

The Sun 391

Chapter 391 – Start of the Move

"I'll need you to get in there."

"Why?"

"We're moving today. I know that you won't try to escape, but we don't want to show you off to everyone, and we also don't want to give other Manufacturers an opportunity to criticize us."

The Money Sink looked at the black cube with furrowed brows.

If she entered, she wouldn't be able to even stand up.

However, that didn't bother her a lot.

She just wanted to know why Nick suddenly wanted her to enter this black box.

"Fine," she said as she walked forward.

Nick opened the cube, and a white mist came out.

This cube was made for moving Specters, and it essentially worked like a portable Specter Cage.

The Money Sink went on all fours and crawled into the cube before she pulled her legs to her torso.

"It's just going to be about 15 minutes or so," Nick told her before he closed the cube.

After pressing a couple of buttons, the cube closed, and several lights and displays appeared on its side.

Then, Nick left the cube in the middle of the Containment Unit and left via the employee entrance.

He quickly went over to the console of the Containment Unit and pressed the release button.

A huge alarm rang throughout the building, and about a minute later, the wall of the Containment Unit opened, revealing the black cube in its middle.

"This okay?" Nick asked the person standing beside him.

"You may proceed," the red-haired woman said neutrally after inspecting the black cube.

This red-haired woman was a guard captain sent by the city, and she was an Expert whose job was to ensure that Dark Dream properly secured their Specters for the move.

"You don't need to be so uptight, Stacy," Julian said from beside her. "Even if something goes wrong, I'm here to take care of it."

Stacy chuckled. "I know, but I still have to do my job."

Nick went forward and lifted the black cube before walking towards the stairs.

Julian stayed at his current position, while Stacy followed after Nick.

When they reached the first floor, they saw most of Dark Dream's Extractors, who were just waiting for orders.

Nick and Stacy just ran past them while Nick still carried the black cube.

After leaving the building, they jumped down to the streets and ran towards the city's southern entrance.

The southern entrance had already been opened, waiting for Dark Dream.

Whenever a Manufacturer needed to move into the Inner City, basically the entire city adapted to them.

Transporting several Specters into the Inner City was risky.

The outside air was entering the lower layer of the Inner City, and the inhabitants were not happy about that.

But what could they do?

These were matters between the city and a big Manufacturer.

A big group of people had already gathered at the entrance of the Inner City, and they were all looking at Nick, who was still carrying the black cube.

They were filled with morbid curiosity.

They wanted to see a Specter, even though they knew that it was extremely dangerous to be here.

However, the guards of the Inner City had already been called to deal with the crowds, and several Johns were keeping the citizens at bay.

Nick and Stacy ran through the opened path for a while.

The two of them continued for over a kilometer until they finally stopped.

In front of them was the central pillar.

It was in the middle of the megastructure, and it acted as the biggest support for it.

The entire central pillar was made of materials found in the ruins below the city, and only Elders and stronger could damage it.

Surprisingly, the pillar was not completely solid throughout.

It had been constructed with a building inside of it in mind.

There were many rooms inside the pillar, and it acted as the walls of a big tower.

Originally, this was where the city's leadership resided.

After all, it was in the center of the city, and its walls were extremely sturdy.

But then, the different layers formed, and all the strong and important people moved toward the top of the megastructure.

So, the leadership of the city also moved towards the top, leaving this huge tower inside the pillar as an administration office for the lower layer.

Sadly, most of the rooms hadn't been used, and the few ones that were used were just filled with different documents.

Of course, the guards also stayed there occasionally, and some of the rooms had even been turned into party and leisure rooms.

The fact was that the building was just too big for a couple of guards and administrators.

On the other hand, the former building belonging to the Spartans was smaller and also acted as a makeshift entrance between the Inner and Outer Cities.

Not only would there be no wasted rooms, but the guards could also more easily get to the Outer City while also giving people from the Outer City easier access to the city's government.

With that move, they could also get rid of two of the city's administration outposts in the Outer City, moving everything to the new administration office inside the megastructure's walls.

So, all in all, the city and Dark Dream were happy with the relocation of the city's forces.

Nick looked at the couple of entrances leading into the pillar.

There were two small ones at the side and a huge gate in the center.

The two small ones were about 2.5 meters high and wide, while the big one was five meters high and nearly ten meters wide.

The huge gate was already open, and Dark Dream's guards were already standing beside it, keeping the normal people at bay.

Each floor of the pillar was nearly seven meters high, essentially transforming the entire building into a collection of halls instead of rooms.

And even though the building only had eight floors, due to the size of each floor, it was over double as high as Dark Dream's old building.

Chapter 392 – The Floors

Of course, the height wasn't the only thing that was bigger.

The width of the building was also very considerable.

The pillar was a hundred meters in diameter, but the building inside the pillar was only around 70 meters wide.

However, a diameter of 70 meters was still more than double as wide as Dark Dream's old building.

As Nick entered through the big gate with the black cube, he looked to the side.

There were a couple of stairs at the side of the huge hallway in the center, and these stairs led to scaffolding, which led into new hallways and rooms.

The first floor was technically only one floor, but Dark Dream used it as two.

Since the ceiling was so high up, Dark Dream created a separate floor at about a height of 3.5 meters.

Like this, Dark Dream had almost double the rooms on the first floor.

