

## **The Sun 431**

### Chapter 431 – Bait

Nick looked at the two newcomers while they talked with the people from Anatomy.

'I wonder how much Anatomy had to pay them to help,' Nick thought. 'It can't be cheap, but the Specter should be worth it.'

'Sure enough, Anatomy has taken on a huge risk. If this fails, they might need to still pay these two.'

"So, what's the plan?" Kevara, the governor of Metal Works City, asked.

"First, we are going to leave and let him lure the Specter out. We assume that the Specter has a perception-by-perception ability, which means the Specter might not appear if we see the bait," Mundus explained.

"Perception by perception," Liera repeated with furrowed brows. "I've never heard of something like that."

Kevara just shrugged. "Plenty of abilities in the world of Specters."

By the way Kevara and Liera were acting towards each other, Nick could tell that the dynamic between government and Manufacturer was probably different in Metal Works City.

This seemed much closer.

Meanwhile, the governor of Crimson City was always very distant from the Manufacturers.

"And how are we going to know when to intervene?" Liera asked with a skeptical voice.

"We have a way to tell," Mundus answered.

Liera just looked at them with an unamused expression.

"Fine. We'll get paid anyway," she said.

"You get the full amount as long as at least one Demon or Hero shows up," Mundus confirmed.

Liera didn't answer.

"When do we start?" Kevara asked.

Mundus looked at the other two from Anatomy, who nodded.

Then, he looked at Nick, who also nodded.

"We'll start right now," Mundus said.

Then, he looked at Nick again. "Start in one minute," he said.

Nick nodded.

Then, the Heroes looked at each other.

SHING!

And seemingly vanished into thin air.

They moved so fast that it was difficult for Nick to follow their movements.

Now, Nick was left alone, and he took a deep breath.

His ability still hadn't activated again.

Of course, the perception-by-perception thing was only half right.

While it was true that the Specter had to have an ability that strengthened its senses, it wasn't something as extraordinary as being able to sense if someone else was sensing something.

That was something that probably only Fallen, Adversaries, or Eternals could do.

Most likely, the Specter had an ability that allowed it to see someone's surroundings.

Naturally, Nick said that the Specter had a perception-by-perception ability since he didn't want Anatomy to look at him.

Anatomy believed that Dark Dream had some kind of special thing that could lure a powerful Specter out, and they would definitely want to know how that worked.

But with this strange ability in play, Anatomy couldn't look at Nick.

At least, it was not worth the risk.

Obviously, Anatomy was suspicious about Nick's claim. They definitely didn't fully believe it.

However, they only had one shot.

If, by some chance, Nick was right, and they were looking at Nick while he was luring the Specter out, they would waste this golden opportunity.

The Specter would most likely not show up if it sensed a Hero watching over Nick.

Then, Anatomy would need to pay the two from Metal Works City a third of the full price, which was a lot.

Even more, they wouldn't get another chance like this.

So, they basically had no choice but to believe Nick unless they were dumb.

About 30 seconds after everyone left, Nick felt his ability reactivate.

'Sure enough, they won't risk it,' Nick thought.

Then, Nick looked towards the closest cliff.

He slowly approached the cliff, and when he reached the wall of the cliff...

CRK! CRK! CRK!

Nick pulled out his blades and started to dig into the cliff!

The reason for that was the Specter's intelligence.

Nick had already appeared after looking over the cliff twice, and both times, the Specter had failed to find him.

He was not sure if it would fall for the same trick thrice.

So, Nick decided to use a new one.

The reason why he told them that it wouldn't come anymore after ten minutes was to give himself five minutes to prepare.

Nick dug a hole in the cliff and quickly dug diagonally downward.

Naturally, since no one was looking at him, he was over a thousand times stronger than a normal human.

He was essentially a very fast machine that could exert tons upon tons of force with every movement.

The stones were being flung out of the makeshift cave with tremendous speed, and even when the occasional cave-in occurred, Nick just kept throwing the stones outwards.

A couple of tons of stone didn't inhibit him in any way.

After just two minutes, the cave had already become over twenty meters deep, and Nick wasn't planning on stopping.

Another two minutes passed, and Nick slowed down.

'I should already be closer to the water,' he thought.

Then, he took a deep breath.

This was the moment.

Nick angled upward a slight bit and continued to dig, but more slowly.

Eventually, the ceiling of the tunnel began to drip with water.

Nick's heart rate increased, and he took a deep breath again.

Crk! WHOOOM!

Nick scratched the top of the tunnel, and the ceiling suddenly couldn't hold anymore.

Water broke through the ceiling and rapidly filled the tunnel.

As soon as the water broke through the ceiling, Nick's ability deactivated.

Less than a second after the cave-in, Nick charged out of his collapsing tunnel with all of his speed.

Naturally, this was his plan.

He would act like he was trying to create a covert tunnel beneath the shore, just like the one that Solace had created.

Yet, tragically, he would dig too close to the surface and cause a cave-in.

And then, he would just run away.

He was sure that the Specter was within the water, and he was also quite certain that the Specter would be able to sense him as soon as he came into contact with the water.

He was right.

After all, his ability deactivated immediately after he got touched by the water.

Nick charged out of the hole in less than a second, and he immediately shot toward the south, away from the shore.

His ability had activated again.

Nick ran.

He got 300 meters away.

And then...

His ability deactivated.

He looked towards the north, and he saw a tiny speck in the distance.

Nick knew exactly what that was.

Chapter 432 – The Battle Begins

That speck had to be a person!

More specifically, one of the coral people!

Nick just continued charging towards the south with all of his speed, which wasn't very fast since his ability had been deactivated.

Time seemed to slow down as Nick saw the distant speck becoming bigger at an alarming rate.

Nick felt like he had barely taken a step before he could actually make sense of the speck.

Just as expected, it was a person.

It was a tall man with black hair.

A huge growth of corals came out of the back of his head and seemingly created long, slithery, and spiky wings.

All over his body, corals were bursting out of his skin, but surprisingly, they only came out from the back parts of his body.

Back of his arms, back of his legs, back of his head, and, of course, the back itself.

The front of the man looked relatively normal.

This had to be him!

This had to be the Hero who had vanished in the Forbidden Zone several decades ago.

This had to be the Chief Zephyx Extractor of the previously biggest Manufacturer of Crimson City, Ambrosia.

He had been extremely powerful back then, and his power probably hadn't diminished.

This was an Early Hero, someone who had already worked with Demons for years before dying.

Anatomy did not have that opportunity.

Time seemingly moved in slow motion.

Nick felt like he was moving extremely slowly while the man moved at incredible speeds.



He was coming closer rapidly!

