

Chaos' Heir 271

Chapter 271 - Mission

"Khan, can you take care of it?" Lieutenant Leville asked.

"Another one?" Khan commented while peeking past the corner to inspect a metal wall that blocked the path.

"They are trying to slow us down," Lieutenant Leville sighed. "Though I don't understand why unless they can expand the underground structure in a matter of weeks."

"It would defeat the labs' purpose to expand deeper into their territory," Khan commented while coming out of the corner and approaching the wall.

"And we can't leave the area assigned to the thirty-seventh battalion," Lieutenant Leville added.

"Well, we shouldn't, at least."

'It's about time for us to go out too,' Khan thought before stretching his fingers to give his hand the shape of a sword.

The assault team had entered the underground structure through a trench that the allied forces had captured during the month that Khan had spent recovering. Finding the exact location of an elevator had been annoying, but activating it had been easy since the Global Army had built a copy of the ring retrieved in the prisons.

The march inside the underground structure had also been easy but slow. The tunnels were relatively large, but they could be very long, and each corner could hide traps or small groups of Stal.

The assault team had advanced slowly to prioritize its safety, and they had even encountered a few hindrances during the two weeks spent inside the tunnels. The traps had been easy to notice and destroy, but the small squads of Stal had forced them to delay their schedule by entire days at times.

The issue was in the underground structure's layout. Even a small squad of Stal could force the entire assault team to a stop with a few rifles. Lieutenant Leville didn't want to send her underlings forward without inspecting the area, so her group had to remain behind corners for a while until she felt confident enough to advance.

Those attacks didn't even lead to satisfying victories. The Stal had always managed to escape through secret passages or by deploying walls resistant to mana before the assault team could reach them. Khan and the others had never caught up with them, but that didn't stop their advance.

The same had happened now. A small squad of Stal had kept the assault team busy for two days. Lieutenant Leville had been ready to give the order to advance after that period only to find a black wall blocking the path.

A red-purple light began to cover Khan's hand before condensing into the shape of a short sword. He then placed the spell on the wall and stabbed it deeply in its structure.

The walls were resistant to mana, so bullets and regular spells would take a while to pierce it. The tunnel was also underground, so explosive or similar attacks with a large area of effect could put the whole team in danger. However, the assault team had a chaos wielder, and Lieutenant Leville didn't hesitate to use him as soon as she understood that his power was perfect for the situation.

The wall couldn't stop the chaos claws spell. The glowing short sword pierced its surface and created cracks around its shape. Those fissures spread like a spiderweb as the attack dug deeper into the wall, and metallic shards soon started to fall as the destruction continued.

The wall's resistant properties fought against the destructive influence of the chaos element, but they eventually had to give in and crumble. A hole slowly formed and allowed Khan to push the spell deeper. That hindrance was thick and annoying to deal with, but he could open a passage in a bit more than five minutes.

The Stal that had stopped the assault team for two days were nowhere to be seen. Khan couldn't sense anything past the wall, so he proceeded to enlarge the passage to create a path that wouldn't hinder a possible retreat.

Khan had done the same with the other three walls that the team had encountered on their path, but the scene continued to surprise his teammates. The chaos element's destructive power was quite famous, but the soldiers remained amazed that he could keep his spell active for so long.

Khan took that role as part of his training. He had become quite good with the chaos claws. They were his easiest spell, but he liked that he could keep them active for so long after a little more than a month.

"There should be a lab nearby," Lieutenant Leville announced while leading the group forward.

After crossing a few corners, the assault team reached a long corridor that didn't seem to contain anything. Still, one of the second-level mages used a sound ability to study the areas past the dark walls and uncover hidden rooms.

The inspection continued for a while, even after the soldier found something. He wanted to make sure that the Stal or the Guko they controlled didn't rig the entrance, but he eventually felt forced to launch attacks.

The soldier sent soundwaves on the other side of the wall by placing his hands on specific spots of that dark surface. Explosions resounded in the area as soon as the attacks touched traps or triggers, and the process continued until Lieutenant Leville ordered him to stop.

Khan's time arrived at that point. He approached the spot marked by the soldier and summoned the chaos claws again before stabbing them on the wall.

The lab's entrance wasn't as resistant as the previous wall. A spiderweb of cracks expanded before shards fell, creating a large hole that allowed the soldiers to inspect the area on the other side.

The room past the wall was dark, and the feeble light from the corridor wasn't enough to illuminate its insides. Still, Khan and the Lieutenants could confirm the absence of lifeforms on the other side, so the team moved to the next part of the plan.

Khan left the hole and let other soldiers take his position. Four burly first-level warriors approached the spot and began to pull from its edges. The entrance opposed their force, but it eventually gave in and started to open.

A desolate lab slowly unfolded in the team's vision. The area was identical to what Khan had seen during the escape, except for its emptiness. The room didn't have monitors or consoles. It only

featured a long table, a series of severed tubes, and random broken machines that no one would be able to connect to their previous form.

Lieutenant Leville nodded at the other two second-level warriors before stepping forward. The first-level warriors armed with rifles raised their weapons and pointed them at the dark depths of the area in case something unexpected happened. Meanwhile, the others moved aside to give their companions more space.

Khan could stay in front of the entrance even if he didn't have a rifle. He was the only one inside the team to have seen an active lab, so his experience could be useful. However, he couldn't do much since the area appeared empty.

Lieutenant Leville seized some shards or tools that seemed interesting before returning into the corridor and giving the items to the soldiers in charge of the provisions. The team had expected that outcome, but it felt annoying anyway since they had to spend two weeks to reach it.

The assault team had the map retrieved during Khan's escape, but that alone couldn't ensure the mission's success. Khan had reached the camp more than a month ago, giving the Stal and the Guko they controlled all the time needed to relocate. Moreover, the hindrances along the way only delayed their advance even further, worsening the overall prospect of the plan.

"This is far from promising," Lieutenant Leville sighed after her underlings gathered around her. "HQ has authorized us to explore the areas near the frontlines, but the Stal have probably hidden the labs. I'm not sure we can complete the mission."

"Let's just clear the checkpoints and leave," One of the second-level warriors suggested. "Our hands are tied, and going too deep into the enemy territory is just reckless. The Stal might keep us locked inside forever in that case."

"We can still complete Captain Clayman's mission," The other second-level warrior said. "I say we follow both orders. I prefer these tunnels than the trench anyway."

"It's not so easy," Lieutenant Leville explained while moving her short dark hair from her forehead. "The Stal are keeping track of our current location. Resurfacing might be too dangerous."

Khan soon grew bored of the conversation. His mind started to wander as he lost himself in the movements of the mana in the area. The tunnel used to be calm, but the presence of his companions made the entire environment fall into a mess.

That wasn't the first time that Khan decided to ignore his surroundings. Focusing on the behavior and actions of that incredible energy made him forget about everything. He liked the faint peace that losing himself brought to his mind, but he started to notice something odd lately.

The Niqols knew a lot about mana, and Liiza had been on point when she described the chaos element. Khan could feel a faint desire to disrupt the harmony around him whenever his surroundings grew too calm. He didn't necessarily want to destroy things. He only wanted the waves of mana to move faster or grow denser.

'Is this my nature?' Khan often found himself thinking during those moments.

Liiza had never explained to Khan how the Niqols studied the mana before starting to use it, but he guessed that they followed a similar procedure. He could sense his knowledge, sensitivity, and

ability increase as he remained immersed in that mental state. The world talked, and he was slowly learning to listen to it.

"Khan!" Lieutenant Leville's voice eventually forced Khan to snap out of his special mental state.

"What is it?" Khan asked while moving his eyes on his superior.

"What do you think about Lieutenant Zartea's idea?" Lieutenant Leville questioned.

"My attention was on the area, ma'am," Khan half-lied. "I didn't think you would have required my opinion."

Lieutenant Leville couldn't scold Khan for that distraction after that lie. She knew that his senses were among the sharpest in her team, so his efforts actually ended up gaining her approval.

"Lieutenant Zartea was wondering whether you had long-range spells," Lieutenant Leville explained.

"The elevators might lead to a trap," Lieutenant Zartea continued. "I can check the area beforehand, but the Stal are too sturdy for my long-range spells. I believe yours might be able to hurt even second-level warriors."

"I would destroy the elevator," Khan replied while crossing his arms. "I would even put everyone in the area in danger."

"That's not better than a grenade then," The third Lieutenant sighed. "We should divide ourselves into two teams and come out from different elevators."

"I don't want us to split when we can't communicate," Lieutenant Leville revealed. "Still, the other options are too dangerous."

Lieutenant Leville took out her phone and used it to project a few holograms in the middle of the group. The underground structure's layout and a map of the areas behind the enemy trenches fused to create an accurate description of the lands above the assault team.

The Lieutenant quickly picked two elevators slightly outside the settlement standing above the group's position. She set precise hours before asking who wanted to be part of the decoys.

"Are you sure?" Lieutenant Leville asked while looking at Khan's raised arm. "You are quite valuable in the exploration of these tunnels."

"I'm also the best on the battlefield," Khan calmly announced. "Also, I can't use the rifles as well as the others, so it only makes sense for me to be part of the initial attack."

Lieutenant Leville couldn't argue against that, and Khan didn't fail to notice how some of the first-level warriors decided to imitate him. Their skill with the rifles wasn't bad, but they wanted to fight side by side with him anyway.

Khan didn't give the event much thought, but he still started to understand what Captain Clayman said about inspiring the humans. Khan only wanted to fight to immerse himself in the battlefield, but his companions saw his behavior as a selfless act that made the best out of his abilities.

'Even lies can inspire,' Khan thought before disregarding the whole issue.

The assault team split and Khan's group moved toward one of the elevators chosen by Lieutenant Leville. Lieutenant Zartea was also there, but the first-level warriors in the group seemed to prefer standing behind Khan instead of following their superior. Vissit [novelbin\(.\)com](http://novelbin(.)com) for **new novels**

The elevator quickly appeared in the team's view, and the Lieutenant blew upward while fusing mana with his breath. His spell spread throughout the opening that led to the surface and studied the area before dispersing.

"The area above us should be empty," Lieutenant Zartea whispered, "But I can't say anything for the settlement. There might be Stal patrolling the area, so remember to be swift."

A series of nods was enough to reassure the Lieutenant, who picked up his phone and kept track of the hour. It was impossible to communicate with the other team in that area, so Lieutenant Leville had chosen a precise hour to coordinate the attack. Khan's team had to wait fifteen minutes before activating the elevator and moving toward the surface.

The darkness of the night hid the group's arrival, but a series of voices and lights immediately reached their position. Loud, odd growls then resounded and made the soldiers shoot toward the short buildings that had appeared in their view.

Khan didn't think. A beacon had fallen on his group, but he left the area quickly. He shot forward toward the many presences that had started to move after the alarm rang. Thirty or so Stal gathered right ahead, but he didn't slow down nor change his direction.