The floor that was on ground level was called floor 1A, and the floor that was halfway up was called floor 1B.

The first floor would be used for all the normal employees of Dark Dream.

Offices for clerks, leisure rooms, a restaurant, storage room for cleaning supplies, more offices, guard rooms, reception, rooms for janitors, offices for the Investigation department, and so on.

The huge hallway branched off into many smaller hallways, which led to even more rooms.

At the end of the big hallway was a big hall, which was used as a reception for any guest.

There was a central counter in the middle of it and several benches and tables scattered throughout the hall.

At the very center of the building was another pillar, which was about ten meters wide.

This pillar had five entrances, four of which led to Extractor Shafts and one leading to stairs.

Extractor Shafts were wide holes that went from the first floor to the eighth floor, and they were there to allow Extractors to quickly change floors.

Since Extractors were so powerful, they could just jump from wall to wall to climb to higher floors, making such a shaft a much faster alternative to stairs.

Nick went past the reception desk and walked towards one of the shaft's closed doors.

Next, Nick held his left hand to a display beside one of the doors.

On his left hand was a fingerless glove, which had a piece of metal inside it that was used to identify the person wearing the glove.

The Spartans had a similar system in their building.

After Nick put his glove on the display, it changed and showed eight numbers.

Nick clicked on the number two.

The door in front of Nick opened, and he grabbed the black cube again before moving to the side.

"Second floor," Nick said, gesturing towards the open door.

Stacy wordlessly walked through the door and jumped.

Then, Nick walked through the door.

He found himself in a shaft that was about two meters wide and almost 80 meters high.

About seven meters up, Nick saw an open door.

BANG!

Nick jumped and easily landed in the opened door.

BANG!

The door behind Nick closed and locked again.

Nick was now on the second floor, and he looked around.

Compared to the first floor, the second one seemed almost empty.

The first ten meters of distance from the exit of the shaft were empty.

There was just nothing there except for the floor.

Then, there were walls with a couple of doors.

In total, there were eight doors, and every one of these doors led to a Containment Unit.

Every floor had space for eight Containment Units, but if it were absolutely necessary, Containment Units could be stacked on top of each other to make space for 16 per floor.

For now, Dark Dream decided against stacking the Containment Units.

The building's first and eighth floors were not meant to contain Specters, which left six floors for Specters.

With space for eight Containment Units per floor, Dark Dream could now contain 48 Specters, and if absolutely necessary, they could even expand to contain 96.

That was a lot more than the measly 20 of their old building.

Nick decided to distribute the Specters similarly to how Kugelblitz distributed theirs.

The second floor was made for strong Specters that did not have dangerous mind powers.

The third floor was the same.

The fourth floor was made for Possession Specters.

The fifth floor was made for training, which meant it contained the Hatchlings, but it also contained Adolescents that were easy to work with, like the Abductor.

The sixth floor was for Force Specters.

The seventh floor was for Specters with mental powers.

And the eighth floor was for Nick, Julian, and meeting other Manufacturers.

Nick decided to keep several strong Specters on the second and third floors to act as a buffer in case anyone tried to get to the weak Specters or the weak Specters managed to escape somehow.

If a Specter escaped, it could only attempt to break through the bottom.

After all, Julian was on the eighth floor, and there was no way a Specter could get past him.

As Nick looked around, he was still a bit unused to the brightness of the walls.

Dark Dream's new building used the same technology to produce light as the megastructure's walls.

Light captured from the Sun was infused in special metal treated with Zephyx, which could transport the light, giving off bits and pieces of it along the way.

This meant that the walls of the building were shimmering with sunlight.

Luckily, since the Sun's light was already quite weak, the light here was even weaker.

Yet, since every surface was shining, it was still kind of strange.

For example, there were no shadows anywhere.

After all, the floor and walls were also shining.

There was simply no surface onto which a shadow could be projected.

Eventually, Nick walked to one of the doors and used a console beside it.

The next moment, a loud alarm thundered throughout the building, and a minute later, the wall split in two, revealing an opened Containment Unit behind it.

Nick walked inside, put the black cube down, walked out, and closed the wall.

Finally, he went in through the employee entrance and opened the cube.

"We're here. You can come out," he said to the Money Sink.

Chapter 393 – Moving Specters

The Money Sink crawled out of the black cube, looked around, and just started to stand in the middle of the room.

It looked just like her old home.

"I'll be back tomorrow with some money. See you," Nick said as he grabbed the black cube.

The Money Sink glanced at Nick for a second before looking away again wordlessly.

After walking out of the Containment Unit with the cube, Nick showed the cube to Stacy.

Stacy inspected the cube, making sure that no Specters were hiding anywhere near or inside it.

"Alright, get the next one," she said.

Nick nodded.

The two of them jumped to the first floor again, left the building, left the Inner City, and entered Dark Dream again.

The first Specter was done.

Nick went to the third floor and entered one of the Containment Units.

As soon as he entered, he heard the excited barking of a puppy.

Or the Puppy.

Nick smiled slightly. "We're going to move you to somewhere else today. Come on, get in the box," he said, gesturing at the black cube.

The Puppy looked at the black cube with fearful eyes.

"It's only going to be for a couple of minutes," Nick said.

The Puppy looked at Nick with hurt in its watery eyes.

Nick's small smile vanished.