Three kilometers.

One kilometer.

300 meters.

Nick turned around and faced the approaching person.

'He can't kill me!' Nick thought. 'I'm certain that the Specter is Envy's servant! That means he can't possibly kill me! Envy wants the power of the Null!'

The man closed in on Nick, and Nick looked back.

100 meters.

50 meters.

BANG!

Suddenly, the ground between Nick and the man exploded, and dust was thrown everywhere.

Nick was covered by the dust immediately, but his ability didn't reactivate.

It wasn't possible to hide from someone who was this much stronger than him.

SHING!

Nick heard the sound of something being cut.

WHOOOM!

At the same time, a powerful shockwave appeared, which blasted away the dusty clouds around Nick.

That was when Nick saw it.

The man's right forearm had been cut off, and it was currently flying towards Nick.

Luckily, Nick could easily sidestep the arm since it was no longer attached to the man.

At the same time, Nick could see an icy silhouette hovering in front of the man.

The entire silhouette was cerulean blue, and it had a somewhat humanoid shape.

Only somewhat because the silhouette's limbs, while at the right place, were essentially just long swords.

Even more, several more swords were coming out from different parts of the silhouette.

The only thing that looked somewhat normal was the silhouette's face.

It looked like the face of a cheap marionette.

An exaggerated grin was carved into its face, and its eyes were just two lines with an upward curve, making it seem like someone was smiling.

WHOOOM!

Before Nick could fully take in the appearance of the cerulean sword puppet, he felt an extremely powerful burst of Zephyx coming from the south.

Nick saw four distant silhouettes rapidly approaching.

They were Mundus, Zarren, Liera, and Kevara.

Ariel was nowhere to be seen.

The battle was about to begin!

The cerulean puppet readied its swords and shot at the coral man.

Naturally, the coral man retreated.

He had already lost an arm, putting him at a disadvantage.

Luckily, the coral people didn't seem to have the ability to properly make use of the Barriers, significantly weakening them.

As the man retreated, he pulled a gun out of his uniform.

The gun pointed at the puppet in front of him.

At the same time, the puppet suddenly stopped and shot to the side.

The change in trajectory was so rapid and sudden that it seemed like several laws of physics had just been broken.

It was like momentum and inertia didn't exist.

When Nick saw that, he was shocked.

It wasn't because of the movement itself.

No, it was about the fact that the puppet could move like that in the first place.

Moving like this required the ability to fly, which meant that it required someone to be a Hero.

Yes, there were plenty of Heroes here, but Nick was sure that the puppet didn't belong to the two from Metal Works City.

Anatomy had the symbol of a puppet, and Zarren had also summoned a small steel puppet before.

This meant that this puppet belonged to Anatomy, and it wasn't Zarren's puppet since Nick had already seen that one.

It most likely also wasn't Mundus' puppet since he was charging out with everyone else.

That only left Ariel.

Ariel was not here right now.

Additionally, the puppet's color was extremely similar to Ariel's hair color.

'Is Ariel a Hero?!' Nick thought.

But wasn't Mundus Anatomy's Hero?

Yes, he was.

This could only mean one thing.

Anatomy had two Heroes!

But then, Nick noticed that Zarren was flying through the sky alongside the other three Heroes.

No, Anatomy didn't have two Heroes!

Anatomy had three Heroes!

All three of their leaders had already become Heroes!

This put them on the same level as Kugelblitz when it came to the number of Heroes if one ignored the governor.

The only place where they were lacking was level.

Since Anatomy didn't have access to a Demon, none of their Heroes could advance within the Hero Stage.

This meant that all three of them were Initial Heroes.

Meanwhile, Kugelblitz probably already had more than one Early Hero.

Maybe they even had a Mid Hero.

While Nick was coming to this realization, the coral man fired his gun at the blue puppet.

BOOOM!

A brutal explosion occurred, and the puppet was shot right in the chest.

All this fancy maneuvering had not helped at all.

When the bullet hit the puppet's chest, it got buried deep inside.

Yet, surprisingly, the puppet didn't really seem very damaged, and it continued to charge at the man.

WHOOOM!

But then, huge green tentacles shot out of the puppet's chest and wound around the puppet in an instant.

Before anyone could react, the entire puppet was surrounded by green tentacles, and very soon, it became clear that these tentacles were actually green roots.

The puppet stopped in the air.

Apparently, the roots immobilized him.

The man retreated.

The four Heroes rapidly approached.

And then...

BOOOOOOOM!

A bolt of white lightning hit the bound puppet and brutally exploded.

The four Heroes in the air stopped for a moment as they saw countless cerulean pieces scattering across the surroundings.

While the bullet had only buried itself into the puppet's chest, this bolt of lightning had completely obliterated it.

Then, the gathered people noticed another person hovering in the distance.

They had been the one that shot the lightning bolt.

And by the power that lightning bolt exhibited, they could be sure of one thing.

This other person was definitely stronger than the coral man!

Chapter 433 – Manipulator

The person hovering in the distance was seemingly made almost entirely out of corals.

The front of their body had several long and spiky tendrils of corals coming out of it.

The only things that were exposed were the obviously female chest and the space between the legs.

It was obvious that this body's previous occupant had been a beautiful woman.

But now, only a mess of corals, a bit of blue hair, and the intimate parts of the body remained free.

Naturally, she had been the one who had fired the terrifying lightning bolt.

As soon as the new person showed up, the two people from Metal Works City were shocked.

"So, that's where you were!" Kevara shouted at the distant woman before she charged forward.

The people from Anatomy realized that the two from Metal Works City apparently knew the newcomer, but now was not the time to talk.

"You guys deal with the other one!" Liera shouted as she shot after Kevara.

The people from Anatomy were not happy to hear that.

Liera, as the CZE of the biggest Manufacturer in Metal Works City, was an Early Hero, and Kevara was even a Mid Hero.

Meanwhile, the three of Anatomy were just Initial Heroes.

This meant that Kevara and Liera represented the majority of their power.

And now, both of them were focusing on only one of the enemies.

However, when they remembered the powerful bolt of lightning, they were no longer as angry.

That woman with the lightning seemed to be very powerful.

Nick could only watch from the ground as the four people shot at their respective opponents.

Zarren was the first to reach his opponent, the man with the gun that could shoot roots.



SHING!

A metallic puppet appeared in front of Zarren, and its body expanded in the blink of an eye.

An instant later, Zarren charged into an open compartment on the puppet's back and was surrounded.

It was like the puppet had been made into some kind of powerful mechanical monster!

BANG!

Spikes exploded out of the puppet, and it swung towards the man with the gun.