The first-grade knife appeared in his left hand when the first Stal became clear. Lieutenant Leville was at his side, and the other soldiers were behind him, but he didn't pay attention to them. Khan only listened to the many masses of mana in the enemy rifles moving up and down as the aliens prepared themselves to fire.

Khan and Lieutenant Leville reached the Stal before any of them could fire. Red-purple light began to shine from Khan's left hand as he covered the knife with the sharp membrane and waved it at the first alien on his path. The latter tried to use an arm to punch him, but it only found its limb flying away from its body.

The growls became angry as the Stal and the soldiers clashed. The aliens fired when their opponents were already on them, so those projectiles missed their targets and created openings that the humans didn't hesitate to exploit.

Khan waved his knife left and right, focusing on quick and short sprints to remain outside the most crowded areas. His group only counted thirteen soldiers, so their goal didn't involve winning the battle. They only had to buy enough time for their allies.

Khan rarely managed to inflict deadly blows in that situation. Punches flew everywhere, and jumping was too dangerous in the middle of that crowd. He often had to wave his knife to interrupt attacks or leave cuts on non-vital spots.

A Stal tried to take Khan by surprise once. The latter had just finished severing half of an incoming fist when a tall figure tried to block his escape route by jumping on him. The alien was too big, and it had even spread its arms to prevent him from dodging at its sides.

Red-purple light quickly came out of Khan's right hand while the alien continued to fall. He stretched his arm forward even if the spell had yet to form fully, but the short blade appeared right before he could touch his opponent's waist.

The effects of the chaos claws turned out to be devastating. Khan only wanted to kill the alien before it fell on him, but he saw a large chunk of its waist exploding into a gory spectacle as soon as the ethereal blade reached a specific depth.

The scene would leave anyone stunned, but Khan wasn't thinking. A rain of blood and gore filled his vision, but he only saw that an opening had appeared now that a quarter of the alien's body had vanished. His feet kicked the ground without showing any hesitation, and filth fell on his face and uniform as he crossed the hole that he had just created.

A few more exchanges had to happen before a series of azure projectiles started to fly from the other side of the settlement. The second team had come out of their elevator and had exploited the diversion to surprise the Stal.. It didn't take long before every alien fell lifelessly on the ground.

Chapter 272 - Lies

The symphony of violence, growls, and cries stopped, and a silent calmness broken only by many steps replaced it. Khan listened to that change of mood as the two teams regrouped and Lieutenant Leville started assigning specific tasks to a few soldiers.

The assault team had seized the settlement. The rifles, vehicles, provisions, and various resources of the Stal could be helpful to the human side, so the soldiers had to seize them while the Lieutenant studied how to deliver them.

Khan wandered past the corpses as his eyes moved among the area. The sharp difference between that silence and the previous chaos left him pensive for no specific reason. Something inside him desired that peace, but he also wanted the previous mess to last a bit longer. ALL new chapters on nov(e)lbin(.)com

His eyes eventually fell on the alien corpses. Strands of mana seeped out of those huge figures while part of that energy remained in their insides. There were two second-level warriors among the dead Stal, and an idea appeared in Khan's mind when he sensed the amount of mana that remained in their bodies.

'Is a second-level warrior enough for the third checkpoint of the [Blood Shield]?' Khan wondered as he stretched his hand toward the hole a projectile had dug in the alien's head.

Red-purple mana came out of his hand as he closed his eyes. Khan felt his energy fusing with the blood dripping out of the injury. The nature of his element made part of that dark liquid splash on its own, but he slowly suppressed its destructive properties to obtain complete control over the material.

Khan opened his eyes and took a deep breath before fixing his gaze on the blood. He tried to make it condense in the flesh below, but the liquid splashed and divided itself into a series of drops that flew everywhere.

'Is this a problem with my mana or my expertise?' Khan asked himself. 'Maybe both.'

"Khan, what are you doing?" Peggy Kilwood asked while a frown filled her face.

"I was only checking something," Khan lied. "The Stal sure are a strong species."

"Don't you want to clean your face?" Peggy continued, uncaring of his previous line.

Khan touched his cheek and finally recalled the blood and gore that had fallen on his face. He had been so lost in his thoughts that he had forgotten what had happened during the battle.

Peggy had seized a towel from one of the buildings in the settlement and was handing it to Khan. The latter quickly took it to remove all the filth from his face, but his companion's expression said that the situation didn't improve too much.

"I'm going," Khan sighed, and Peggy nodded a few times.

Soldiers ran around the settlement while carrying various tools or resources. Khan dodged a few of them to enter one of the buildings and use the bathroom to remove the remains of blood that tainted his face. When he came out of the structure, he found Moses, Peggy, and other first-level warriors waiting.

"Is something the matter?" Khan asked.

"Are you okay?" Moses questioned. "You have been kind of lost since the beginning of the mission."

"Oh," Khan whispered before coming up with a lie. "It's a bit hard to deal with my element. I have to remain focused."

"No wonder," Moses replied. "I'm surprised you can do so well. I've heard nasty things about chaos wielders."

"His talent isn't the issue here," Peggy stated. "I don't know how you can cast so many spells in a row without getting tired."

The other soldiers nodded and began to voice their approval. It was clear that they found Khan's mana capacity odd, but he didn't think he had gone overboard. Luckily for him, one of his underlings voiced a comment that explained the issue. "He lights up his knife non-stop."

"That's not really a spell," Khan lied again while showing his palm and releasing a bit of mana.

The mana created a small red-purple sphere that slowly changed color as Khan focused on modifying its properties. Its shades initially intensified before growing pale.

"This is something I've learnt on Nitis," Khan explained. "The mana naturally changes color and texture if you modify its nature."

The soldiers gasped in surprise and inspected the tiny sphere of mana. Khan never used it to do anything, but they could feel that its power and nature changed whenever it gained different shades.

"Right, you had to go to an alien academy," Moses commented. "I guess you had to learn something to gain points in the eyes of the Global Army."

"It's more useful than you think," Khan revealed while drawing his knife and creating the red-purple membrane. "I can add the properties of my element to martial arts without relying on spells."

A new series of surprised gasps and sounds resounded among the soldiers. Khan was lying about his techniques, but the theory behind the Niqols' methods was real, and it was easy to explain its usefulness.

"How long did it take you to learn?" Moses asked while scratching his chin.

"I'd say six months to start thinking about using this ability in battle," Khan exclaimed, using numbers that reflected his actual accomplishments. "Though I went all-out on the Niqols' training when I was there."

Most soldiers diverted their gazes at those words. They could guess why Khan had worked so hard on Nitis, and they didn't want to mention that topic. Instead, Moses and a few others tried to consider learning that ability, but it soon became obvious that they were finding problems with that idea.

Khan felt able to understand what was happening in their minds. Six months weren't a long time, but the soldiers could focus on techniques that the Global Army acknowledged in that period. It would have been fine if the matter only involved a few weeks, but half a year was simply too much.

"Did the Niqols help with your element?" Moses asked as the group began to disperse.

"They did far more than that," Khan sighed as he retracted the barrier and inspected his knife. A few new marks had appeared on the weapon after the battle. He might need to change it after the mission.

The assault team loaded the three armored trucks in the settlement with the resources seized from the various buildings. There was even a tank and a small vehicle with two seats, and Lieutenant Leville stared at them while trying to understand how to deliver them to the humans.

"Alright, gather up!" Lieutenant Leville eventually shouted. "The enemy lines aren't far away. I need the best shooters and someone willing to go into the tank. The others will remain here and defend the settlement in case the Stal try to reclaim it. If there are too many of them, run toward the enemy trenches."

Khan instinctively stepped forward, but the Lieutenant stretched an arm to stop him. She shook her head as a quick explanation left her mouth. "We won't get in their range. We'll gun them down and let the allied forces on the other side advance."

Khan could imagine the scene, mostly because his escape had featured something similar. A group of twelve soldiers had managed to conquer a trench with nothing more than a few rifles and a powerful decoy. Lieutenant Leville and her team could do far more with vehicles, a tank, and a larger group.

"You and Lieutenant Webburn are in charge while we are away," Lieutenant Leville ordered. "Let's move up, people! Fill the trucks and the car!"

The soldiers were aware of their skills, so a team didn't take long to form. Everyone took their position on the vehicles and started to leave. They couldn't move quickly due to the tank, but they eventually disappeared from Khan's sight.

Khan reached for one of the buildings used to inspect the surrounding areas. Some soldiers went with him, while others occupied the other structures with a similar purpose.

It was still deep into the night, and the silence that filled the settlement made the soldiers decide to remain silent. It was hard to inspect the distant areas due to the darkness, and turning on the beacons could attract unwanted attention, so everyone focused on their immediate surroundings.

The two women that had followed Khan glanced at him from time to time. They wanted to take that chance to talk with him, but the nature of the situation forced them to remain silent.

Khan ignored those glances and focused on the transparent glass used as walls in the room. He couldn't see much, but he could sense the ground at the base of the building. That was enough to check eventual elevators since they were the most threatening aspect of the enemy territory.

The silent night went on peacefully, and the morning didn't bring any problem when it arrived. The soldiers remained in their position, but they left the buildings when they saw their companions in the distance. They appeared tired due to the long fight and walk, but Lieutenant Leville didn't let anyone rest yet.

The settlement was easy to protect, but the assault team would remain in the open. Besides, the last two battles had already ignored the mission's primary purpose. HQ could consider stealing vehicles and delivering them to the allied side a waste of time or an unnecessary deviation.

Lieutenant Leville led the entire team back inside the underground structure. The group marched for half a day before reaching an area large enough to contain them and choosing to rest there. Their provision could last for a long time, especially after refilling them in the settlement, so they only had to sleep and recover before resuming the main mission.

The following weeks saw the assault team busy in the slow advance iconic of the first part of the mission. Small squads of Stal would appear to delay the soldiers, and walls or other traps would force the group to waste time, but nothing tried to stop them forever.

The mission continued relatively smoothly, with real battles happening only when the group attacked settlements on the surface. Those fights weren't too hard due to their proximity to the frontlines and the assault team's sheer prowess. Still, losses happened from time to time, even if they mostly involved one or two soldiers.

The underground structure never rewarded the long efforts of the soldiers. The assault team eventually visited the remaining three labs, but they were empty and abandoned. Nothing valuable had remained there, which turned the mission into a complete failure.

Lieutenant Leville and her underlings didn't feel too bad about that since they expected a similar outcome. The gains of the thirty-seventh battalion were also enough to quell any annoyance that could appear in their minds. The group had sent many resources to the allied side, so they could feel proud of themselves.

However, HQ couldn't be satisfied with that outcome.. When Lieutenant Leville led her team back to the nearest allied trench, she received orders to wait until the higher-ups of the Global Army came up with a new plan.