"Get in the box," he said in a neutral tone.

The Puppy began to whimper and approached Nick slowly.

"Get inside, or I will throw you inside," Nick said with a dark tone.

The Puppy fearfully stepped back.

Then, it looked at the black cube again.

Finally, it very slowly walked into the cube while acting like it was walking to its execution.

Nick closed the cube, left via the employee entrance, opened the big door, grabbed the cube, and showed it to Stacy.

Then, the two of them ran toward Dark Dream's new building again.

This time, Nick went to the seventh floor with the cube.

The Puppy used to be on Dark Dream's third floor since it was a Physical Specter, but Nick decided to move it to the seventh floor in their new building.

The seventh floor was for Specters with dangerous mental abilities.

In a couple of years, the Puppy would become an Adult, and there was a high chance that it might evolve an ability that could manipulate people even better.

Nick did not want to take any chances with the Puppy.

It looked harmless and cute, but that was exactly what made it so dangerous.

After delivering the Puppy to the seventh floor, Nick grabbed the next Specter.

"I know you just moved in, but you gotta move again," Nick said to the big man with spidery limbs in front of him.

The big man looked at the small cube before looking back at Nick.

"Come on, you have to come with us in this cube. It's only for a couple of minutes."

The man approached the cube and put one of his spidery limbs inside before looking at Nick again.

Naturally, he wanted to tell Nick that he wasn't fitting in there.

"You fit in there," Nick said calmly. "You're not going to move into your new home while walking around with me. Either you go into the box yourself, or I will cut you into pieces and store you myself. Your choice."

The Abductor looked at Nick.

Nick looked back with a neutral expression.

Then, the big man opened his mouth.

"AAAAAAHHHHHHH!"

Nick just looked at him as if nothing happened.

The man closed his mouth.

Then, he slowly climbed into the cube.

It wasn't easy, but he managed to completely stash himself away.

Nick closed the cube and transported it to Dark Dream's new building.

The Abductor was put on the fifth floor, the one for training.

"We're moving," Nick said to the next Specter. "I know it's uncomfortable, but you have to go into this box for a couple of minutes. After that, you'll get your new room. Although, it's white. So, you gotta paint it again."

A woman with scarlet red hair and many wounds all across her body was sitting in the corner of the room, her legs tucked to her chest.

"I kill you," she quietly said.

"No, we're not cutting right now," Nick said. "We gotta move you to your new place. I'll send Larry to work with you later, alright? I heard you like working with Larry."

The Bleeding Lady just rocked back and forth a bit.

"Come on, we have to go," Nick said.

A couple of seconds later, the Bleeding Lady's legs extended, and she started to crawl forward by pulling herself with her arms, her legs just being dragged behind her.

A red trail of blood was left behind by her.

Eventually, she crawled into the cube and returned to her previous sitting position.

"It's just going to be for about five minutes," Nick said.

"I kill you," the Bleeding Lady whispered.

Nick closed the cube and carried it away.

"Hey, Larry, I need you," Nick said in Dark Dream's old main hall.

"Huh?" Larry asked, not expecting to be called by Nick. "What's up, Boss?"

"I promised the Bleeding Lady that you would work with her if she complied. Can you come with me and do that later? I don't want her to throw a tantrum," Nick said.

"Oh," Larry said. "Sure, no problem."

"Thanks," Nick said.

Then, Nick, Larry, and Stacy went to the second floor of Dark Dream's new building.

Larry followed Nick into the new Containment Unit, and Nick opened the cube.

"How did you already color it red?!" Nick asked in surprise as he saw the red color inside the cube.

The Bleeding Lady crawled out of the cube, and she quickly locked onto Larry.

"Hi," Larry said with a smile.

"I kill you!" the Bleeding Lady said with quite a loud voice before quickly crawling towards him.

"You two have fun. I gotta go," Nick said, leaving with the empty cube.

Nick showed the cube to Stacy again, but this time, Stacy frowned.

"It's contaminated. You need to clean this," she said.

Nick sighed. "Sure."

Chapter 394 – Final Specters

"This good?" Nick asked for the tenth time or so.

Stacy inspected the cube closely.

"Good enough," she said after a bit.

Nick sighed.

He had to scrub the cube so many times with Cleansing Liquid, regular cleaner, and even Recovery Liquid for some reason.

Even Larry had passed by Nick since he was already done working with the Bleeding Lady.

Finally, Nick and Stacy went back to get the next Specter.

"Get in the box! We're putting you in a new Containment Unit!" Nick ordered, pointing at the cube.

SLAP!

Nick slapped a tentacle away.

"No, we're not doing that right now!" Nick said.

Slap!

Slap!

Nick slapped more tentacles away.

"Want me to force you into the box?"

Slap!

"Okay, that's it!"

Nick grabbed the tentacle-filled worm in front of him and threw it into the cube.

BANG!

Then, Nick closed the cube, locking the Lover inside.

He really didn't like that Specter.

Nick transported the Lover to the seventh floor of their new building.

BANG!

As soon as the cube opened, Nick grabbed the worm and threw it against the wall.

The worm wriggled around a bit before it started to slowly approach Nick again, wanting to touch him with its tentacles.

Nick quickly left the Containment Unit with the cube.

"We're moving into a new building, and I can't just let you fly around outside," Nick said. "You gotta go into the box."