The man retreated further and readied his gun.

He aimed his gun at the steel puppet and fired.

WHOOM!

But then, strings appeared above the man's body.

The strings came out of all of the man's joints and seemed to lead up to the sky.

When the man had fired his gun, his right arm moved upward like it had been pulled by one of the strings, and the shot barely missed.

Nick could see that Mundus also had a puppet in his hand.

Compared to Ariel's cerulean blade puppet and Zarren's steel armor puppet, Mundus' puppet seemed ordinary.

It was just a black puppet that stood on top of Mundus' left hand, while his right hand manipulated its strings.

Surprisingly, the way the puppet floated above Mundus' hand looked just like the coral man with the gun.

Nick could tell that Mundus had been the one who had made the coral man miss.

He also immediately realized that Mundus could fulfill two roles.

He was obviously a Manipulator, but his powers could most likely also be used for the Informant role.

If Mundus could control an enemy Hero, he could definitely control someone weaker.

That was when Nick remembered that Veteran who had come to get him.

That guy had acted like a machine.

Had he been controlled by Mundus?

After the coral man missed his shot, Zarren closed in again.

WHOOOM!

A sheet of metal came out of the puppet's arm, and Zarren swung towards the enemy.

The coral man tried to evade, but the strings around his body became taut.

BANG!

The sheet of metal hit the man's left leg, and an explosion of blood occurred.

After the explosion of blood passed, Nick could see that the man's leg had been turned into something that looked like a bloody sausage!

The bones in the leg were probably broken so badly that there might as well not be any bones at all.

As it stood now, the coral man could count himself lucky that his leg was still attached.

At the same time, Nick noticed that the man's strings had been cut.

Somehow, the man had managed to get rid of the strings, which was also the reason why only his leg was injured.

Otherwise, his entire body might have turned into a bloody sausage.

But at that moment, the man pointed his gun at Zarren again, and this time, there were no strings attached to his body.

BANG!

The gun fired, but at the same time, more strings appeared.

But this time, the strings seemed to vanish into the surroundings!

They just entered the air and vanished!

Mundus spun the strings in his hand, and Nick could feel an incredible amount of Zephyx coming out of Mundus' body.

Nick almost couldn't believe what he saw next.

The area in a big circle around the coral man seemed to detach from reality.

And then, it spun!

If one looked at the battlefield from above via a round portal or something, they would see the outer fifth of their view detaching and spinning.

The bullet, which had just entered the spinning part, was spun alongside the surroundings.

Of course, due to the bullet's speed, it was only inside that part for a tiny amount of time.

But it was enough, and it barely missed its target.

Then, Zarren reached the coral man again.

WHOOOOM!

Several gigantic plates of steel appeared around the man, and they immediately compressed.

This was just like the time Zarren had surrounded Nick's head with metal but on a much greater scale.

Of course, the steel around the man immediately started to bend and was just about to burst.

Something like this couldn't possibly contain a Hero.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The world seemed to split apart, and a line seemed to form in the air, which turned the area around it blurry.

Nick knew what this was.

This was how it looked like when something with extreme speed passed by.

As soon as the phenomenon occurred, a small hole appeared inside the steel.

An instant later, all the metal became icy blue and turned into icy flakes, revealing the coral man beneath.

Chapter 434 – High-level Battle

'That's a sniper round!' Nick thought after looking at the streak in the air.

Nick had seen many guns being fired in his life, but he had never seen a sniper round that had moved at these speeds.

Then, Nick saw the coral man as the icy flakes were blown away.

A small hole had appeared in the man's abdomen.

That bullet had definitely hit its mark.

Nick's eyes widened as he saw everything around the hole freezing!

The man's abdomen was quickly freezing over, and if he didn't do something, he would be dead real soon.

BANG!

Suddenly, the corals coming out of the man's back hit the man's lower body, shattering it.

Everything below the man's chest was obliterated.

If the man were a normal human, he would die within a couple of seconds.

However, this was not only an extremely powerful Extractor but also a meat puppet of a Specter.

Even though the man had received devastating damage, he still calmly pointed his gun at Zarren again.

Zarren charged at the man, and Mundus readied himself.

But then, the gun moved.

It pointed away from Zarren and pointed at...

Nick!

Nick's eyes widened, and he only saw the flash of a distant muzzle.

He couldn't even think.

The next couple of moments happened at unbelievable speeds.

First, the gun fired its round at Nick, who couldn't even hope to dodge that.

Almost simultaneously, a blue blur shot out from below Nick.

It was the cerulean sword puppet, and it was fully repaired!

Or was it a second one?

The cerulean sword puppet immediately stopped between Nick and the bullet to block it.

Yet, before the bullet hit the cerulean sword puppet, something else happened.

BANG!

A brutal lightning bolt arrived at speeds that the bullet couldn't compete with and completely obliterated the puppet again.

The puppet was turned into dust before the bullet hit it.

Nick seemed frozen in time since he couldn't even think at the speeds at which these events took place.

The bullet shot past the dust of the cerulean sword puppet.

BANG!

And hit a small plate of steel just centimeters in front of Nick.

WHOOOM!

Huge and long tendrils came out of the bullet, and they all reached for Nick.

But at the same time, the steel plate grew, covering more and more of Nick's body.

The steel and the bullet battled for dominance, and eventually, Nick was encased in a steel ball, which was, in turn, surrounded by roots.

As far as Nick was concerned, he only saw the flash of a muzzle before darkness encased him.

For just an instant, Nick wasn't sure if he was still alive.

But then, the Nightmare's influence appeared, and Nick was certain that he was still alive.

Burning blades cut into Nick's flesh and peeled it off its bone.

Sadly, the only thing he could do was to grit his teeth and hold out.

While Nick was being tortured by the Nightmare, the roots covering the steel ball extended toward the ground.

WHOOOM!

And threw themselves towards the sea!

They had captured their target!

The realization of what happened occurred simultaneously in everyone.

Mundus' eyes narrowed, and the black puppet in his hand curled into a ball.

DING!



Strings appeared in the air and became taut, stopping the root-

covered ball.

The roots tried to keep pulling, but they couldn't compete with the strings.

By now, it was obvious that the coral man was an Early Hero, while the people from Anatomy were Initial Heroes.

Yet, even though the coral man was stronger than Mundus, his relationship between him and his roots was different from Mundus' relationship with his strings.

The roots were like minions, and they wouldn't get new Zephyx from the man. This limited their output, and eventually, they would run out of Zephyx.

Meanwhile, Mundus' strings were directly manipulated by him, and he could infuse them with as much Zephyx as he wanted.