Chapter 273 - Surprise

The sunlight shone on the partially barren plains near the frontlines. The dark metal of the moving camp glowed under that yellow radiance, and the same happened to the small habitations placed next to the structure.

The sounds of steps on the metallic floor awakened Khan from his nightmare. He was sleeping in the open with his back on the camp's wall, and the melody played by the mana around him quickly replaced his faint drowsiness.

The assault team had completed the inspection of the four labs in the underground structure and found nothing. After that, Lieutenant Leville had brought everyone in the nearest camp behind the allied trenches, where they had settled to wait for HQ's orders.

The moving camp already had its platoon, but it also contained a series of metal bags that could transform into small habitations. They were similar to the tents that Yeza and the Niqols had deployed before the tragic attack on the valley, except that they relied entirely on technology.

The camp didn't have enough tents for the entire assault team, so many soldiers had decided to share the small habitations or set up beds in the crowded dormitory. Khan hated the idea of being in hot environments, and his training schedule was tight, so he had decided to remain in the open. He entered the main structure only to shower or eat.

The assault team had been on the camp for three entire days, but HQ had yet to announce its decision on the matter related to the anti-mana project. Lieutenant Leville and the others didn't mind that wait. They already felt quite satisfied with the resources stolen from the Stal, and Khan also liked to have the time to focus on his training.

The soldiers in the camp respected the assault team due to its unique mission and conquest of the trench. Lieutenant Leville and her underlings had saved them from the dangers of the frontlines. Also, all the members of her group had become somewhat famous due to the secrecy of their task.

Even more fame fell on Khan since his young age only added value to everything he had accomplished. The soldiers in the camp naturally wanted to get closer to him, and that wasn't limited to the female side, but his dismissive character quickly made them give up on the task.

Khan's mood was strange. His desperation continued to be a lingering feeling that he couldn't disperse nor suppress, but he could ignore it when he lost himself in the mana.

His focus had moved away from the simple study of the mana. Its behavior felt almost obvious after the weeks spent listening to it. His approach had shifted to something deeper, more personal. Khan wanted to understand his nature to compare it to the chaos element.

Normally, the soldiers would develop elements that suited their bodies and characters. The mana had deep connections to every aspect of a person, but Khan was an exception due to his mutations.

That left Khan with questions that he seemed unable to answer. Where did he end? Where did the Nak start? What would have become of him without the mutations? Was his current character the result of the chaos element? Did the mutations affect his personality to suit the nature of his energy?

Khan didn't know how to find answers to those questions. The mutations had probably hidden them forever, but his doubts remained, especially now that he was growing closer to the mana. Something told him that he needed to understand himself to move his abilities to the next step.

Time had flown quickly during the mission in the underground structure. The longing that occupied an important part of Khan's mind intensified whenever he realized how far Nitis had gotten.

His second year in the academy had already reached the fifth month. The time spent on Nitis would soon drown among his other experiences. Right now, the long period on that dark planet occupied a long part of his life, but that statement would slowly lose value as time passed.

Khan could sense that he was starting to feel better. He wasn't happy nor ready to open his heart again, but he was getting used to his new state. The same had happened after the events with the Kred, but that only scared him.

His first kill had been a tragic experience, but he had learnt how to ignore the awful nature of that action. Khan didn't want the same to happen with his time on Nitis. He preferred endless sadness over treating that intense love as nothing more than a happy memory.

Lieutenant Dyester's teachings often resounded in his mind whenever those thoughts became too loud. That was one of the main reasons behind his introspection. Khan wanted to understand who he was before deciding what he wanted to be.

'I could turn into a monster,' Khan thought as the sunlight shone on his face. 'Everything would be easier if I just stopped caring. I could spend my life killing on the battlefield and earning ranks until I find the Nak. I can always unlock my feelings afterward.'

Khan immediately mocked those thoughts. Could he even relearn how to feel after spending so long as a mere pawn of the Global Army? Besides, he didn't want to stop feeling. Khan had made that decision even before Nitis.

'I can't experience the happiness if I don't accept the sadness,' Khan sighed while bumping the back of his head on the metal surface of the camp. 'I couldn't have gotten Liiza otherwise, and she is the best thing that has happened in my life.'

Khan bumped his head on the metal again as if the action helped him disperse his doubts. He had already explored those doubts countless times. Turning into a puppet simply wasn't for him.

'At least I know what I don't want to become,' Khan laughed internally. 'Now I have to understand what I want.'

Khan already had the answer to that. Liiza, Snow, and the other Niqols appeared in his mind. Even George was among them. He wanted to be with his friends, away from the Global Army and politics. Still, there was another figure among those familiar faces. The glowing azure head of a Nak stood proudly behind everyone.

'I have two curses now,' Khan shook his head. 'I can't pursue peace because of the nightmares, and I can't accept love because I've already experienced the best version of that feeling. Dammit, I'm spending too long inside my mind.'

Khan decided to silence the mess inside his mind to have something to eat. Soldiers appeared in his vision when the camp's entrance slid open, and they limited themselves to polite nods when he walked past them. He replied to those gestures with fake smiles and nods of his own, but he never exchanged words with them.

The same happened in the canteen. Khan found an isolated spot where to sit, eat, and read some of the books on his phone. He was getting better at the "enhanced reading", but he still struggled to perform it without committing mistakes. Yet, his current expertise was enough to memorize a few pages during his meals.

Khan had obviously tested the "simulated mental battle" before and after his mission with the assault team, but the technique remained too demanding for now. Gaining access to the specific part of his brain and flooding it with mana was doable, even if tiring, but what came after required a level of concentration that he couldn't achieve yet.

"You are early as always," Moses exclaimed in a voice full of energy as he approached Khan's seat.

"We don't know when we'll be stuck inside those tunnels again," Khan justified himself while putting away his phone. "Also, you are pretty early too."

"I have a reputation to defend here," Moses explained through a sigh. "And I have to gain points over my cousin. She is better than me in negotiations and other stuff. I need to compensate with hard work."

"Your family can't be so small," Khan declared. "I'm sure you can find a role that suits your character."

"Tell that to my father," Moses joked as a tray came out of the table. "I'm sure Lord Kilwood can't wait to hear your opinion."

"You are grumpy as usual in the morning," Khan chuckled.

"This wait is starting to annoy me," Moses revealed. "It's fun to get all this admiration, really fun, but I can't add a failure to my profile. Our only gains can't even enter the official records."

"They can't put the failure on us," Khan responded. "We went down there and found nothing."

"Khan, you know that I have no intention to offend you when I say this," Moses replied. "You have nothing to lose. Your merits are also enough to obtain forgiveness for a major crime. You don't have to fight against your older brothers, sisters, and cousins, and whatever to get a bit of recognition inside your family."

"Being rich must be hard," Khan mocked.

"Shut up," Moses grinned before focusing on his food.

Similar scenes had happened in the previous days on the camp. Khan had been mostly lost during the mission, but he had still behaved perfectly, and some soldiers had eventually learnt to ignore his dismissive personality. They even felt surprised when they understood that Khan could joke around easily.

More soldiers from the assault team arrived after Moses. Peggy and other familiar faces gathered around his table and ate their breakfast quickly, exchanging a few words and jokes from time to time. The men and women in the platoon stationed there inspected their table with desire and admiration. Khan and his companions basically were the cool kids of the camp.

An unusual event ruined the morning routine before many soldiers could reach the canteen. Lieutenant Leville's loud voice abruptly pierced the chatters inside the moving camp and made

everyone fall silent. Khan and the others couldn't hear the first part of her phrase clearly, but they couldn't miss what followed it.

"What crazy bullshit is this?" Lieutenant Leville shouted as she ran past the canteen's entrance while keeping her phone near her ear. "We would have already conquered it if we had enough troops. I thought that the whole point of the trenches was to preserve the status quo."

Lieutenant Leville became impossible to hear after she left the moving camp to make the conversation private, and chatters inevitably resumed when the metal door slid close. Of course, everyone guessed that HQ had finally given new orders.

"Do you want to bet?" Peggy asked while moving her eyes among her companions.

"Not at all," Moses refused. "You always win when it comes to political stuff."

"I'm broke," Khan stated.

"Only if I can copy your bet," A soldier exclaimed.

"I'm in too if I can have the same bet," A second soldier added.

"What's the point of a bet then?" Peggy scoffed before moving his eyes in the direction where the Lieutenant had left. "Though it must be something bad. Lieutenant Leville usually is quite restrained."

"What can even happen?" A soldier asked. "We are already at war."

"And we already explored the underground structure," Moses added.

"We didn't explore all of it," Khan reminded.

"We couldn't proceed forward," Moses responded. "We had allied platoons on one side and the depths of the enemy territory on the other. Continuing the mission with a bit more than thirty soldiers was simply stupid."

"That's why HQ has decided to send the whole battalion," Lieutenant Webburn announced as he entered the canteen. "We have orders to take the entire quadrant. Captain Clayman is already notifying all the platoons under him."

A series of surprised gasps and loud "what" resounded in the canteen. They didn't come only from the assault team. Even the other soldiers who didn't join the special mission felt stunned in front of that announcement.

"Sir, with all due respect, we struggle to take trenches," Moses exclaimed. "How can we even consider the idea of seizing an entire quadrant?"

"The details of the plan are still unclear," Lieutenant Webburn revealed. "However, HQ seems willing to send every resource in the hands of the thirty-seventh battalion on the frontlines.. We might even have air support."

Chapter 274 - Reassuring

Khan wasn't an ignorant soldier anymore. He had studied Lieutenant Pouille's books and had learnt many important aspects of the Global Army. His knowledge now involved ranks, levels, and the differences among various groups, so he could understand what it meant to send a whole battalion into the enemy territory.

Ecoruta would belong to the Guko even if the Global Army helped in its conquest. It didn't make much sense to win the war and renegotiate the favorable alliance with the alien species, so large attacks weren't part of HQ's plans.

The decision to send a whole battalion forward described how important the anti-mana project was for the Global Army, and Khan couldn't help but inspect the issue coldly. Forcing a large army to advance through multiple trenches was risky and expensive. HQ was willing to sacrifice many troops as long as the mission succeeded.

"How does that make any sense?" Moses whispered during the relatively calm uproar. "We don't know where they moved the labs. What's the point of seizing the whole quadrant?"

"Maybe the Guko on the space station know something about the tunnels," Khan commented.

'Or maybe they are sending us forward blindly in the hope of uncovering clues,' Khan continued in his mind.

Lieutenant Webburn saw a storm of polite questions fly toward him, but he dodged most of them with a believable excuse. He was also in the dark about the attack. Lieutenant Leville was still talking with a superior in the end.

The questions transformed into chatters among soldiers, and the news soon spread throughout the camp and the habitations outside. In a matter of minutes, everyone became aware of HQ's decision.

Khan didn't say much during that mess. He tried to listen to some voices from soldiers who had been on Ecoruta longer than him, but they also sounded quite lost. The troops had never left the trenches during their stay on the planet, and the assault team had been the only exception.