The Dreamer looked at the black cube.

Then, it slightly flapped its wings and smoothly landed inside the cube.

Since the Dreamer wasn't so big, it had plenty of space in there.

Nick closed the cube and brought it to the seventh floor of Dark Dream's new building.

There were zero issues with the Dreamer.

SHING! SHING!

Nick grabbed a bloody chunk and chucked it into the cube before closing it.

This was the Blood Hawk, and Nick didn't even attempt to communicate with it.

He just cut it into pieces and grabbed the biggest chunk with the core.

The Blood Hawk was delivered to the fifth floor of the new building, and Nick needed to scrub the cube again after transporting it.

Next, Nick had to cut the Blood Horse very carefully into a cube that just barely fit into the actual cube.

The Blood Horse was quite big, and it wasn't easy to make it small enough to transport.

Just like the Blood Hawk, the Blood Horse was put on the fifth floor.

After more scrubbing, Nick went and grabbed the Glasses.

Since it was a Possession Specter, transporting it was extremely easy.

Nick put the Glasses on the fourth floor.

Then, Nick grabbed the Can and also put it on the fourth floor.

Now, only three Specters were left, but those three couldn't be transported with the cube.

Nick put the cube away since he wouldn't need it anymore and grabbed a couple of Zephyx Suppressors.

Next, Nick entered a Containment Unit and put the Zephyx Suppressors around the motionless Screaming Coffin.

It had just gotten some food this morning, but Nick still had to be careful.

Since the Screaming Coffin couldn't be folded, it didn't fit in the cube, which meant that it had to be transported a different way.

Luckily, it wasn't worth a lot, and everyone basically already knew it since they had moved it to their old building the same way.

This time, Stacy made sure that there were no issues with the Zephyx Suppressors.

Additionally, the citizens in the Inner City finally got to see an actual Specter instead of just black cubes.

When they saw the coffin on Nick's back, they all looked at it in wonder.

This was a Specter?

In the new building, Nick put the Screaming Coffin on the fourth floor and took the Zephyx Suppressors away.

Now, only two Specters remained.

"Okay, those two will be troublesome," Nick said. "One of them is a Force Specter, and the other one acts like a mix of Force and Possession Specters. They are also both quite big."

Nick got one of the expensive Specter Cages and fixed it to the Fog's Containment Unit on the sixth floor.

Moving Force Specters was always risky, and the city also forced Nick to keep several Extractors ready that could suppress it in case anything happened.

The city did not want another Crimson Sea incident.

Because of that, the Gemini trio, Clayton, Petra, and Jason, were all following Nick.

All of their abilities could suppress Force Specters.

Because of that, the Gemini trio, Clayton, Petra, and Jason, were all following Nick.

Luckily, the expensive Containment Unit and the expensive Specter Cage proved to be worth their money, and no issue occurred.

The Fog was pushed into the cage by the Containment Unit, and the cage was moved out of the building by removing one of the walls.

Fortunately, the ceiling of the new building was high enough for the cage, and parts of the floor were also removable for exactly this reason.

The Fog was put into its new Containment Unit on the sixth floor without problems.

And finally, it was time for the most problematic Specter.

Who would've thought that the Dung Heap would be so troublesome to move?

The biggest issue was that the Dung Heap wasn't inside a Containment Unit meant for Force Specters, which meant that they had to suppress it manually.

Ten of Dark Dream's employees gathered in front of the Containment Unit, and even several guards from the city were standing on standby.

The only way to get the Dung Heap to move was by getting it out of its Containment Unit first before suppressing it again.

It was just too big, and any container that could contain it didn't fit through the employee's entrance.

As soon as the door opened, an abhorrent stench assaulted everyone, and a slime-like substance flowed out of the Containment Unit's exit.

Nick charged forward and grabbed the Dung Heap.

Even though the Dung Heap was acting like a Possession and a Force Specter, it was actually a Physical Specter, which meant that Nick could grab it.

After grabbing it, he charged into the prepared Specter Cage beside him and pulled the Dung Heap into it.

A moment later, he pushed past the Dung Heap, left the cage, and kicked the Dung Heap until it fit the cage.

BANG!

The door closed.

Finally, the Dung Heap was in the cage.

However, it came at a price.

Everyone kept their distance from Nick and looked at him with disgust.

He did not smell very nice right now.

Luckily, this was the last Specter.

So, which floor would the Dung Heap be sent to?

Surprisingly, the sixth floor.

The floor for Force Specters.

Even more, it would be put into a Containment Unit for Force Specters.

The reason was that Nick suspected that the Dung Heap might transform into a Force Specter in the future.

What if it lost its slime-like body and turned into actual liquid when it became an Adult?

Then, it would be able to break out of a normal Containment Unit.

Because of that, Nick put it in a Containment Unit meant for Force Specters.

And he was not happy about that, at all.

Not only did the Dung Heap deliver almost no Zephyx, but now, they even needed to contain it with a Containment Unit that was worth millions upon millions of credits.

If it weren't for its ability, Nick would have long since sold this shitty Specter.

He hated the Dung Heap.

Chapter 395 – Funny Name

"And that's it," one of two guards standing in front of one of Dark Dream's Containment Units said.

"Thank you," Nick said.