So, even though the roots pulled with all their strength, Mundus just stopped them by using more Zephyx.

In less than a second, the roots became weak and stopped moving.

Nick had only been moved one kilometer closer to the sea, which was still a couple hundred meters away.

Zarren saw that he no longer needed to infuse the ball of metal with Zephyx to harden it and focused on the man again...

Who pointed his gun at Zarren.

WHOOM! BANG!

Zarren summoned a big sheet of metal between him and his opponent.

The bullet hit the sheet and wrapped around it, making both of them fall to the ground.

Meanwhile, Zarren charged forward.

At the same time, more strings appeared above the man, keeping him in place.

The man hadn't readied another round yet.

Mundus and Zarren focused on the coral man.

They were about to win.

"CAREFUL!"

At that moment, Kevara's words seemed to pulse throughout the world.

These words were not spoken with her mouth but with her Zephyx, allowing her to bypass the speed of sound limit.

At that moment, Zarren and Mundus looked higher into the sky, towards the other battlefield.

Kilometers of the sky were covered in silver metallic liquid, making it seem like the world was covered in clouds.

At the same time, countless small pieces of metal were shooting past the clouds at unbelievable speeds, destroying the ground everywhere.

Luckily, there was a metallic cloud above the people of the first battlefield, protecting them from the fallout.

From time to time, huge explosions of lightning shot past the clouds of metal.

The liquid metal clouds were made by Kevara, and the countless pieces of metal were made by Liera.

When the people from the first battlefield looked up after Kevara's shout, they saw something terrifying.

The coral woman had summoned a spear made of lightning, and she was about to throw it.

Sadly, she was so fast that no one could react.

WHOOOOOM!

The bolt of lightning left the skies.

They passed over Nick.

They passed over Zarren, Mundus, and the coral man.

They shot into the horizon at the south.

This was the place where the earlier sniper round had come from!

This was where Ariel had to be!

Silence.

BOOOOOOOOM!

A kilometer-wide explosion of lightning brightened the horizon.

For the first time, there seemed to be two suns.

Sssshhh!

And then, as everyone looked towards the south, a nearly imperceptible sound of quietly whispering wind went through the battlefield.

An instant later, a new coral man appeared, almost his entire body covered in corals.

In his hands were two longswords...

And he stood right behind Mundus!

Chapter 435 – Strings

The combatants didn't even have time to react to the explosion happening in the south before a third enemy attacked Mundus.

The timing had been perfect.

No one had noticed the man with the two blades until now, which meant that he had most likely been an Assassin in the past.

An Assassin had two jobs.

Getting closer to a target.

And...

CRRRRRRRRR!

The man's blades moved at incredible speeds and attacked Mundus.

It was like Mundus had been thrown into a meat grinder!

Luckily, a dark green Barrier appeared around Mundus, sparing him from injury.

However, his Zephyx was dropping fast!

An instant later, a balloon of steel appeared between the two of them and expanded.

Zarren's puppet was pointing its hand towards Mundus, and Zarren kept using more and more Zephyx to expand the metal.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The metal was being cut apart again and again, but the attacks were no longer reaching Mundus.

At that moment, Mundus' eyes turned icy.

Nick felt an incredible amount of Zephyx getting summoned, and a moment later, new strings appeared.

But this time, they were blood red!

The strings were attached to Mundus' left arm and to the blade man's left arm.

The world seemed to shake.

And then, both of their arms detached!

There was no blood or any kind of wound!

It was like they were puppets!

A moment later, the two arms turned blurry, and when they became clear again, they had switched places!

Mundus' left arm was now at the blade man's left shoulder and vice versa.

In an instant, the arms reattached.

SHING!

A sword covered in black runes appeared in Mundus' right hand and, without hesitation...

SHING!

He cut his left arm off!

Mundus' left arm, which had turned into the blade man's left arm, was cut off and fell to the ground.

At the same time, Mundus' real left arm, which was now attached to the blade man's left shoulder, reached for the man's right wrist and grabbed it.

The man's attacks stopped as he had lost the use of both of his arms.

At the same time, the puppet in Mundus' right hand started to dance.

Next, more and more strings appeared around the blade man.

The blade man tried to jump back, but the strings wouldn't let him.

The blade man tried to cut the strings, but the only arm that was listening to him was being restrained by his other arm.

He couldn't even bite through the strings since his entire face was covered in corals.

Meanwhile, Zarren kept fighting the other man with the gun.

Even though the man was a level stronger than Zarren, he was so heavily injured that it was only a matter of time before Zarren won.

"We need help!"

Kevara's voice echoed throughout the world again.

Zarren gritted his teeth.

What did they mean they needed help?!

Those two were a Mid Hero and an Early Hero, and they were fighting one opponent who didn't even have access to a Barrier!

Was the coral woman a Late Hero?!

The next moment, Zarren's eyes were filled with determination as he looked at the struggling man with the gun.

A terrifying amount of Zephyx shot through the world, and thousands of steel sheets appeared around the gun man.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

In an instant, they all clamped around the gun man.

If the man still had access to all of his limbs, he would be able to get out of this, but as it stood, he only had one arm left, and that arm was carrying his gun.

Zarren looked with unbroken focus at the ball of metal.

More and more sheets of metal surrounded the ball, but strangely, it didn't expand or grow.

That could only mean that it became denser.

While this was happening, a man was charging past the liquid metal clouds and entered the other battlefield.

This was the blade man.

However, he was covered in hundreds of strings, and his left arm had stopped restraining his right arm.

This could only mean that the blade man had fully fallen under Mundus' control.



At the same time, Mundus slowly floated after the man.

It was obvious by the way he moved that he had to retain a high level of focus to keep the man under control.

BANG!

The steel ball in front of Zarren fell to the ground and made a gigantic crater.

A moment later, Zarren charged towards the other battlefield as well.

The battle in the sky intensified while the former battlefield on the ground became quiet.

The only thing of note was a steel ball covered by roots.

BANG!

At that moment, when everything had become quiet, three small explosions came from the coast.

Three more coral people appeared, but compared to the other three, these didn't fly, and they were also not nearly as fast.

Obviously, these three were not Heroes.

The three of them quickly rushed towards the metal ball.

One of them easily lifted the metal ball, and the three of them ran towards the north again.

Inside the metal ball, Nick couldn't sense any of this since he was too busy getting his bones ground into dust.

The three coral people entered the water while carrying Nick's metal ball.

For the first time, Nick was actually inside the big sea to the north, but he couldn't feel it.

Naturally, Nick could use his ability to create a bit of light, but that would waste too much Zephyx.

As far as he knew, there was still a big battle going on outside, and Nick needed all of his Zephyx in case he needed to run.