Still, Khan's experience in crowded battles was above his companions. The size of the battlefield would naturally surpass what he had witnessed on Nitis. Yet, he could develop a prospect in his mind after taking into consideration what the Stal owned in terms of weapons and defenses.

'The attack will be a bloody mess,' Khan concluded while heaving a deep sigh.

The issue wasn't with the sheer number of defenses that the Stal could deploy. The thirty-seventh battalion could probably match those after the efforts of the assault team. However, the side advancing toward the enemy lines would always suffer huge losses during a trench war. It would be impossible to dodge the rain of projectiles in a frontal attack featuring hundreds of soldiers.

The prospect was grim, even when Khan added eventual tanks and armored trucks in the frontlines. The regions on that side of Ecoruta were relatively flat, so vehicles wouldn't have problems advancing. Yet, that wouldn't improve the situation too much.

The same went for the air support. The spaceships could probably turn the tides of a battle, but the soldiers on the surface would have to take care of the anti-aircraft guns behind the enemy lines first. That alone would require considerable sacrifices in terms of human lives.

"What do you think, Khan?" One of the soldiers at Khan's table asked once the chatters began to quiet down.

"It's too soon to think about anything," Khan honestly explained. "We don't know the exact tactic. Also, the area covered by the thirty-seventh battalion is huge. We have the manpower to seize the whole quadrant, but that would normally require many months."

Khan only hinted at his idea, but everyone at the table understood what he meant. An attack that involved multiple frontlines would have a high chance of failure since it would force the battalion to spread its troops. It made more sense for the assault to target a specific location.

"They might really know something," Moses said as a hand fell on his chin.

"Khan," Peggy called while lowering her eyes and raising them again to look at Khan, "You have more experience than us in open battlefields. Can you teach us some tricks?"

The question ended up taking Khan by surprise. His profile had a few descriptions about Nitis, but they lacked many details, and Lieutenant Kintea had limited himself to talk about positive deeds. Peggy had to be really worried to ask for his help when she was so unclear about Khan's actual experience.

It turned out that all the soldiers at the table shared Peggy's worries. They turned toward Khan and waited for his answer as expectant expressions filled their faces.

"I don't know what to say," Khan replied while moving his eyes among those steading gazes. "How honest do you want me to be?"

"Don't treat us like kids," Moses scoffed. "We are also soldiers. We fought at your sides for weeks already."

Khan didn't want to shatter his companion's hopes, but he didn't know how to inspire them either. Captain Clayman would probably have straightforward and loud speech in those situations, but Khan wasn't him.

The images of the muddy valley appeared in Khan's mind as he tried to come up with an answer. Only madmen would decide to jump in such a chaotic, dirty, and dangerous environment. Actually, they would also consider their alternatives before making up their minds.

"There aren't tricks," Khan eventually stated. "A random bullet can blow your head off while you are distracted. An attack aimed at your companion can take you by surprise. A tank from the other side of the battlefield might fire a large projectile and catch you in the explosion.

"You shouldn't try tricks. You can only be careful and make sure to have trustworthy people around you. Everything else is a mix of preparation, determination, and luck."

A moment of silence followed those honest words. Even some soldiers in the tables nearby had listened to the conversation and had lowered their heads afterward. Khan didn't add any detail, but they still understood that the real battlefield could be merciless.

"How did you survive there?" Moses asked at some point, and many eyes fell on Khan.

The desire to have a drink appeared in Khan's mind as memories of the muddy valley surged. He recalled the chaos, the cries, the sudden invasion of the monsters, and the random deaths that had occurred. He couldn't see that, but his eyes grew empty, and his expression went cold.

"I'm fast, and I have a good understanding of my surroundings, even in the middle of the mess," Khan explained. "Still, I would have died if my superiors didn't sacrifice themselves to lead the enemies away."

Many faces went dark. The soldiers in the canteen weren't completely inexperienced. They had seen deaths and struggles inside the trenches, but they knew that an open battlefield could bring far more problems.

"Do you think we have chances to win?" Moses eventually asked the question that was in everyone's minds.

"Of course," Khan replied without showing any hesitation. "We should outnumber the Stal, and their inner areas shouldn't have defenses meant for foot soldiers. The initial attacks will be the greatest hurdle."

Some relief seeped into the dark faces. Khan was right. Everything would be easier after surpassing the initial trenches. The battalion would only have to deal with small settlements and cities that could be unprepared for war.

Khan had to suppress a helpless sigh when he saw that reaction. He didn't lie, but he had avoided saying a few things. He didn't mention how many soldiers could die during those initial attacks.

Almost half a day had to go by before the soldiers could obtain a proper announcement about the mission. Lieutenant Leville gathered all the soldiers outside the camp after lunch and described HQ's orders in great detail, even naming those who belonged to specific teams.

Khan turned out to be correct. HQ didn't plan an offensive that involved the whole quadrant. It wanted the thirty-seventh battalion to reach a specific location deep behind the enemy lines since it suspected that the Stal might have stretched the underground structure there.

The attack would have three different fronts. One would feature the main army fighting to pierce the enemy lines, another the team would handle the vehicles, while the last would have elite soldiers tasked to take care of specific defenses.

The plan sounded solid, and Khan felt glad to hear that he had gotten a few things wrong. He had initially believed that the Global Army would rely on the numerical advantage to advance forcefully, no matter how many corpses amassed on the ground. Yet, it seemed that HQ was ready to send a series of items meant to prevent substantial losses.

The details about the items and the different teams arrived on the soldiers' phones. Khan didn't feel surprised to be on the elite group, but the goods he would receive for the attack sounded useful.

The list was short. It contained a shield capable of enduring a few bullets, a protective vest that could partially repel mana, and a series of grenades meant to be as strong as spells. That wasn't a lot, but it would definitely improve the situation on the battlefield.

Khan cross-checked the list with the other soldiers in the camp. Most members of the assault team had become part of the elite group, while all the others had fallen into the main army. The latter had more protective gear in their items but lacked grenades since they could create problems in a crowded area.

The division among the three teams had to be immediate. HQ wanted to exploit the openings in the enemy defenses created by the assault team, so they had to prepare quickly. Khan didn't know how the higher-ups had discovered those weaknesses, but he guessed that there were some spies under Lieutenant Leville.

The vehicles in the camp weren't enough to carry the soldiers to the respective gathering points, so a long march began. Lieutenant Leville and Lieutenant Zartea led the soldiers meant for the elite team across the partially barren plain to reach another structure. The walk lasted for a few hours, but they eventually arrived at a series of relatively tall buildings that were experiencing a flow of troops.

Khan snapped out of his unique mental state at the sight of the other soldiers. He inspected the various faces, but he recognized only a few of them. They came from the large camp, so he could confirm that Delia wasn't in his team.

'She must be in the main army,' Khan concluded in his mind while suppressing a sigh.

The main army would be the most dangerous side of the battlefield, so he couldn't rejoice to know that Delia would be there. As for Rick, he probably wouldn't join the fight due to his status, which was for the best due to his inexperience.

The Lieutenants made the soldiers gather outside the buildings before planting a series of portable habitations. The elite team would have a total of two hundred members led by a third-level warrior called Bonnie Dyelow. She was a middle-aged woman with short brown hair and dark eyes. She was also a second-level mage, and her face featured a series of scars that cut through her mouth and nose.

Bonnie was a Lieutenant who would probably obtain a promotion after her period on Ecoruta. She didn't interact with the soldiers during the gathering, but her underlings took care of explaining the hierarchy of the elite team. She was at the top, while the Lieutenants under her would take care of different sides of the group.

Khan took a random habitation and waited for the official summoning to happen. He meditated a bit, and a message eventually forced him to come out of that state. He expected something related to the imminent battle, but surprise filled his mind after noticing that the notification had come from Delia.

'I've loved every second we have spent together,' Khan read on the message, 'Please, forgive me for leaving Ecoruta without giving you a proper goodbye. I don't want to experience the battlefield.'

Khan initially didn't understand what was happening, but a second message followed. Rick had sent something similar, even if his reasons seemed opposite to Delia. He wanted to see the battlefield, but his family had withdrawn him from Ecoruta after hearing about the mission.

Khan left his habitation to search for someone who could tell him more about the situation, but the area ended up intensifying his confusion. A few soldiers were arguing with the Lieutenants next to the tall buildings.. The discussion was loud, and he could often hear words like "treason" and "desertion".

Chapter 275 - Rebels

'What is even happening?' Khan wondered as he approached the buildings.

Khan had learnt about the consequences that those crimes could cause. Deserting could ruin entire careers and even lead to jail time, so he couldn't understand how the soldiers on Ecoruta could consider those options.

"Is something the matter?" Khan asked when he reached the soldiers arguing next to the buildings.

"It's a damned mess," Moses commented while stepping aside to make space for Khan. "Half of the thirty-seventh battalion is leaving the planet instead of joining the main army."

"Can they do that?" Khan asked.

"Well," Lieutenant Leville replied, "No one forces the soldiers to remain on Ecoruta. They only need to get accepted in another position to leave the thirty-seventh battalion. Their families can even help remove eventual punishments. Captain Clayman is also quite permissive, so he probably allowed everyone to depart before HQ could say something on the matter."

Everything began to make sense in Khan's mind now. No one would choose to remain in the main army during such an improvised attack.

"Why did you decide to stay?" Khan asked while moving his gaze on Moses. "Your family should be able to pull you out easily."

"Our team is relatively safe compared to the others," Moses explained. "Well, it was relatively safe. I don't know what HQ will decide to do after the recent events."

"They can't force to attack anyway, right?" One of the soldiers in the group questioned. "Our team won't be able to advance without the diversion of the main army."

"We still have many vehicles," Lieutenant Leville reassured.

"We lost hundreds of troops!" Another soldier complained.

"She is right," A third soldier added. "I'm not sure we can win in this condition."

Khan remained silent as the conversation continued. He didn't know if his relationship with Rick and Captain Clayman could help him get out of that situation. Part of him also wanted to stay as long as the attack didn't turn into a suicide mission.

'I might even get accepted somewhere else,' Khan thought as he studied the situation.

Ecoruta was different from Nitis. The planet had multiple battalions, so a single attack wouldn't matter too much, even if it involved the anti-mana project. The space station in the orbit also allowed soldiers to come and go freely. In short, no one was stuck there, especially if they had families willing to help.

"What's this mess?" Lieutenant Dyelow asked after coming out of one of the buildings.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," Lieutenant Leville quickly said. "We were discussing the recent events with the team."

"The soldiers these days are a bunch of lazy, spoiled brats," Lieutenant Dyelow sighed. "I wonder what they'll do when a proper war appears."

"Ma'am, this attack would have worried anyone," Moses politely contradicted. "Besides, no one would like to be cannon fodder."