"Just doing our job," the other guard said. "Do you know what to do with him?"

"I do," Nick answered.

"Then, I would tell you to have fun, but we both know that this won't be the case," one of the guards said with a laugh before the two of them walked towards the Extractor Shafts.

Nick followed after them and escorted them out.

The stairs and the Extractor Shafts were all locked by default, and the guards couldn't leave without someone escorting them.

When they reached the Shafts, they went to the side, towards the stairs.

Extractors often weren't the biggest fans of using Extractor Shafts from other Manufacturers, and they preferred to use the stairs.

Nick swiped his left hand over the console, and the door to the stairs opened.

Compared to the stairwell in Dark Dream's old building, this one didn't have a hole in its center.

There was no way to quickly jump up or down the stairs.

When they reached the first floor, Nick opened the door with his identification again.

Nick led the two of them out of the building and said his goodbyes before going back in.

In order to access the stairwell and to leave it, one needed identification.

The main reason for this choice was security and stopping random people from getting to places they didn't belong.

If someone somehow managed to sneak into the stairwell, they could travel between the first and sixth floors, but they wouldn't be able to leave without proper identification.

Important to note was the fact that there was a divider between the sixth and seventh floors.

This divider had been placed here because Specters with dangerous mental powers resided on the seventh floor.

These Specters might have powers that could manipulate normal people, and this divider kept normal people from getting to the seventh floor.

Additionally, it also stopped people who were already being influenced from getting to the Specters.

Nick entered the Extractor Shaft and went to the third floor.

Right now, only one of the Containment Units on the third floor was active.

Nick took a deep breath and approached the Containment Unit.

The city had already told him everything about this Specter, and he knew what he had to do.

However, he didn't look forward to working with it at all.

If Nick had to rate the Specter out of ten for different criteria, he would rate it like this.

Danger: three.

Money: seven.

Annoyance: eight.

As long as one didn't become careless, this Specter was essentially harmless.

However, if one lost their focus, one would get into trouble.

Luckily, since the Specter was inside a Containment Unit, there was still a great likelihood of the Extractor being able to escape in case something went wrong.

Assuming the Extractor was on the same level as the Talker.

'Everything has already been dealt with,' Nick thought. 'For the next eight hours, no issues should arise.'

'I have to get used to working with it since the Talker will be the only real way I can advance in the future.'

Nick took a deep breath and sighed.

'No pain, no gain, I suppose.'

Nick opened the door.

As soon as the door opened, Nick could finally see the Talker.

It was a brightly smiling young man with blonde hair.

He wore a clean white shirt and black trousers, giving him a professional look.

However, his bright and charismatic smile gave him the aura of a charming person who could get along with everyone.

It wasn't hard to imagine this man walking through the streets, laughing and joking with everyone he passed by while giving everyone a compliment.

In short, this guy looked like everyone's friend.

Nick quickly entered and shut the door behind him.

"Oh, hey!" the man said in surprise. "You're a new face! I haven't seen you before!"

The man slowly approached Nick.

Meanwhile, Nick didn't move and just looked at the man. "Hello."

"Hi!" the man said with a laugh. Then, he coughed. "Sorry, I haven't introduced myself yet."

The next moment, the man offered his hand with a friendly smile. "Hi, the name's Jay Jessie Jameson Jonathan Jenkins! I know it's a mouthful, but you can just call me Jayjay."

"Yes, hello. My name is Nick Nick," Nick said as he slowly and carefully shook Jayjay's hand.

"Nick Nick?" Jayjay repeated in surprise before bursting out into laughter. "That's one hell of a name. How did you come by it?"

"Well," Nick said before trailing off.

The next moment, Nick felt Jayjay's grip tightening while his body started to slightly shake. It was almost like Jayjay's entire body was straining with power.

His eyes also looked intensely into Nick's eyes.

"I'm an orphan, and I didn't really have a name back then..."

As Nick started to narrate his past, Jayjay relaxed again.

His grip loosened, his body relaxed, and his eyes unfocused.

"And you stuck with the name Nick Nick?" Jayjay asked with a laugh.

"What else was I supposed to do?" Nick answered with a shrug. "I already introduced myself in this way in front of all the powerful people of the city. It was ride or die."

Jayjay just laughed. "To think that you would name yourself Nick Nick. That's hilarious! Did you ever think about changing your name ever since then?"

"Not really," Nick said. "It isn't really an issue."

"How come? I would think that most people would have issues with such a name."

"Well," Nick said, "to me, a name is not really that important. It's just a way for others to refer to you. I'm still me, you know. My name doesn't really have a big influence on who I am, I think."

"That's an interesting viewpoint," Jayjay said. "Why do you think others put a lot of emphasis on their name, then?"

"I think other people view their names as a representation..."

The conversation continued.

Chapter 396 – The Talker

"It's like a big greyish-white stone. Usually, you can see a couple of guards standing around it."

"Huh, why are guards standing around the Rust Lick?" Jayjay asked.

"It's because salt is necessary to survive, and the people of the Outer City often forget to consume enough salt. People in the Inner City have a lot of added salt in their food, but people in the Outer City don't."

"Why don't they use salt in their food? I heard it tastes good," Jayjay asked.

"Mostly money problems. Salt is expensive."

"Why's the salt so expensive?" Jayjay asked.