Because of that, he was just enduring the Nightmare's influence.

After the three of them entered the water, the area became quiet again.

However, up in the air, the battle seemed to reach a crescendo.

More and more lightning was being thrown around, and even the clouds of liquid metal were vibrating.

By the looks of things, the battle was desperate.

Chapter 436 – Corals

Nick didn't know how long he was under the influence of the Nightmare.

It could have been a couple of seconds, but it could have also been minutes.

It was difficult to tell time while one was being tortured.

But eventually, the Nightmare's influence vanished as the light returned.

Nick opened his eyes as soon as he felt the warmth of the sun.

Just for his heart to nearly stop as he saw three coral people in front of the destroyed ball of metal!

Nick became terrified immediately.

Yet, one thought gave him hope.

'They are not allowed to kill me!'

So, Nick collapsed into mist.

Turning into mist was extremely dangerous since any big attack could easily kill Nick.

Turning into mist in front of an opponent was like deactivating one's Barrier and puffing one's chest out.

One punch could prove fatal.

However, since the coral people were not allowed to kill Nick, they couldn't risk attacking him, and the mist's weakness turned into a strength.

In his mist form, Nick quickly rushed out of the ball.

The coral people tried to grab him with their hands, but it wasn't possible to capture mist with one's bare hands.

Nick managed to leave the ball and fly away.

He could now also see where he was.

It was a small island filled with corals.

Nick rapidly shot towards the south.

WHOOOM!

But then, a wall of water appeared in front of him, and he had to stop.

The wall of water was filled with Zephyx, and Nick knew that he couldn't pass through it.

Nick evaded in another direction, but more and more water gathered around him.

Eventually, he was completely surrounded by water, which was coming closer and closer.

Only a little bit of space was left, and Nick became panicked.

If the water kept coming closer, he would die since it would use up all his Zephyx!

But if he turned back to his normal body, he would be captured.

'Does it make a difference?' Nick thought in defeat. 'They also got me in this state.'

SHING!

Nick returned to his normal form.

The water immediately wrapped around him and immobilized him.

It was like the water was made of extremely hard liquid metal.

The next moment, the water turned into a transparent film, which covered his body.

Nick tried his best to resist, but the transparent film was forcing him into a relaxed standing position.

Then, against his will, Nick started to slowly walk towards the three coral people, who just watched with neutral eyes.

While Nick seemed to calmly walk forward, the inside of his mind was anything but calm.

He was trying to find a way to escape, but no matter how much he searched, he couldn't find one!

The three coral people in front of him were Specialists, and one of them even had this water ability that could suppress Force Specters.

Even if Nick used all of his Zephyx, he wouldn't be able to create a flash strong enough to blind the three of them.

The gap in power was just too vast.

In this moment of panic, Nick looked at the foreign piece of Zephyx in his neck.

This was the bit of Zephyx that Simon Francium had left in Nick's body.

If he willed it, the piece of Zephyx would explode, killing him instantly.

This was his only way out.

But he didn't use it yet.

Maybe there was still a chance.

What if the others were still fighting?

In that case, Nick only had to wait.

The others had to be close to winning, right?

From the corner of his eyes, Nick saw gigantic explosions happening in the sky.

'They're still fighting?!'

Nick saw metal, liquid metal, ice, wind, lightning, and fire exploding in the sky.

The battle seemed to be brutal!

Some seconds later, Nick's body stopped walking, and he found himself in a clearing.

There were nearly 50 people kneeling in a round clearing.

All of them were completely still.

It was like they had turned into true coral statues.

Every single one of these statues looked with reverence at the same spot.

In the middle of the clearing, on top of a big rock, was a pillar made of corals.

All the corals on the island gathered at the base of this pillar.

The pillar was only around four meters high, but Nick could tell that it was filled with an incredible amount of Zephyx.

Involuntarily, Nick's body stepped towards the boulder and began to climb.

When Nick reached the top, he saw another person.

Involuntarily, Nick's body stepped towards the boulder and began to climb.

This one was wearing a crown made of corals, and he wore the robes of a priest.

"Finally," the man spoke with an unnatural cadence. It was almost like it was not a human speaking.

"Getting you was more troublesome than expected," the man in the robes said as he turned around and approached the pillar.

Then, the man lightly touched the pillar.

A small part of the corals detached, and the man carefully held them in his hands.

He turned back to look at Nick.

"I hope you are worth the effort," the man said.

WHOOOM!

At the same time, the statues of corals came to life and ran towards the big pillar.

They all gathered at its base and lifted.

CRACK!

The pillar was lifted off the ground.

When Nick saw that, the last of his hopes died.

He had hoped that the Specter couldn't easily move, but apparently, that wasn't the case.

The people would just run into the sea with the pillar.

The chances of being found while running across the bottom of the sea were minuscule.

The priest with the coral crown approached Nick.

Nick's body kneeled in reverence, exposing his neck.

Nick's entire world was filled with panic and terror.

He would turn into one of these things!

Nick focused on the foreign mass of Zephyx in his neck.

He was filled with terror.

He had to do it!

BOOOOM!



A cerulean glint.

The priest exploded.

#### Chapter 437 – Surrender

Just as Nick was about to touch the foreign mass of Zephyx in his neck, a cerulean glint appeared in front of him.

For a short moment, Nick's mind didn't work, and just a bit later, an endless wave of relief washed over him.

This was probably the closest he had ever come to dying.

The cerulean glint was the cerulean sword puppet belonging to Ariel.

It burst out of the ground and cut the priest into pieces.

After cutting the priest apart, the cerulean sword puppet focused on the pillar that was being carried by several people.

The puppet swung one of its sword arms.

SHING!

A blue shockwave traveled forward and passed through all of the coral people carrying the pillar.

CRK! CRK! CRK!

The coral people all fell into pieces, and the pillar hit the ground.

Then, the puppet turned towards the three Specialists standing in the middle of the clearing.

"I surrender," the three Specialists said in unison.

The next moment, Nick regained control of his body, and all the water around him vanished.

BOOOOOM!

Suddenly, a gigantic fiery explosion occurred far to the south, and Nick looked forward.

All the metallic clouds in the distance fell apart and started to vanish as they were falling to the ground.

Apparently, the fight was over.

WHOOOOM!

Suddenly, five people appeared in the clearing, and all of them were looking at the three coral people and the pillar.

Naturally, they were Mundus, Zarren, Liera, and Kevara.

However, the last person wasn't Ariel.

When Nick saw the tall man with the spear, he finally understood how Ariel had survived that one attack.

It seemed like the governor couldn't stay completely on Kugelblitz's side.