"No one likes to fight," Lieutenant Dyelow stated, "And yet, here we are, fighting for metal that most of us can't differentiate from other alloys. Anyway, go back to your tents. We'll probably remain here for a while."

Khan and the others performed a military salute before going back toward their habitations. Still, they didn't enter them. The group gathered in an empty spot of the vast camp to continue the conversation without their superiors' influence.

"I'm telling you," Peggy announced. "HQ will never order us to charge forward in this condition. We'll probably have to wait for a battalion to join us."

"But that will put us back in the previous situation," A soldier complained. "I'm starting to think that we should defect and leave this position."

"He is right," A second soldier commented. "The Global Army can't punish all of us, especially if members of the Kilwood family join the movement."

"What about those who can't move on their own?" Moses chuckled coldly. "Our family won't pay for all of you. I'm pretty sure we'll get scolded to no end for leaving our post."

"HQ must call off the attack if enough troops leave the battalion," Another soldier said.

"You don't understand," Moses exclaimed. "HQ will never give up on this offensive. The mission is too important."

"What are we even trying to find?" A soldier questioned in an angry tone. "I don't like the trenches, but I prefer them over a reckless attack meant to destroy something so secret that even the Lieutenants don't seem to know."

"You don't want to know," Moses replied. "I also want to forget it."

Khan remained silent as the discussion continued. Most soldiers limited themselves to echo the opinions voiced by some relatively famous individuals. The group contained more than a hundred members, but only a few of them stood at its center and expressed their ideas.

The conversation felt a bit pointless in Khan's mind. The poorest soldiers wanted their richer companions to leave to prevent eventual punishments or red marks on their profiles. Meanwhile, the latter hesitated to put their careers in danger.

Most of the soldiers on Ecoruta had ended there due to their troublesome characters. Leaving without valid excuses would only ruin their prospects inside the Global Army. Yet, a joint rebellion could shift the blame on their superiors since it would highlight the poor management of the troops.

"Khan?" Moses called in a helpless tone, forcing Khan to snap out of his thoughts.

Countless gazes fell on Khan. He felt surprised to see how many soldiers actually knew him and respected his opinion. He had never met most of those men and women, but they had heard a lot about him, so they fell silent as they waited for his words.

"I can't help you here," Khan honestly revealed. "I didn't think we had a choice until a few minutes ago."

"Khan, you probably are the most talented soldier in the second year," Moses commented. "Drop that misfit mindset and tell us what you think."

Khan's eyebrows arched in surprise, but a quick inspection of the soldiers around him told him that many shared Moses' opinion.

"When did I even become so important?" Khan wondered while trying to sort out his ideas.

"I honestly don't understand why you are complaining so much," Khan eventually declared. "Leave if you don't want to fight, or stay if you don't mind following your orders. There's not much more to it."

"Come on," Moses complained. "This problem involves the whole battalion. Our companions left us in the dirt."

"Not really," Khan explained. "They have only made their move before all of you."

"That's the point!" Peggy joined the discussion. "We will look bad now. They are forcing our hand."

"Peggy, your family can put you in a good position even if you were the worst soldier in the entire Global Army," Khan responded. "Most of the soldiers here don't have that privilege, but they still decided to risk their careers. It takes guts." [Find new updates on n\(o\)v\(e\)lbin\(.\)com](#)

A few silent seconds followed that statement. Khan was right, but the soldiers didn't feel any better after that realization.

"What will you do then?" Moses asked after the silence became deafening. "I'm sure HQ wouldn't be able to say anything if we all refuse to join the battlefield."

"I have come on Ecoruta to fight," Khan revealed. "I won't back off because the mission has become more difficult."

"That's easy for you to say!" A soldier shouted.

"Easy?" Khan voiced.

"You are a chaos wielder," The soldier replied. "The Global Army will obviously put you in a safe position."

A series of soldiers joined that complaint. The respect and faint admiration that they had directed toward Khan transformed into anger and disappointment. They expected him to join their movement due to his past and poor background, but he ended up voicing the opposite opinion.

Khan didn't expect that development. The comment even hurt him. Those soldiers didn't know anything about the chaos element and what he had to overcome to use his spells. That belittlement angered him, but he decided to ignore those disrespectful companions.

Khan scoffed and shook his head before turning to leave. Someone called him, but the soldiers in the gathering didn't dare to block his path. He could return inside his habitation in no time and forget about that pointless mess.

The annoyance vanished when Khan fell in his meditative state. He didn't care about those political issues. He could have probably used that chance to establish his position as leader of the younger generations in the Global Army, but he didn't want such dumb companions.

A thought appeared in his mind when he came out of the meditative state. Delia was far from wealthy. Her desertion had probably caused serious problems for her career, but she didn't hesitate to reassure him when he questioned her about the issue.

'They didn't even put my relocation on my profile,' Khan read on Delia's message. 'The Global Army is probably worried that I might disclose what we have seen in the labs. I'm in the space station now, but I'll probably leave tomorrow morning.'

Khan replied with a simple goodbye before thinking about his position. He could definitely leave without suffering any repercussion, but he had no valuable destinations. Ecoruta was perfect for his current needs, and the idea of seeing a messy battlefield even intrigued him.

In the end, Khan decided to spend the rest of the night sleeping. When the morning arrived, Khan left his habitation and found a similar gathering of soldiers and Lieutenants around the camp's main buildings. The discussions were louder than the previous night.

Khan didn't want to join those pointless conversations, but he inevitably heard something. It seemed that some soldiers had left during the night, while others threatened to depart if HQ didn't inform them about the changes to the mission.

The scene was quite surprising and very different from the other interactions between underlings and superiors that Khan had seen on other planets. The soldiers were probably scared, but their behavior remained disrespectful and rude. Some Lieutenants even had to raise their voices to remind everyone about their position.

Lieutenant Dyelow came out of her building and inspected the situation for a few seconds before finding Khan near the tents. A helpless smirk appeared on her face as she shook her head and walked toward him.

"They are so loud," Lieutenant Dyelow announced before patting Khan's shoulder. "It's a pity that they aren't like you. We would be already on the battlefield otherwise."

"They are scared, ma'am," Khan said, ignoring the fact that many gazes had moved toward him.

"They should be," Lieutenant Dyelow announced. "War isn't a nice place, but running away and relying on their families isn't a solution."

"Did HQ decide what to do?" Khan asked.

"Yes," Lieutenant Dyelow stated without adding anything else.

"Why aren't you informing the camp?" Khan questioned as a frown appeared on his face.

"I can understand who to report to the Global Army like this," Lieutenant Dyelow explained. "The Kilwood kids are untouchable, and the same goes for a few of these cowards. Yet, I'll make sure that the others won't get anywhere in the future."

Khan widened his eyes, but he didn't say anything on the matter. He remained silent until his curiosity had the better of him and made him voice a question. "What did HQ decide?"

"The attack has to happen," Lieutenant Dyelow revealed. "However, the thirty-seventh battalion is short in manpower now. HQ will send troops from other platoons to reinforce our ranks, but I wouldn't be too happy about that.. We lost our chance to exploit flaws in the enemy lines."

Chapter 276 - Cannon

The following days in the camp ended up being quite tense. Lieutenant Dyelow stayed true to her words. She sent away all the soldiers who had threatened their superiors or behaved disrespectfully.

Less than fifty warriors remained among the habitations as the team waited for HQ to move the plan forward.

Khan found himself unable to be with his peers. Many still respected him, but they couldn't see him as a potential ally after he stated his position in the meeting. Khan didn't mind that too much since his training kept him busy most of the time, but it felt annoying to see that abrupt change of behavior.

Khan knew that fame and public opinion could change quickly, but he had never witnessed that first-hand. He knew that the role of an ambassador required many social connections and general likeability, so the current situation felt like a setback in his plans.

Still, Khan didn't know how to handle the issue differently, especially after some of his peers had belittled the chaos element. He had proven his character to his superiors, but he had lost part of the general respect earned through his feats.

Someone with experience in that field would have probably managed to keep the restless soldiers at bay while respecting HQ's decisions. Khan acknowledged that, but he also justified himself a bit. He was only seventeen, and his mind was all over the place. There was a limit to how much he could blame himself.

The solitary days ended up benefitting Khan. The lack of friends or soldiers willing to engage in conversations with him removed the need for lies and pretense. He could be himself and dive into his training without affecting his health. He couldn't test his spells in that camp, so his free time allowed him to sleep properly.

The peaceful period came to an end when a series of loud noises filled the area. Khan and other soldiers left their habitations only to see a series of vehicles approaching the camp before stopping next to the tall buildings.

The event surprised everyone, but Lieutenant Dyelow promptly called for a gathering to explain the situation. The new battle plan wouldn't have different teams or fronts. It would involve a joint assault meant to overwhelm the enemy lines slowly.

The news didn't please the members of the elite team. Everyone would be part of the main army now, and the swift offensive had turned into a slow advance.

Only a few soldiers managed to understand that the new tactic was basically necessary. The delay created by the defecting soldiers had allowed the Stal to fix the openings created by the assault team. It was impossible to complete precise attacks now, which also worsened the prospect of receiving air support.

More soldiers began to gather in the camp as the days continued to pass. The number of tents in the area increased, and the Lieutenants felt forced to update their underlings about the situation multiple times. The army slowly took form, and the last to arrive turned out to be Captain Clayman.

The arrival of the Captain warned everyone that the battle was imminent. The days after the event saw the Lieutenants taking control of specific platoons to improve the flexibility of the army, and Khan ended up under Lieutenant Leville again.

The items promised by the Global Army arrived, but they didn't reflect the initial list due to the difference in the various teams. The soldiers received the shields and a series of armored gear but no grenades or other offensive items since they would be pointless during that type of assault.

Time continued to pass until the day of the battle arrived. Khan found himself among a group of ninety soldiers advancing behind a series of armored trucks and a tank. Eight identical companies stood at his sides and marched forward. Only the group with Captain Clayman was different since it had more vehicles.

Khan checked his items during the march. He was wearing an armored vest and a few protections on his forearms and shin. The shield had the form of a watch on his wrist with three green lights on its screen. The item had created a thin membrane over his figure that felt like a weaker version of the cells' barrier.

The lights indicated how many bullets the shield could endure. Of course, larger projectiles would consume more charges, but Khan still liked having that additional protective layer. He didn't expect the battles to get messy right away, but it felt nice to know that he could avoid using the [Blood Shield] right away.

The advance was slow but tense. Only Khan, a few experienced soldiers, and the Lieutenants knew that the initial phases of the assault wouldn't be too dangerous, but everyone soon understood that.

The allied trench eventually appeared in the army's view, and the enemy lines past it also became visible. Chaos immediately spread among the Stal stationed there, and a few projectiles also flew from their side, but none of them managed to get past the barrage of armored trucks.