Nick felt like it was hard to focus his eyes, and he often saw his vision becoming blurry.

How long had he been at this?

He didn't know.

He had set the timer to eight hours before entering, and since the alarm hadn't rung yet, Nick couldn't have been here for longer than eight hours.

How much had he said over the past hours?

He was sure that he had never said this many words in a single day.

'This is going to be my life now,' Nick thought as he kept talking about the characteristics of salt.

This was how one worked with the Talker.

The Talker was a Specter that grew more powerful by socially exhausting people.

It demanded constant attention, and it demanded a smooth and endless conversation.

When it asked a question, it wanted an answer.

Surprisingly, the answer didn't have to perfectly reflect the person's true thoughts and beliefs.

Lying was also okay, but the lie shouldn't be too obvious, and it would be bad if one contradicted oneself at a later point.

While talking to the Talker, one wasn't allowed to take a couple of moments to relax or to gather one's thoughts.

No drinking, eating, sleeping, or getting distracted.

The Talker wanted a high-quality conversation that demanded attention.

If one stopped talking or started to give very short and curt answers, one would regret it.

The Talker would start by lightly slapping the other person's face.

If the person didn't return to talking normally, the Talker would get more aggressive.

Tearing fingernails out.

Punching.

Tearing limbs off.

The Talker would only lose interest if it was clear that no amount of torture would make the person talkative again.

This was the only outcome.

After all, as a Specter, the Talker didn't have any real needs.

It didn't feel hungry, thirsty, exhausted, tired, bored, or whatever.

It could keep going.

It could keep talking for years without a break.

Humans couldn't do that.

Normal humans needed to eat, sleep, and drink.

And even Extractors would, at some point, become too exhausted to continue talking.

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Many of them had lost limbs, and those who managed to recover from the physical torture had become much quieter afterward.

Becoming the Talker's victim was not funny.

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Before Jayjay could recover and get to him, Nick closed the door.

As soon as the door closed, Jayjay immediately stopped in his charge.

In one fluid motion, all his blades vanished, and the destroyed parts of his suit were repaired.

Then, he walked to the middle of the Containment Unit and just stood there, looking forward with a charming smile.

Silence.

Jayjay didn't say or do anything.

He just waited.

For his next conversation.

Outside the Containment Unit, Nick took a deep breath.

Even though he knew that this was going to happen, fighting an Adult was still a bit nerve-wracking.

Nick knew that this was how it was going to be every day from now on.

While the Talker was definitely a very intelligent Specter, it wasn't sane.

No matter how many times it happened, the Talker would always attack Nick if he ever attempted to interrupt the conversation.

No amount of logical arguments or pleading would change that.

For a while, Nick just aimlessly looked forward.

His mind could relax for the first time in eight hours.

Nick was so happy that he could just do nothing.

He could just look forward and not think about anything.

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Chapter 396 – The Talker

"It's like a big greyish-white stone. Usually, you can see a couple of guards standing around it."

"Huh, why are guards standing around the Rust Lick?" Jayjay asked.

"It's because salt is necessary to survive, and the people of the Outer City often forget to consume enough salt. People in the Inner City have a lot of added salt in their food, but people in the Outer City don't."

"Why don't they use salt in their food? I heard it tastes good," Jayjay asked.

"Mostly money problems. Salt is expensive."

"Why's the salt so expensive?" Jayjay asked.

Nick felt like it was hard to focus his eyes, and he often saw his vision becoming blurry.

How long had he been at this?

He didn't know.

He had set the timer to eight hours before entering, and since the alarm hadn't rung yet, Nick couldn't have been here for longer than eight hours.

How much had he said over the past hours?

He was sure that he had never said this many words in a single day.

'This is going to be my life now,' Nick thought as he kept talking about the characteristics of salt.

This was how one worked with the Talker.

The Talker was a Specter that grew more powerful by socially exhausting people.

It demanded constant attention, and it demanded a smooth and endless conversation.

When it asked a question, it wanted an answer.

Surprisingly, the answer didn't have to perfectly reflect the person's true thoughts and beliefs.

Lying was also okay, but the lie shouldn't be too obvious, and it would be bad if one contradicted oneself at a later point.

While talking to the Talker, one wasn't allowed to take a couple of moments to relax or to gather one's thoughts.

No drinking, eating, sleeping, or getting distracted.

The Talker wanted a high-quality conversation that demanded attention.

If one stopped talking or started to give very short and curt answers, one would regret it.

The Talker would start by lightly slapping the other person's face.

If the person didn't return to talking normally, the Talker would get more aggressive.

Tearing fingernails out.

Punching.

Tearing limbs off.

The Talker would only lose interest if it was clear that no amount of torture would make the person talkative again.

This was the only outcome.

After all, as a Specter, the Talker didn't have any real needs.

It didn't feel hungry, thirsty, exhausted, tired, bored, or whatever.

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Chapter 399 – 18 Months

More time passed, and finally, after around 18 more months, Nick managed to become a Mid Veteran.

Nick had been an Extractor for nine years by now, and he was already a Mid Veteran.

One had to know that becoming a Mid Veteran this quickly was crazy.

If anyone managed to become a Mid Veteran, that mostly happened in their late 30s or their 40s.

Meanwhile, Nick was already one at 25 years of age.

On the other hand, not much had happened within the last 18 months.