Most likely, the governor had stayed in the background, and when he had noticed that Ariel was getting attacked, he got involved and saved her life.

Every Hero was essential to the city, and losing even one could have terrifying consequences.

The three Specialists in the middle of the clearing lifted their arms in surrender, but their expressions remained dead.

Mundus looked at the pillar and summoned his puppet.

The puppet began to dance on Mundus' hand, and strings upon strings wound around the pillar.

"Don't kill my minions," the three Specialists said.

The present people looked at the three Specialists.

Mundus waved his arm, and several strings appeared around the three Specialists.

In the end, the three Specialists and the pillar were completely encased in strings.

Silence.

It was over.

Anatomy had successfully captured the Demon!

"Congratulations," Kevara said with a polite smile. "It seems like Crimson City finally got its second Demon!"

Markus, the governor, looked with a neutral expression at Kevara and nodded. "Thank you. It wouldn't have been possible without your help."

"Only doing what I'm paid to do," Kevara said with a smile. Then, she looked at Mundus. "I'm expecting the Specters within the month."

Liera also looked at Mundus. "I'm coming for mine tomorrow."

"Of course," Mundus answered.

Kevara nodded before looking at Nick. "And look at that. Even the little guy survived."

"It's thanks to Ms. Cerillion," Nick spoke politely.

Kevara chuckled a bit before she looked towards the southern sky. "But to believe that Melinda was here all along."

"You knew her?" Zarren asked, referring to the powerful coral woman.

Kevara and Liera hadn't been strong enough to fight the coral woman on their own, and even with the addition of Mundus and Zarren, the fight had still been difficult.

Only when the governor joined did the tide turn.

This Extractor had been unreasonably powerful.

Kevara nodded. "That was Melinda Barnaby," she said. "She was my predecessor."

"I remember her," Crimson City's governor said. "If I remember correctly, people believed that she betrayed humanity."

"That was the consensus," Kevara said.

'Well, it's a stupid question, but I'm not going to get an answer otherwise since everyone keeps talking about this like they know everything already,' Nick thought.

"Was she very powerful?" Nick asked.

"Oh, yes. Very," Kevara said, looking at Nick. "She used to be one of Aegis' agents before she 'retired' and became a governor. She used to travel all around the world, fighting against the forces of the Fallen and Adversaries."

"Honestly, if she had access to her Barrier, we might not have won."

Kevara sighed. "If I knew that I had to fight her, I would have asked for way more."

"Anyway, today was quite a wild day, but Liera and I have to go back now," she said.

"Of course," Mundus said. "Thank you once again."

The people said their goodbyes and the two from Metal Works City left.

Now, only the people from Crimson City are left.

The governor looked at the cocoon that was the pillar.

"According to the amount of Zephyx, this should be a Late Demon. That's even stronger than the Crimson Fungus," he commented.

"We can suppress it," Mundus said.

The governor looked at Mundus, who had a neutral expression on his face.

Then, he looked at Zarren. "You and Ariel have also become Heroes?" he asked.

"Just recently," Zarren answered with an equally neutral expression.

Then, everything became silent.

Nick could feel the tension in the air.

On the surface, this seemed to just be small talk, but that wasn't true in reality.

The governor was obviously not happy that Anatomy kept two Heroes secret, and he was also not happy that three Initial Heroes were now responsible for containing a Late Demon.

Anatomy had shown once again that they were not trustworthy, and now, they also had access to the strongest Specter in the city.

Even more, this Specter's powers were extremely dangerous.

As long as Anatomy kept the pillar imprisoned, they could essentially order its army around.

With the three coral people in the clearing, Anatomy had essentially gained three more Specialists as well.

In just a single day, Anatomy's power had shot up tremendously.

Just one day ago, people believed that Anatomy only had a single Initial Hero and no Demon.

But now, they had three Initial Heroes and a Late Demon.

One had to remember that Kugelblitz only had four Heroes, and one of them was the governor.

If one didn't include the governor, Kugelblitz only had three Heroes.

Sure, Aria was an Early Hero, but it wasn't certain that Kugelblitz would win in a team fight.

After all, the three from Anatomy had always been working together as a team, and their powers perfectly complemented each other.

Anatomy could actually fight Kugelblitz now.

Chapter 438 – Governor's Crossroads

The city had been in relative peace up to now since Anatomy couldn't really fight Kugelblitz.

After all, they only had a single Initial Hero, while Kugelblitz had three.

But what about now?

Anatomy was now an actual threat to Kugelblitz.

Would the city remain peaceful?

These were genuine concerns that went through the governor's mind.

With this Demon, the entire city might get thrown into disarray.

Would there be an actual war between Kugelblitz and Anatomy?

And what about the governor?

How would Anatomy act towards him?

At this moment, the governor had to make important choices.

He hadn't expected the Demon to be this powerful, and he also hadn't expected Anatomy to have three Heroes.

That was why he had helped earlier.

But now, he wasn't sure if he had made the correct decision.

Should he remain an honorary member of Kugelblitz?

Should he tell Kugelblitz about the Demon and kill Anatomy right now before they could go back to the city?

Should he stay neutral and let the two Manufacturers duke it out?

Should he join Anatomy?

The fate of the entire city was being decided right at this moment, and everyone who was present knew that.

There was a very good reason why Ariel was not here.

As a Sniper, it was best for her to remain far away from the battlefield.

The governor had saved Ariel's life earlier, but now, she was preparing to kill him if he tried anything.

However, while there were many decisions the governor could make right now, he wouldn't battle them at this moment.



Yes, he was a Mid Hero, but he knew that he most likely wouldn't win against them.

And if he actually lost, he probably wouldn't even die.

Most likely, they would give him to the pillar, creating a powerful puppet.

"When I arrived, you've already suppressed the Specter," the governor said evenly.

"Of course," Mundus answered neutrally.

Then, the governor looked at Nick, who just gestured that he didn't see anything.

The governor furrowed his brows.

Something monumental happened, and once again, Nick was present.

Somehow, this guy was almost always involved whenever anything big happened.

By now, it was surprising that Nick hadn't been involved in the Crimson Sea incident.

"We're going to deliver the Specters to you within two weeks," Zarren said, looking at Nick.

"Thank you," Nick said politely.

It was clear why Zarren had brought that matter up at this moment.

"Then, I will go back to the city. Thank you for protecting me during the mission," Nick said.

Zarren and Mundus just nodded.

Then, Nick glanced at the three coral people.

He wasn't worried that the Specter was going to tell them about his background.

For once, it was a good thing that the Specter was so intelligent.