The tanks among the human groups only needed to fire a few times before the Stal jumped out of their trench and abandoned the area. The swift victory took many soldiers by surprise, but it felt normal when they considered their situation.

The Stal weren't ready to fight that massive number of troops. They weren't aware that the humans had decided to send such a force toward trenches that had never seen more than fifty soldiers on each side.

The victory didn't slow down the advance in the slightest. The Stal had taken away everything they had during their retreat, so the human side could march past the trench without bothering to take a break.

Similar scenes followed during the rest of the days. The army found settlements and trenches along its path, but the Stal had been smart enough to leave them after realizing how numerous their opponents were.

The army could advance undisturbed and without meeting enemies until the night arrived. Captain Clayman ordered everyone to stop, and the various Lieutenants echoed his message to their underlings.

The soldiers had to sleep in the open that night. A cold breeze blew over the partially barren plain, but the soldiers barely felt it. There was only tension in the air since they knew that the following day would feature actual battles.

Khan lost himself into the darkness of the night. He was among hundreds of soldiers but alone. The cold felt like an old friend among that crowd. The faint idea of resting appeared in his mind, but he ignored it to enjoy that peaceful moment before the arrival of the mess. He wanted to experience both situations and the sharp change that divided them.

Ecoruta's two moons disappeared when the morning light filled the sky. The army awakened in a matter of minutes and resumed the march into the enemy territory. More abandoned settlements and trenches appeared on its path, but signs of life eventually forced the advance to a halt.

Gulps and gasps resounded among the various companies. Khan could sense the mana around him growing tense and restless. The world seemed to know that chaos was about to unfold.

The faint shapes of a large city had appeared in the distance, but the soldiers' eyes were on the army that divided them from those figures. Hundreds of Stal, armored vehicles, trenches, and large cannons stood on their path.

The human army outnumbered its opponents, but the latter had better weapons. A single night had not been enough to fill the entire area with trenches, but the Stal retained the innate advantage that those kinds of battles gave to the defending side.

A bloodbath was about to unfold, and Khan calmly drew his knife to prepare for the event. His gesture forced the soldiers around him to snap out of their anxiety. They wielded their weapons and rifles tightly as they waited for their superiors to give the inevitable order.

"Stay behind the trucks," Khan announced among that tension. "Don't go near the tanks. Don't dive too deeply into the enemy territory if you make it to the other side. We might need to retreat."

The silence was so deep that most of the soldiers in his group heard him. Many wore resolute expressions, and Lieutenant Leville also turned to nod at him before voicing a short speech.

"Most of their defenses will be useless after reaching them," Lieutenant Leville announced. "Wait until the tanks start firing at each other. The charge will begin when the first bullet flies through the air."

Lieutenant Leville stepped forward after completing her speech. Other second-level warriors followed her and approached the back of the armored trucks. The vehicles had handholds and footholds there, and the soldiers didn't hesitate to jump on them.

"There is room for a few of you," Lieutenant Leville exclaimed after checking the situation in her group. "We'll open the battle and distract the Stal. Who wants to come?" Gêtt the latest chapters on [no/velbin\(.\)com](http://no/velbin(.)com)

Terror appeared on many faces. The sole idea of jumping inside that mess and waiting for their allies to arrive sounded insane, but astonishment replaced that fear when Khan and a few others stepped forward.

"Why am I not surprised?" Lieutenant Leville chuckled when Khan jumped on one armored truck.

Khan didn't answer. He exchanged a nod with the second-level warrior and the two soldiers attached to his truck before losing himself in the waves of mana again. The time for words was over.

Similar scenes happened in the other groups. The tanks even started to move forward to make the enemy lines enter their range. Each step of those spider-like vehicles seemed to last an eternity, but a tremor eventually ran through the mana in the area, and Khan's eyes grew cold.

The trucks accelerated without giving any warning. Whistling noises and loud explosions resounded as Khan tightened his grip on the handhold. He could see the soldiers chasing after the vehicles, but he couldn't inspect the actual battlefield from his position. Still, his senses gave him a faint idea of what awaited him.

The ride became bumpy when the trucks crossed a series of fuming craters. Azure light never stopped flashing as countless bullets flew through the air. Khan couldn't keep track of so many projectiles, but a big mass of mana eventually attracted his attention.

Khan glanced past his companions hanging from the truck. They didn't understand the reason behind his gesture, but the explosion that followed made them turn. Their eyes widened when they saw that smoke had covered the armored vehicle next to them.

The armored truck turned to the side and crashed on the ground before rotating on itself. The momentum dispersed the smoke and revealed that something had blown away its front. The spinning also flung away the soldiers hanging from its back, leaving them right in the middle of the rain of bullets flying through the air.

The rider of Khan's truck moved to the right to act as a cover for those soldiers. The abrupt movement surprised the four soldiers hanging from its back, but no one lost their grip on the handholds.

The soldiers struggled to keep up with the vehicles, but the rifles also failed to reach their position most of the time. Meanwhile, the tanks on both sides fired large bullets relentlessly, but they often missed their important targets due to the many projectiles on their path.

Countless presences eventually appeared in Khan's range. His truck was almost there. He bent forward and prepared himself to jump into battle, but surprise filled his mind when he understood that the vehicle wasn't going to stop.

The truck crashed directly into the enemy trench. Its front slammed on the other side of the channel and dug a hole through the ground.

Khan and the others slammed on the truck's back due to the violent impact. Still, they felt forced to jump forward when a series of cylindrical items came out of the vehicle and started rolling inside the trench.

A series of explosions followed the leap. Khan landed on the ground with his three companions, and chaos immediately filled his mind.

Khan was right before the enemy trench. Hundreds of Stal stood in the area, and most of them were firing their rifles at the incoming tanks and soldiers. The mana took so many forms and trajectories that he almost felt overwhelmed by the information reaching his mind.

Still, his senses quickly grew used to that mess. The bullets became nothing more than a normal occurrence, and the same went for the many Stal in the area. Khan didn't need to study them

anymore since he had already memorized what they were, which relieved a lot of pressure from his mind.

The Stal didn't have the time to focus on Khan's group due to the bombs that had blown away part of the trench. Five more soldiers came out of the truck crashed on the channel and joined their companions as they tried to decide where to attack.

Similar scenes happened near the other trucks. Most of those vehicles had reached their destination, and the soldiers inside them did their best to find valuable targets and charge toward them.

"There's a cannon there!" One of the second-level warriors in Khan's groups shouted among the mess of whistling noises and growls.

That short announcement was enough to make the group move. Khan and the others turned toward a large gun planted on the ground, which continued to shoot bullets toward the human tanks. A series of Stal stood before the weapon, and even more aliens occupied the trench before it.

Khan's group only contained nine soldiers, but many were second-level warriors. Also, the explosions had created a cover for their presence, allowing them to jump past the trench unnoticed.

The Stal noticed the humans among their ranks when Khan's group crossed the area destroyed by the bombs. A series of rifles immediately pointed at them, but one of the second-level warriors shouted an order before bullets could fly in their direction. "Inside the trench!"

The soldier jumped to his left, and his companions followed. Khan and the others found themselves inside a trench, with Stal aiming their rifles at them, but the same man pointed his hand forward and generated a torrent of water.

The water seemed alive as it filled the large trench and pushed the Stal away. Bullets flew from above the channel, but the aliens on the surface had a hard time aiming at Khan's group from their position. The team could follow the river to get closer to the cannon, but a hindrance suddenly appeared.

Two Stal as strong as second-level warriors marched through the river and blocked part of its might with their bare bodies. The two aliens were supporting each other to endure the spell, eventually forcing the soldier to call his attack back.

"Go!" The soldier exclaimed as he raised his arms to take a defensive stance that Khan didn't recognize. "Leave the trench and reach the cannon."

The soldiers didn't hesitate to follow those orders. Khan and the others jumped outside the trench and charged toward the group of Stal protecting the cannon.

Bullets flew in their direction. Khan and a few others managed to dodge the first wave of projectiles, but some inevitably hit their companions. The second wave of attacks was even harder to avoid, and the same went for the third.

Khan's watch lost one of its green lights before he could reach the Stal around the cannon. Twenty aliens had gathered in front of the huge weapon to block the soldiers' path, and some of them were second-level warriors.

Khan waved his glowing knife to cut two arms moving in his direction, but the Stal didn't seem to care about that loss. It jumped forward, forcing him to step back and leap to dodge the bullets coming from the trench.

The other aliens that protected the cannon advanced as Khan and other soldiers retreated. Even the human second-level warriors had to back off in front of the stronger Stal. The attack had been a failure, and the Stal were even pushing them more in the open.

"Cover me for a few seconds!" Khan suddenly shouted as he sprinted backward.

A bullet fell on his body, but the shield endured it. The second green light disappeared as Khan joined his hands and focused on his feelings. A red-purple light began to shine between his palms, and he separated them to give birth to the chaos spear.

A series of projectiles flew in his direction. Still, a soldier jumped in their trajectory while using the light in the environment to create a shield. Nothing reached Khan, which allowed him to complete his spell.

"Move away!" Khan shouted, and the soldiers busy keeping the Stal at bay jumped back to open a path for him.

The Stal initially wanted to chase those opponents, but the red-purple glow coming from Khan's ethereal weapon claimed the entirety of their attention. Part of them sensed that the spell was extremely dangerous, and some relief appeared on their faces when Khan threw it far above their heads.

Nevertheless, the relief transformed into desperation when the spear curved and fell on the cannon.. The Stal tried to move toward the weapon, but a red-purple radiance soon filled their vision and made them unable to advance.

Chapter 277 - Mess

The spear gave birth to a bright pillar that destroyed everything it touched. The cannon was three-meter tall and had a barrel larger than a man's head. A container of mana stood under it, and a series of round gears allowed it to tilt left, right, up, and down. Yet, the red-purple glow destroyed half of its structure, turning the weapon into nothing more than a pile of metal.

Khan's group had remained relatively hidden from the entirety of the enemy army. Multiple trucks had crashed on the trench or other spots of the frontlines, and the defensive formation of Stal covered a vast part of the area. Yet, the red-purple pillar claimed everyone's attention, especially after they could witness the result of the spell's destruction.

The chaos of the battlefield took a deep breath during that second of amazement. Khan could hear the world gasping and hesitating to inspect his spell before going back to its messy state.

The situation was far from ideal. Khan and his companions were in the middle of the enemy lines, past the trench, with Stal on every side and multiple weapons placed everywhere. Most of the aliens had to focus on the incoming army, and the cannons couldn't aim at the soldiers out of fear of friendly fire, but the area remained a pure mess.

Khan's group didn't know where to move. The explosion of the chaos spear had attracted the Stal's attention, but that diversion had only managed to buy a few seconds.

The Stal tasked with the protection of the cannon showed their anger when they turned toward the human group. Some even threw away their rifles due to their desire to kill the attackers with their own hands.