Dark Dream hadn't caught an additional Specter.

This felt quite stagnant. Especially since Nick hadn't done much except work for the past 18 months.

Yet, it was important to note that there were no shortcuts when it came to becoming stronger.

The fact that Nick was a Mid Veteran at 25 years of age was already unprecedented in Crimson City.

He was over five years younger than the previous record holder had been.

Sadly, Nick still had to invest years into every level, and things would only get worse.

The time it took to advance was already bordering on suspicious, and even if Nick somehow managed to advance even faster, the only thing that would accomplish was that the city would thoroughly investigate all of Dark Dream, which might uncover Julian's secret.

There were no natural nor artificial treasures or herbs or potions or whatever that could increase someone's level rapidly.

The fastest way was to work with Specters and consume even more Zephyx by inhaling or eating it.

However, the second part had only little effect and was very expensive.

So, while Dark Dream seemed slow and stale from the viewpoint of inexperienced people, the experienced Manufacturers could tell that Dark Dream was rapidly becoming more powerful.

Especially their employees were growing stronger rapidly.

Dark Dream now had two Peak Johns with Taren also becoming one.

Sadly, Jenny was still too early to try going into Zephois.

She needed to absorb more Zephyx.

Aside from that, Dark Dream now had seven Late Johns, which was far more than they had previously.

There were also four Mid Johns and six Initial Johns.

In total, Dark Dream now had 19 Johns, which was over double of what they had before the Crimson Sea broke out.

Even more, the power of their Johns was also much higher.

On top of that, Dark Dream also had 17 Newbies of different levels, making them about equal to the number of Newbies Solace had.

Having a great number of Newbies represented having a healthy supply of weak Specters, which ensured the supply of new employees.

For a Manufacturer, it was always preferable to gain new Extractors by raising them.

Getting Extractors from other companies was always associated with risk.

What if those Extractors were spies?

Additionally, they would need to pay a fee to the company where the Extractor was currently employed.

As for Extractors without a job, it was best to avoid them.

Every Manufacturer put tons of money and resources into raising every Extractor, and if a Manufacturer was willing to essentially burn all that investment and fire them, there had to be serious issues with that Extractor.

It was extremely rare for an unemployed Extractor to get hired.

The only real recourse for the Extractor was to join the city and work as some form of contractor.

They would not receive all the fancy treatment that real guards enjoyed but still had to work quite a bit.

Even more, the money this job paid was horrendous.

However, it was better than every other job.

Even though the pay was horrendous, that was only true when seen from the viewpoint of the average Extractor.

Someone working for the city as a contractor still earned easily enough to live in the lower layer of the Inner City.

So, with all of this considered, it was important for a Manufacturer to have many Hatchlings and Adolescents since those produced fresh new recruits.

However, the employees were not the only things that grew quickly in Dark Dream.

The Specters also grew rather rapidly.

For example, the Talker had become a Mid Adult already, but that wasn't really because of Nick.

The Talker had already been close to advancing when Dark Dream had gotten it, and its next advancement would take years.

Dark Dream also gained two more Peak Adolescents in the Fog and the Abductor.

The Bleeding Lady, Dung Heap, and Money Sink were Late Adolescents, and the remainder of the Adolescents were Mid Adolescents.

Dark Dream did not have any normal Early and Initial Adolescents.

After all, Dark Dream hadn't caught many new Specters.

Luckily, the Puppy and the Fog were easy to work with, giving the Initial and Early Johns some work.

With all of this said, one thing was clear.

Dark Dream needed time.

Everything and everyone was advancing, but they still needed more time to produce more powerful Extractors and Specters.

With time, several of their Adolescents would advance to becoming Adults, and several of their Johns would become Veterans.

However, Nick didn't have that time.

At least, he didn't want to have it.

Dark Dream needed more Adolescents.

Right now, Dark Dream had just the right ratio between Adolescents and Johns.

However, the number of Adolescents would decrease in the future since some of them would become Adults, while more and more Newbies would become Johns.

Additionally, Nick needed another powerful Adult.

Right now, he and the Talker were at the same level, but as soon as Nick became a Late Veteran, things would change.

The Talker would still be nowhere close to becoming a Late Adult, making it very difficult for Nick to advance again.

If Nick had two additional Mid Veterans, the Talker might only grow a little slower than Nick, but that wasn't the case.

As things stood now, the Talker would probably need around a decade to become a Late Adult.

Nick didn't want to wait that long to advance.

Mainly due to Julian.

Julian was also advancing.

He had not advanced a level yet, but he was about to.

In just five years, Julian would have managed to become an Early Fanatic.

If Nick didn't catch up, he might not survive.

After all, would Julian keep Nick alive when he had gained control over the entire city?

Of course not.

Because of that, Nick decided to go all-in when it came to helping Dark Dream grow.

Nick needed Dark Dream to become more powerful rapidly if he wanted to keep his current rate of advancement.

So, Nick decided to do something drastic.

He would go on an excursion again.

But this time, he wouldn't go with Dark Dream.

No, he would go on an excursion with Solace.

Chapter 400 – Roles

"We're here to meet Mr. Nick," a smaller blonde man said to the receptionist of Dark Dream. "We're the team from Solace. He should be expecting us."

"Of course," the receptionist said politely. "Please, give me a short moment. I'm going to get him right away."