If the Specter told Anatomy why it was so interested in Nick, it would have to reveal that it was Envy's servant, and it knew very well what that meant.

Being Envy's servant would mean its death.

Because of that, telling Anatomy why it was so interested in Nick equated to killing itself.

At this moment, the Specter was probably trying to come up with a great lie regarding why it attacked Nick.

Nick turned towards the south and ran.

When he reached the coast, he didn't stop running.

Surprisingly, he didn't sink into the water and just kept running across the surface.

It wasn't very difficult for a powerful Extractor to run across something as dense as water.

Nick left the island behind, but the further away he got, the more nervous he became.

His ability hadn't activated yet.

Most likely, Ariel was looking at him from her vantage point.

Nick wasn't sure if Anatomy would try to kill him now.

After all, the Specter had been captured, and the governor had seen Nick alive.

If Nick died now, they could argue that he had died after the mission and that his death didn't have anything to do with them.

That would also put the governor in front of a crossroads.

If the governor judged that Anatomy was suspicious, he was locked into following Kugelblitz.

If he decided to let the matter go, he would be locked into either being neutral or following Anatomy.

Sadly, there wasn't anything Nick could do to influence the outcome.

His only hope was that Anatomy wouldn't decide to introduce even more unstable variables.

The governor's appearance and the power of the Specter were already unforeseen circumstances.

Killing Nick would cause the situation to become even more chaotic.

Now, the question was, did Anatomy want a chaotic situation or not?

Nick didn't know.

After running for some time, Nick reached the shore and jumped over the cliffs.

When he landed behind the cliffs, his ability still hadn't reactivated.

Nick just kept running.

Every step felt like it took forever.

Eventually, Nick's ability reactivated again, and he took a deep breath.

When the crimson pillar of mist came into view, Nick finally felt relieved.

If Anatomy decided to kill him, they would have done it already.

This meant that Nick was finally safe.

Nick ran past the Desert and veered towards the left after passing the mountain.

Half a minute later, he saw the southern entrance of the city.

Only when Nick walked past the four Veterans defending the south did he truly feel safe.

He went over the bridge and reached the outer city.

He was back.

This entire mission had taken less than an hour, but it had felt like forever.

After entering the city, Nick slowed down.

'It was risky, but it was worth it,' he thought as he slowly walked towards the Inner City.

Nervousness left Nick's being and was replaced by excitement.

'We really earned a lot today!' Nick thought.

When Nick thought about the Specters they had secured today, his mind was going wild with possibilities.

The payout was absolutely tremendous.

So, what would Dark Dream receive?

One Peak Adult.

One Mid Adult.

One Early Adult.

And seven Adolescents!

Ten Specters!

Chapter 439 – Long Day at Work

The news that Anatomy had captured a powerful Demon traveled throughout the city within the next couple of days.

Naturally, Kugelblitz congratulated them publicly, and everyone saw this as a good event.

After all, with a second Demon contained, there was one less Demon walking around the world.

But beneath the surface, things became troublesome.

Anatomy had become a genuine threat to Kugelblitz.

Kugelblitz felt threatened.

Obviously, they didn't want to lose their position as Crimson City's strongest Manufacturer.

This meant that they had to do something against Anatomy.

Of course, they had tried to get rid of Anatomy for decades now, but that hadn't worked until now.

The soft approaches just didn't work.

This meant that only the hard approach was left.

They had to kill at least one of Anatomy's Heroes or their Demon.

However, killing their Demon was basically impossible since no one would be able to enter without getting noticed.

This meant that they could only kill their Heroes.

But that was easier said than done.

They couldn't attack any of their Heroes inside the city since everyone would immediately notice what was going on.

At that point, all pretenses would be lost, and open warfare would commence.

This meant that the governor needed to choose a side, and whoever he chose would most likely survive.

And chances were that the governor would choose the opposing side of whoever decided to escalate this conflict.

If Kugelblitz decided to stage an assassination, the governor would most likely choose Anatomy's side and vice versa.

The main reason was that the governor didn't want this situation to occur.

Therefore, as a counterincentive, he made it clear that he would choose the other side.

If one side believed that they would need to fight the other Manufacturer and the governor, they wouldn't easily stage an attack, which would keep the city peaceful.

So, without one side being stronger by quite a bit, no side would escalate the conflict.

Yet, while all of these covert mind games and tactics were going on beneath the surface, none of the normal Extractors noticed anything.

To them, things seemed just as always.

One day later, Liera Jenkins appeared in the city and took the Specters that she had been promised with her.

Anatomy and Liera kept the number and power of Specters a secret, but everyone could see that Liera had left with three Specter Cages.

And then, it was time for Dark Dream to receive their Specters.

The citizens noticed that another big set of Specters was being moved from one place to another, and they watched in shock as Extractors from Anatomy delivered one Specter Cage after the other to Dark Dream.

Dark Dream's employees watched in just as much shock.

They almost couldn't believe that they were getting that many Specters!

After over an hour, the people from Anatomy finally left, and Nick could start his work.

Luckily, Anatomy had already given Nick all of the documentation regarding the Specters within the last couple of days, which meant that Nick already knew what to expect from them.

So, Nick immediately went to work.

The first Specter he visited was on the seventh floor, the floor for Specters with mind powers.

Without hesitation, Nick walked into the Containment Unit.

In the middle of the Containment Unit was a relatively weighty fellow with a nervous expression on his face.

He was quite dirty, and he looked like he was afraid that somebody was watching him.

Nick just looked at the guy as he slowly approached Nick.

"Are you one of them?" the weighty fellow asked carefully.

"One of whom?" Nick asked back.



"You know what I'm talking about," the fellow said carefully.

"I really don't," Nick said.

"One of the rat people," the guy said in a whisper.

"Rat people?" Nick asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes, the rat people," the man repeated as if Nick was supposed to know what he was talking about.  
"They're the ones that secretly run the city."

"Could you elaborate?" Nick asked.

"Did you never notice how hairy the governor's arms and legs are? That's his rat coat coming through his flimsy disguise! The rat people control this city! They want to turn all of us into willing servants to build their rat empire!"

"Didn't you see that the governor and the really strong Extractors can look at the Crimson Sea without issue? That's because the Crimson Sea is the rat king living below the city in reality!"

Nick listened to the guy talking about rat people for about an hour before he just turned around to leave the Containment Unit.

Surprisingly, the weighty fellow didn't stop Nick from leaving.

After he left the Containment Unit, Nick just took a deep breath and sighed.

'Fucking rat people,' Nick repeated in his mind. 'What nonsense.'

The weighty fellow was a Specter, and he was called the Conspirator.

The Conspirator came up with conspiracy theories all the time and tried his best to convince the people.

