sigh of relief. With Envy's servant destroyed and with Specters now having it much harder to enter the city, Nick could finally relax. Nick doubted that Envy had more than one servant inside Crimson Fungus City and that one servant had been destroyed. Additionally, since the outside world was cut off, no other servant could enter for the time being. Until the time the bridge to the outside was built, Nick wouldn't need to fear Envy anymore. Nick's mind finally relaxed. Yet, as soon as it did, Nick felt his chest starting to ache. The more he relaxed, the more terrible and guilty he felt.









"Thanks, Wyntor," Nick said as he also stood up.
"Oh, by the way," Wyntor said as the two of them were leaving the office. "The governor will soon announce the new name of the city."
"New name?" Nick asked. "Why?"
"Names for cities are mostly used to create an image of the city in the minds of people who have never seen it. Usually, the strongest Specter in the city is the one that has the biggest impact on a city's perception, which is why many cities are named after their strongest Specters."
"While the Crimson Fungus is technically still the strongest Specter, it is definitely not the most troublesome or the one with the biggest impact."
"However, the Crimson Sea also isn't strong enough to get the entire city named after it."
"Because of that, we decided on a hybrid name."
"Crimson City."
"Crimson City?" Nick asked.
A moment later, Nick thought about the city as a whole.
The underground was crimson.
The mist was crimson.
Even the big fungus was crimson.



Nick nodded. "Good morning. Jenny isn't here yet. I can assign you some work if you want to earn some money."
The Newbie nodded. "Yes, please."
"Are you familiar with how to work with the Puppy?" Nick asked.
The Newbie's eyes shone in excitement. "Yes!"
"Then, go to the third floor. I'll send someone to get you in eight hours. The Puppy is still in the same Containment Unit as before."
"Thanks, Boss!" the Newbie said with excitement before they left to work with the Puppy.
Everyone wanted to work with the Puppy.
Working with the Puppy was a lot of fun, and time passed very quickly while working with it.
A couple minutes later, three more Extractors came.
They were the three that Dark Dream had gotten from Gemini some time ago.
All three of them were Peak Newbies and were on their way to becoming Initial Johns.
Yet, when Nick assigned work to the three of them, they became terrified.
The Dreamer?!
None of them had worked with the Dreamer before!

The reason was that the Dreamer produced Zephyx based on the level of the Extractor, and Dark Dream used to have plenty of Johns to work with it.
Sadly, that was no longer the case.
Nick assured them that it wasn't dangerous.
He even said that it made no sense to covertly get rid of them since they have been exemplary employees ever since that little revolution a year or so ago.
The first couple of clerks had also arrived, and Nick told the clerk manning the reception to tell the Extractors that he would be back to assign work soon.
Then, Nick took the three Extractors to work with the Dreamer.
He simply talked to the Dreamer a bit and told the three of them how to work with it.
Naturally, Nick wasn't scared that the Dreamer would kill them.
After all, Nick and the Dreamer had had a talk about a year ago.
Two of the people from Gemini left since their shifts would start later.
When Nick reached the entrance again, he saw over five Extractors.
'At least we still have a couple of people left. I thought it would be worse,' he thought.
Chapter 310 – Wrapping Up
?Two hours later, Nick finally knew how many Extractors Dark Dream had in total.

One Peak John, which was him.
One Mid John, which was Jenny.
Three Early Johns, who were Constanze, Marvila, and Larry. The three of them had been the first recruits Nick had received from Ghosty's Lab.
Two Initial Johns.
Five Peak Newbies.
Two Late Newbies.
Two Early Newbies.
That was it.
Seven Johns and Nine Newbies.
Dark Dream used to have 24 Extractors, but now, they only had 16.
Nick decided to send the three Early Johns to work with the Fog.
In order to accommodate Jenny's increased workload as the only team leader for now, Nick only assigned her to the Bleeding Lady, which barely took 15 minutes out of her day.
After talking with the two Initial Johns, Kerry agreed to work with the Lover from now on.
While working with the Lover was definitely the worst job inside Dark Dream, it had many benefits.

It didn't take long.
It paid very well.
It gave a lot of security.
It made the Extractor important.
The last John was assigned to work with the Glasses every four days while also getting a round with the Fog every four days.
Obviously, that was more work than almost all other Extractors did since working with these two Specters was divided into 24-hour shifts.
But that was because the last Initial John specifically requested this.
His name was Taren, and he was the recruit that Nick used to test which ability the Fog gave new Extractors.
Taren asked for more work for a couple of reasons, and he was very honest and direct about these reasons when talking to Nick.
Taren had lost his girlfriend when the Crimson Sea broke out, and he now aimlessly walked through life.
He wanted something to do that could distract him and give him a new purpose.
He even jokingly said that he used to have conflicts with his girlfriend since he wanted to work more while she didn't want him to.

Taren kept saying that he wanted to put his everything to work and that Nick should consider him for the next position as team leader.
After hearing all of this, Nick felt for Taren since Nick himself felt similarly.
Wasn't he also just searching for distractions?
For now, Nick decided to give him more work.
Taren had been with the company for over two years now, and Nick hadn't had any problems with him.
Nick decided to talk to Wyntor and Jenny about this.
The Newbies were also sent to work with all the different Specters.
After another day, the food deliveries for the Dung Heap had also resumed.
The delivery of corpses for the Screaming Coffin also resumed.
The credits for the Money Sink had never been an issue.
One day after everyone had resumed working, everything inside Dark Dream was going smoothly again.
The only bad part was that Nick needed many more Johns now.
Dark Dream only had seven Johns, while they had nine Adolescents.
Luckily, two of them were Possession Specters, and one of them basically counted as one.

Nevertheless, Dark Dream needed more people.
Especially after another issue raised its head.
The undercity work.
Every John working for Dark Dream had to work six hours below the city every two weeks.
Wyntor and Nick talked about the issue of lacking manpower, but in the end, they decided to speed up the growth of their people instead of buying Extractors from outside.
The three guys from Gemini should become Johns within the month, which would alleviate a lot of pressure.
After talking to Jenny, they decided that she would be the sole team leader for now.
They decided against making Taren a team leader for now since they weren't certain yet if he was ready.
If his motivation remained after half a year, Nick would teach him how to be a team leader and then make him one.
But for now, they wanted to see if Taren really wanted to devote himself to Dark Dream or if this was just a momentary fancy due to his girlfriend's death.
Another day later, Wyntor told Nick that the official investigation into the Spartans had been concluded.
Nobody even knew that Nick had been in the Spartans' building or that Dark Dream was connected to the Crimson Sea's escape.



"They kind of used the body like a sponge."
"The John was a couple of levels higher than the Crimson Sea, and the Crimson Sea needed all its power to absorb the body."
"From what the witnesses said, the Crimson Sea gathered around the corpse like it was a sponge."
"Lastly, they just threw the body into the Containment Unit, and the Crimson Sea was contained."
"Over the next couple of years, the Crimson Sea advanced to become a Peak Adolescent, and that's when it broke out."