Meanwhile, some Stal came out of the trench to join the hunt for the humans. The path behind Khan and the others was relatively empty due to the bombs launched by the truck, but aliens were quickly filling it to pursue the invaders.

There wasn't a proper way out of that situation, but Khan and the others didn't need to escape. Their task was to create a diversion and wait for their allies to arrive.

Khan moved before his companions could say anything. Stal were jumping on the surface to approach his group, so he shot toward the trench. The channel could be a trap if the aliens encircled it, but remaining in the open was simply too dangerous.

The first soldier was still busy dealing with the two powerful aliens. He was using a martial art that made him able to deflect most punches flying in his direction. Something would normally hit him due to the sheer number of limbs aiming at him, but the trench prevented the Stal from working together properly.

The water spell had pushed the weaker Stal away, creating a space where Khan could jump. Still, he would end up in the middle of two groups of aliens while also hindering his companion if he went in without taking care of the threat.

Khan sprinted toward the two powerful Stal. He didn't jump. Instead, he dived for the first head that appeared in his view while his glowing knife pierced forward.

The Stal turned one of its heads while Khan was in the middle of his dive. The glowing knife was about to reach its neck, but its left arms rose to deflect the attack.

Khan didn't need to think or calculate the speed of the Stal's movements. He was usually faster than those aliens, but his opponent was a second-level warrior that had to perform a simple gesture. He could sense that his attack wouldn't reach its target.

The [Blood Shield] covered Khan's left arm right before the alien could hit him. A massive force fell on his limb when the Stal touched him, and his feet inevitably left the surface.

Khan found himself flying toward his right inside the trench. He slammed on the wet ground and rolled a couple of times before stabbing his feet in the mud and straightening his position.

The strong Stal ignored its companion and turned toward Khan. It appeared pissed that someone as weak as him had attempted a sneak attack. Meanwhile, Khan stared at the alien while a series of figures began to approach him from behind.

That was exactly what Khan had wanted to avoid, but his mind didn't have room for regret or curses. His left arm felt numb, and jumping out of the trench would only put him back in the rifles' trajectory. He had to deal with one of the threats now, but the waves of mana couldn't help him there.

Khan closed and relaxed his right hand. He could launch a spell, but the chaos claws were too dangerous to use against an opponent far stronger than him. The chaos spear was out of the question too. His aim wasn't terrible, but he would only fall prey to his own destruction in that situation.

As for the Wave spell, Khan had developed a way to limit its size, but his control remained poor. He risked hitting the soldier fighting against the other powerful Stal.

The decision became obvious in less than a second. Khan began to turn to deal with the Stal approaching him from behind. He was ready to unleash his spell to open a path and run away from the powerful alien, but familiar masses of mana suddenly approached his position and made him stop.

The other soldiers in Khan's group jumped inside the trench and stood at his sides. Two second-level warriors landed at his left and faced the powerful Stal, while the others arrived at his right to help him with the weaker aliens.

"That was a nice shot!" One of the soldiers exclaimed.

"Do you need to rest after something like that?" Another soldier asked while raising her guard to protect Khan.

"I'll be fine in a few seconds," Khan lied as he massaged his left forearm to disperse the numbness that afflicted his limb.

Battles exploded around Khan. The second-level warriors on his left worked together to fend off the tall alien trying to make its way forward by swinging its fists.

Even when working together, the two second-level warriors weren't a match for the Stal's physical might. However, one of them condensed the light in the area to create two swords that sent bright flashes toward the alien. The attacks only inflicted superficial injuries, but that was enough to keep the Stal at bay.

The other soldiers had started fighting against the weaker Stal on Khan's right. The trench worked in their favor since they could fight side by side while the aliens had to come forward one by one.

The group had successfully created a safe spot inside the enemy trench, but Khan didn't come on the battlefield to watch his companions fight. He waited enough to make his lie stick before jumping on the right wall and sprinting forward to reach the line of Stal.

The punches flying toward his figure grew easier to sense as time passed. Khan learnt to filter out the information that his mind didn't need. The bullets flying across the battlefield disappeared, and the same went for the Stal in the distance. He focused on the aliens in his range and the rifles targeting him as he waved his knife to cut what dared to appear on his path.

Limbs, chunks of flesh, heads, and blood flew in front of Khan as his sprint continued. The alien first-level warriors could react to his movements, but they couldn't stop them.

The punches that tried to interrupt his advance turned into gore that flew through the air. The heads that entered his range lost their connection to their necks. Khan had to interrupt his sprint only when one of the Stal decided to jump on him to block his way.

Khan kicked the wall to push himself at the bottom of the trench. The alien tried to turn after slamming on the diagonal surface, but a red-purple short sword suddenly stabbed its waist and turned its internal organs into a shattered mess.

The Stal fell to its knees, but Khan didn't even look at the scene. He turned and saw a series of aliens glaring at him as they held their severed limbs or patches of missing flesh.

Khan charged toward them. The first alien had been the last to react, so Khan could run past it while opening a large cut at the base of its back. The second Stal had lost one of its heads, which made it unable to stand properly and allowed Khan to deliver a killing blow.

The third alien had lost an arm during Khan's offensive, and it seemed to have every intention to make him pay. It spread its limbs when it saw its opponent moving forward, but it suddenly lost sight of him. Then, a sharp pain spread from its groin and made it fall on its knees.

Khan slid under the alien and kicked the following opponent while standing up. The fourth Stal had only lost half of its hand during his offensive, and the attack barely managed to make it move. Yet, Khan continued his assault by sending his mana forward. Gêtt the latest chapters on [no/velbin\(.\)com](http://no/velbin(.)com)

The alien revealed a confused expression as it stared at the foot placed on its torso. It had felt something, but nothing seemed off, so it soon moved its attention back on Khan.

'Is it too weak?' Khan wondered while pulling back his leg and charging forward.

Khan had to test the effects of his normal mana sooner or later. In theory, his energy already carried the innate destructiveness of the chaos element, but that feature appeared too weak to hurt first-level warriors.

The discovery reassured Khan, but he didn't think about that for now. He had partially confirmed that his mana wasn't dangerous in its normal form, but he still had to deal with his opponents.

The Stal punched Khan with its four limbs, but the latter ducked to dodge the attack. His knife flashed above his head, and two forearms fell together with a rain of dark blood.

The alien growled in pain, but Khan didn't stop. He ran under the severed limbs and reached the Stal's waist, where he stabbed his knife before jumping.

The Stal's torso opened into two parts as Khan kept the sharp membrane active and pushed it forward. The alien could only fall on its back as a trail of blood followed its movements.

Khan found his companions staring at him while wearing proud smirks after killing the last alien. His gaze couldn't go past the soldiers, but his senses allowed him to understand that the battle among second-level warriors was still ongoing.

"Change!" The soldier in front of Khan shouted before crossing him and shooting after the other Stal approaching their position.

Khan quickly grabbed the soldier and pulled him back. The latter and his companions shot confused glances at him, but he explained himself by pointing at the barrier above the trench and voicing a few words. "They are here."

The confusion on his companions intensified before a few battle cries resounded in the area and explained what was happening. A series of soldiers peeked out of the barrier and began shooting at every Stal they saw. Some even jumped inside the trench to move behind the enemy lines.

"Forward!" Lieutenant Leville's voice resounded from behind Khan's group. "Kill them all!"

The battle cry made many soldiers jump inside the trenches to approach the groups of aliens defending weapons or other specific positions. The same went for some of Khan's companions, and he didn't hesitate to follow them.

The true nature of the battlefield became clear after Khan stepped on the surface again. The human army had fallen on the Stal, and fights had started everywhere. The tanks still shot bullets from time to time, but they aimed them at areas that didn't contain members of their species.

The cannons continued to fire large bullets aimed at the tanks, and one of them eventually shattered under that relentless offensive. A second quickly followed, which forced the Lieutenant in that team to order an assault at those weapons.

Khan didn't have a precise role in that battle. He had never seen anything messier in his life, and his mind lost itself in the violent waves of mana that filled the area. His senses improved with each bullet or attack dodged.. Chaos was everywhere around Khan, and he danced among it.

Chapter 278 - Aftermath

The sheer size of the battlefield surpassed anything Khan had ever experienced. His group dispersed as the wave of soldiers reached the trench. Bullets flew everywhere, and cries filled the area.

Khan could shut down his thoughts and lose himself on the battlefield. His eyes and ears worked, but he didn't rely on them to fight. Stal and humans filled his surroundings without relying on any specific tactic or strategy. Everyone attacked everyone, often ending up in friendly fire and similar problems that the chaos in the area swept away.

Khan felt whole but also empty. He was one with the world but not himself. His knife never stopped glowing and cutting the air. His feet always kicked the ground or incoming enemies. Blood, dirt, gore, and sweat covered his body as he shot left and right toward every alien that he found.

A Stal tried to approach Khan from behind, but he jumped forward to stab his knife at a distracted opponent. The weapon left a deep cut at the center of the alien's back, but the latter turned while swinging its arms.

Khan kept the sharp membrane active and slid his knife in the opposite direction of the alien's rotation. The Stal found a curved cut that went from the center of its back to its torso when it completed its movement. As for its opponent, it couldn't see him anywhere.

A series of bullets flew toward Khan, and he sensed them, but fights were happening all around him. He couldn't dodge, not completely at least, so he ducked and let one of the projectiles fall on his shield.

The watch went dark now that it depleted its charges. Khan felt the barrier dispersing, but his attention quickly went on the Stal falling toward him.

Khan had to take a step back to avoid the Stal. The soldier on the other side voiced a weak "sorry" when he noticed his ally, but an alien exploited that moment of distraction to slam its arms on his head.

Khan saw everything and nothing. His brain memorized information, but it reacted only to the mana. He felt lost, but he also had complete awareness of his situation and position.

Conflicting sensations filled Khan's mind as he continued to fight. Chaos raged, but he was at peace. Deafening noises reached his ears, but he heard nothing. The strangeness of the situation seemed able to freeze his joints, but his limbs moved faster than ever.

The first-grade knife broke at some point. Khan had kept the sharp membrane active during most of the battle, and his element had eventually gotten the best of his weapon. The event forced him to rely on the chaos claws, which allowed him to notice the differences between his spell and the Divine Reaper.

The chaos claws spell seemed similar to the Divine Reaper in its uses, but it lacked the martial art's swiftness and speed. The red-purple short sword destroyed instead of cutting, so each attack was inevitably slower than when he used the knife.

The battlefield prevented other soldiers from noticing that Khan relied on his spell non-stop. Some of his fights would have gone better if he used his version of the Divine Reaper, but he didn't want to abuse the [Blood Shield].

His sensitivity to mana allowed him to avoid strong Stal. However, Khan decided to jump on them whenever he noticed an opening or a distraction.