Now, every knowledgeable Extractor would have noticed one specific thing.

Wasn't that just like the False News, the Fanatic that was roaming the city?

And yes, it was very similar.

The Conspirator and the False News basically did the same thing but on different scales.

The False News was way more troublesome since it reached way more people, while the Conspirator's reach wasn't as big.

Yet, there was one subtle difference.

Their ways of growing more powerful were slightly different.

The False News seemed to grow more powerful based on how many people it convinced of its conspiracies, while the Conspirator grew more powerful just by sharing his conspiracies.

However, just like the False News, the Conspirator was very convincing, and every normal person who listened to him believed him.

Luckily, working with him was pretty easy.

Dark Dream just needed to send a strong Extractor to talk with him. As long as the Extractor was powerful enough, the Conspirator's effect would be trivialized.

They just had to be careful that their Extractor didn't suddenly start believing crazy shit.

The ability an Extractor could gain by working with the Conspirator was the power to become much more convincing.

By using the ability, the likelihood of the other side believing the Extractor's words was far higher.

Of course, the effectiveness of the ability lessened with the power of the opponent.

After Nick was done working with the Conspirator, he looked at how much Zephyx the Conspirator produced.

'If I send someone to work with the Conspirator every hour of the day, that would be about 95 grams of Zephyx. Not a whole lot, but it's also only a Mid Adolescent.'

'I would say it's a bit below average.'

Nick closed the door again and went to the next Specter.

Chapter 440 – Old Acquaintance

Nick walked to the second floor of the building and stopped in front of one of the Containment Units.

When he saw the Containment Unit, he frowned.

'We're definitely not going to work with this one, but I should still take a look at it,' he thought.

Then, Nick walked into the Containment Unit.

Inside the Containment Unit, Nick saw a beautiful lady with a bright smile.

When she saw Nick, she walked closer.

"Hello, I haven't seen you before," she said politely.

"I read that you have actual intelligence," Nick said calmly.

"Of course I do," she answered with a laugh. "My file should have said as much."

Nick didn't immediately answer and stayed silent for a couple of seconds.

"You're not getting any victims during your stay here," Nick said. "You're an asset, and you will be sold the first chance I get."

The lady didn't seem offended or perturbed in any way. "Are you sure? I only need one person, and I can produce a whole lot of Zephyx," she said.

"So, I've read," Nick said. "But Dark Dream isn't as shady as the owner of your old Containment Unit."

"Just stay comfortable and expect to get moved somewhere else at some point."

The lady looked at Nick with a smile.

Nick looked with seriousness at her.

Finally, her mask slipped, and all her friendliness vanished.

"Fine, but make it quick," she said before walking to one of the walls.

Nick just turned around and left the Containment Unit without saying anything.

They would definitely not work with this Specter.

Even if an Extractor explicitly asked to work with that Specter, Nick would refuse.

No one in all of Dark Dream would work with this one, ever.

So, what was so bad about working with this one?

The lady was called the Agonizing Wait, and she gained power by emotional distress created by fearing for a loved one.

Back when she was still free, she abducted the brightest and most loved people she could find.

After abducting them, she contacted the person's friends and family and told them that they would see their loved one's body again within a week.

However, whether or not the loved one's body was still alive was based on a coin flip.

50% chance they returned alive with no injuries

50% chance they returned as a corpse.

The stronger the love for the loved one, the more Zephyx the Agonizing Wait produced.

Naturally, working with it was crazy.

The only possible way to work with it was to kidnap someone from the streets who had a family.

However, Nick refused to do that.

He was willing to do a lot of things for power, but he was not willing to go that far.

Usually, such a Specter was worth almost nothing since she also occupied a Containment Unit, effectively costing money.

Yet, her ability was amazing for Manipulators.

An Extractor with her ability could manipulate other people's perception of time.

This could completely destroy someone's rhythm and concentration during a battle.

Because of that, the Agonizing Wait was still worth something and could be sold.

But, for now, the Agonizing Wait would have to wait in agony until she got a new home since Nick refused to work with her.

After leaving the Containment Unit, Nick walked over to one of the Containment Units on the other side of the floor, to his next Specter.

He operated the console of the Containment Unit and changed a couple of settings.

'I don't think it will recognize me,' Nick thought as he stepped into the Containment Unit.

As soon as he entered, he saw the Specter clinging to one of the walls.

It was a little grey mechanical spider.

Yes, that was the Grey Room.

Naturally, Nick had met this Specter before.

Back when Nick had infiltrated the Spartans, he had freed the Grey Room and had worked together with it to wreak havoc in the Spartans' building.

Sadly, after the battle, the Grey Room ran away and vanished into the city.

Apparently, it had been recaptured by Anatomy.

"Hello, my name is Nick Nick, and I'm the Chief Zephyx Extractor of Dark Dream, your new home," Nick said calmly.

"You will be working with my Extractors from now on, and if everything works out well, you will get plenty of time with many powerful Extractors."

"However, if you kill even one of my Extractors, I will forbid anyone from working with you for a while, and if it happens again, I will have to kill you."

"Do you understand?" Nick asked.

Scratch, scratch.

Two of the Grey Room's right legs scratched the wall.

"I presume this is a yes."

Scratch, scratch.

"Great," Nick added. "Then, I will be working with you first. Since I am the only one here, I have activated the Containment Unit's timer. In a bit less than one hour from now, you will be pushed off my head. Don't get surprised when it happens."

Scratch, scratch.

Nick nodded, walked to the middle of the room, and sat down.

"Then, you can begin," he said.

The Grey Room left the wall and approached Nick at a normal tempo.

It climbed on Nick's body and eventually stopped on top of his head.

And then, it plopped down.

WHOOOM!

Suddenly, Nick saw himself getting transported to a different place.

The Containment Unit and the Grey Room vanished, replaced by a grey endlessness.

The floor, ceiling, and sides all looked the same.

There was just grey nothingness in all directions.

However, Nick could still feel some kind of floor.

'According to the documentation, I will be here for about 50 hours or so. Better make the best of it,' Nick thought.

Naturally, Nick wasn't truly in some form of grey dimension.



In reality, he was sitting unconscious in the Grey Room's Containment Unit with the Grey Room perched on top of his head.

The Grey Room grew more powerful by inflicting boredom, and it achieved this effect by putting its victim into a featureless reality while also manipulating their perception of time.

One hour in reality would feel like 50 hours in here.

Since Nick would only be working with the Grey Room for one hour in reality, he would stay in here for around 50 hours.

A proper shift would be even longer.

In general, people were not the biggest fans when it came to working with the Grey Room.