The next moment, the receptionist walked off towards the stairs.

The three people standing in front of the desk watched the receptionist leave.

They didn't say anything and just waited, their expressions neutral.

About a minute later, they saw someone coming back with a tall man filled with muscles.

Naturally, that was Nick.

The three of them had already seen Nick before, but only one of them had interacted with him before.

"Hey, Carl," Nick said with a nod to the smaller blonde man. "I presume we're going to go right now?"

Carl nodded back.

Carl wore the uniform of Solace, and he didn't seem to carry a weapon.

However, his lack of a weapon didn't mean that he was harmless.

Far from it.

After all, he was the second Expert from Solace and the only other Expert besides their CZE, Hera Marion.

However, since he had only become an Expert about four years ago, he was still at the Initial level.

Advancing within the Expert Stage took a lot of effort and time.

Carl was Solace's vice-CZE, and he was responsible for gathering new Specters for Solace.

Nick and Carl had talked a couple of times in the past.

"Yes, we're going soon," Carl answered with a neutral voice. "Let me introduce the team first."

Then, Carl pointed at a tall but thin man with long black hair. The man looked rather wild with his long and unkempt hair, and there was a certain coldness in his eyes. On his back was a rifle that was nearly as long as him.

Nick could immediately tell that this was a very experienced fighter, but that was to be expected.

From what Nick had heard, these three were Solace's main force when it came to capturing Specters.

They were responsible for capturing almost 20% of Solace's Specters.

"This is Irwin, our Sniper and Sensor. He's a Peak Veteran," Carl said. "Since you were adamant that our abilities are to remain confidential, I can't tell you more."

"Hi," Irwin said with a distant and neutral voice.

Nick nodded.

Then, Carl pointed at a brown-haired man of average size. The man carried two guns in his holsters, and he looked at Nick with a skeptical raised brow.

"This is Mark, our Manipulator, and he's a Mid Veteran," Carl said.

"Hey," Mark said with a nod.

Nick nodded back.

Then, Carl turned to his two teammates and pointed at Nick. "This is Nick. He's a Mid Veteran, and he's a Sensor, an Assassin, and a Runner."

When the other two heard that, grimaces of disbelief and skepticism appeared on their faces.

Somebody that could fill all of these roles?

Yeah, right, sure.

These things that Carl mentioned were roles certain people were able to fulfill during a group mission.

The role system was used by all the other Manufacturers within Crimson City.

Dark Dream hadn't adopted this role system yet since they had only had a single mission into the outer world.

There was not much point in categorizing everyone.

In general, there were ten roles.

A Bruiser was somebody who was good at engaging enemies directly without dying to a quick attack.

Clayton, the tall guy from Dark Dream with his huge shield, counted as a Bruiser.

A Bruiser had the job to buy time for the remaining members of the team.

Even though his lack of a weapon and his small stature made it seem different, Carl was actually the Bruiser of this team.

A Sniper was, as the name suggested, someone who could take an enemy out from a long range.

Jenny would be a good example of a Sniper from Dark Dream.

A Manipulator was somebody who could affect the battlefield without directly causing a lot of damage.

Fields of darkness, pulling enemies closer from a distance, pushing enemies away, distorting the surroundings.

These were examples of what Manipulators used to manipulate the battlefield.

An Assassin was somebody who could very quickly reach an enemy and kill them.

A good example was Nick.

A Sener was somebody who had an ability that allowed them to sense the surroundings and scan for threats.

Nick was a good example since he could sense if somebody could see him or not.

A Runner was somebody who was extremely good at escaping.

This might seem unimportant, but this job could be the most important one in certain situations.

If a Runner managed to escape, the assault on the team would be unveiled, and the attackers would be prosecuted.

After all, attacking other Extractors was highly illegal.

Most of the time, if a Runner managed to escape, the assaulting party would immediately flee.

If a powerful guard or the governor appeared, they would be caught alive, and everyone would know which Manufacturer was responsible for the attack.

Another role was the Healer.

As the name suggested, Healers had the ability to either rejuvenate somebody's vitality or rejuvenate somebody's Zephyx storage.

That one person from the Spartans who had been in the team attacking Nick back then was a good example.

Back then, she had helped one of her team members recover their Zephyx.

A Suppressor was somebody who could exhaust and suppress an enemy.

Three of Nick's teammates from the last excursion, Clayton, Petry, and Jason, were good examples.

All three of them had the ability from the Money Sink, allowing them to absorb an enemy's Zephyx.

Suppressors were essential when it came to fighting Force Specters.

An Informant was somebody who could extract information out of somebody with their ability.

Jenny, for example, could count as an Informant.

She had the Dreamer's ability, and with it, she could look into the dreams of somebody.

The last role had the charming name of Whatever, and it acted as anything that couldn't be classified by the other nine.

Most Extractors could only fulfill one of these roles, but there were also a couple that could fulfill two.

When somebody said that they could fulfill three, they were most likely exaggerating or lying.

Nick could fulfill three of these roles, but that was hard to believe for others.

If somebody's skillset was this diverse, chances were that they were not good at any of them.

In fact, none of Nick's three new teammates believed him.

However, they kept quiet.

After all, Nick was Dark Dream's CZE, and it was important not to ruin the relationship between the two Manufacturers.