The battlefield slowly thinned down until it went silent. Soldiers inspected their surroundings and searched for other opponents, but they soon realized that the area now featured only humans. Disbelief soon replaced their battle intent, and everything eventually fell prey to loud cries that announced the victory.

Khan took a bit to return to his normal mental state. He had remained in a daze when he inspected the sharp changes in the mana around him. The energy had gone from pure chaos to peaceful to ecstatic. The soldiers' happiness filled the world with raging waves that flew upward and engulfed the whole army.

Khan discovered that he was out of breath when the battle ended. Deep tiredness filled his arms and legs, and his body felt heavy. Mana still flowed out of his mana core and filled his insides, but the long battle had drained him.

Some of the happy cries transformed into sobs. Many soldiers sat on the bloody ground, uncaring of the corpses and gore lying around them. The first-level warriors were exhausted, and those who had yet to reach that level were even worse. Even the Lieutenants couldn't bother dealing with their duties in that situation. Everyone wandered, rested, or lost themselves in what was left of the area.

Khan wanted to wipe his forehead, but he stopped when he noticed that both his arms were full of blood. He couldn't even find a clean spot on his torn and ragged uniform. One of his shoes had also disappeared, but he couldn't remember how.

The ground had turned muddy after all the blood that had fallen during the battle. Craters, metal shards, and corpses also filled the plain. Most of the trench had crumbled, and smoke still came out from where the large bullets had crashed.

The scene depicted death and reminded Khan about the Second Impact. He had already seen such destruction, but the event had involved a vaster area at that time. He had even been one of the causes behind that mess, but that realization barely affected his mindset. Find new stories on [nov/e\(l\)bin\(.\)com](http://nov/e(l)bin(.)com)

His gaze stopped when he noticed a soldier puking in front of the gruesome spectacle. The scene was pitiful, but Khan couldn't move his eyes away from the poor man. That was a natural reaction to the disgusting images that the area could provide, but Khan had lost the ability to suffer because of them.

'I've grown cold,' Khan sighed before forcing himself to look away.

Only a few soldiers had remained active on the battlefield. Captain Clayman shouted orders to the Lieutenants around him and tried to get everyone moving. The army had to gather the bodies and check all the equipment that the Stal had left behind before regrouping and making a point of the situation.

The cleaning operations began, and the other soldiers slowly started to get to work. Even Khan received orders at some point. He had to move the corpses of the Stal and amass them on a pile that someone would eventually set on fire.

Tents began to appear in the area as parts of the battlefield became free of the corpses. The ground absorbed the blood but remained muddy. Still, it was stable enough to allow the creation of a messy camp and defensive lines that used the intact vehicles.

The outcome of the battle became clear by the morning of the next day. The human army had lost half of its members and many vehicles to achieve its victory. A few cannons and tanks from the Stal's side had also remained intact, which improved the prospect of future fights.

The numbers were encouraging. The human army had been on the offensive side, so Captain Clayman had been ready to lose far more troops. However, the initial distraction and the soldiers' general superiority due to their spells had contained their losses.

Captain Clayman ordered everyone to rest while the higher-ups dealt with food and other basic necessities. Many soldiers had to sleep in the open due to the lack of portable habitations. It even took a while for trucks with new provisions to arrive. HQ also had to send fresh troops to refill the losses since the army had to approach the city in the distance afterward.

No one really socialized during the days after the battle. The army also partially dispersed since many soldiers didn't want to sleep on the muddy ground where friends and Stal had died. The event wasn't problematic since the higher-ups had stretched the Global Army's network in the area, but the Lieutenants still reminded everyone not to wander too far from time to time.

Khan notified Lieutenant Leville about his need for a new knife. The weapon arrived together with some trucks that carried provisions and more portable habitations. The blade met his requirements, so his isolation could continue peacefully as he waited for the army to resume its advance.

A message eventually interrupted Khan's usual training routine. Captain Clayman had summoned him to his tent, and he didn't hesitate to cross the camp to reach the largest habitation in the area.

"Did you want to see me, sir?" Khan asked after the metal door of the habitation opened to reveal a relatively large room with an interactive desk at its end.

"Khan, yes," Captain Clayman exclaimed before raising his eyes from the menus on the desks. "Please, sit. We have a few things to discuss."

Khan felt surprised, but he still followed the orders. He reached one of the armchairs before the desk and sat while glancing at the various menus on the interactive surface.

The desk featured multiple reports and profiles of specific soldiers. Khan was among them, but he saw nothing strange during that glance. He could look at the same descriptions and stats from his phone.

"HQ is taking the attack seriously," Captain Clayman announced while laying his back on his chair and placing his hands on his nape. "We are actually advancing instead of remaining locked in useless trenches."

"The anti-mana project is scary," Khan commented. "I'm not surprised HQ wants to take it down so badly."

"Indeed," Captain Clayman sighed before clearing his throat. "Well, your performance in the battle has been great. They have told me that you have taken down one of the cannons during the initial attack. Good job, you have saved many lives."

"Thank you, sir," Khan stated without adding anything.

Captain Clayman laughed as he took a bottle and two cups from a drawer of the desk. A smirk appeared on his face as he poured the drink and voiced a casual announcement. "It's great to be captain. They bring these bottles with the furniture."

"Are we setting camp here?" Khan asked while picking up the cup and searching from the Captain's eyes only to remember that the soldier didn't know about Nitis' customs.

"We have to build a settlement," Captain Clayman exclaimed before taking a short sip from his drink, "But we won't live here. HQ will create a branch of the thirty-seventh battalion here to use it as a base for our assault."

"It's almost about time to leave then," Khan guessed while savoring the strong booze.

"Are you disappointed?" Captain Clayman teased through a chuckle.

"Not at all," Khan honestly admitted. "I don't mind fighting."

"You are a rare breed," Captain Clayman declared. "You are young, talented, resolute, and mature. Your mastery over your element is also quite astonishing considering that you have trained for less than two years with mana."

"Thank you, sir," Khan could only repeat before focusing on his drink. The Captain had yet to mention the reason behind that meeting, but Khan had no intention to press him.

"I have already forwarded your application for a promotion," Captain Clayman said before raising his hand when he saw that Khan's widened his eyes in surprise. "You don't need to thank me or anything. It's only proper that you gain a chance to become a Lieutenant. I've added my recommendation, but your age might be a problem. Still, don't worry. Very few soldiers succeed at the first try."

"Thank you, sir," Khan said for the first time. "I don't know what to say."

"Don't say anything," Captain Clayman announced. "You deserve some recognition."

Khan could only nod at those words. Becoming a Lieutenant was the first step toward the answers he needed to learn about the Nak. He almost couldn't believe that something like that could arrive so soon.

"Let me ask you one thing," Captain Clayman said while Khan was still immersed in his thoughts. "Do you like Ecoruta? Do you like the battlefield?"

"No sane mind would like the battlefield," Khan responded. "As for Ecoruta, it's just another planet."

"That's a good answer," Captain Clayman laughed. "I feared you had become addicted to fighting. It happens, you know? Some soldiers became unable to have a normal life after witnessing the dark aspects of war. They begin to feel at home only when bullets fly over their heads."

Khan didn't know what to add there, so he remained silent. Yet, the Captain continued his line with something that created cracks in his poker face. "It's a pity that I won't be able to see your growth."

"Are you leaving Ecoruta, sir?" Khan asked.

"No, you are," Captain Clayman exclaimed. "The Global Army wants you to head toward Onia.. You have to join one of the tournaments."

Chapter 279 - Mana Treatment

Khan didn't think about Onia in a long time. Only a year had passed since then, but the events on that hot planet seemed to belong to a different lifetime already. Everything was still na?ve, bloodless, and fine back then.

The year that had followed the training camp on Onia had been rough, tragic, and full of awful moments. Only Liiza had brought some light in that period, but she also belonged to the past now.

"Onia?" Khan couldn't help but mutter as memories surged in his mind.

The Ef'i, his bloody fight against Eztli, the faswite, and the cute moments with Martha came back. They felt so distant that Khan almost couldn't believe that he would go back to Onia.

"What is it?" Captain Clayman asked when he noticed Khan's stupor. "Everyone is happy to get a chance to leave this planet. You should be the same."

"It's just sudden, sir," Khan replied.

"The Ef'i have decided to hold the tournaments early this year," Captain Clayman explained while pointing at Khan's cup. "They have made that decision due to Istrone's mess. Giving the Global Army the chance to get more faswite is their way to show respect for our losses."

"They really are a warrior race," Khan commented while placing his cup on the desk to let the Captain refill it.

"You can refuse if you really want to," Captain Clayman exclaimed while pouring the drink.

"However, I don't suggest it. The tournaments on Onia are a big deal, and winning them is even bigger. Your career will take a leap forward if you bring home a mine."

"Refusing would be dumb," Khan agreed. "What about the anti-mana project?"

"Let me handle that part," Captain Clayman announced while pushing the cup toward Khan. "I'll even notify you once we have dealt with the labs, but, please, leave this planet. Ecoruta has nothing but blood and battles to offer."

'That's why I came here,' Khan replied in his mind as he picked his cup and took a short sip.

"You are a strange one," Captain Clayman sighed. "Being picked for a tournament is a great honor and a statement of your prowess, but you don't look happy."

"I feel honored, sir," Khan hastily responded. "Hearing about Onia just brought back memories."

"I read that you have already won a tournament there," Captain Clayman said.

"It feels so far away," Khan honestly revealed.

Captain Clayman didn't say anything. He knew what had come after Onia. Istrone and Nitis had broken Khan and rebuilt him into a new man.

"Don't let it get to you," Captain Clayman eventually stated.

"What do you mean, sir?" Khan asked.

"Don't bring the war back home," Captain Clayman explained. "Don't carry this filth and blood with you all the time. Go to Onia, win the tournament, and enjoy the position that the Global Army gives you afterward. You have already fought a lot, but becoming an ambassador requires more than that."

Khan didn't hide his surprise at those words. He had never mentioned his goals to the Captain, but the latter seemed to know about them.

"I have good sources," Captain Clayman announced while wearing a proud smile. "Besides, it's not hard to find information about you. There has never been such a young candidate in Onia's tournaments, and you didn't exactly lay low before that."

'It can't be bad for my goals to be public knowledge,' Khan thought. 'I might get a suitable role if I actually end up winning a tournament.'

"When do I leave?" Khan questioned.

"Tonight," Captain Clayman replied. "A spaceship will bring you back to the space station where you'll use the teleport. I'm afraid you won't get the chance to say goodbye to anyone."

"That's fine," Khan stated. "I can leave as soon as the spaceship arrives."

"Good," Captain Clayman announced. "Do you have any special requests that I can mention to HQ?"

Khan thought for a few seconds before nodding and voicing a simple demand. "I need a book for the Ef'i's language."

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Luke and Bruce stood in front of a room that featured a single bed and some medical equipment. Their eyes were on Martha, who was sleeping with a series of tubes and sensors attached to her body. Her burns had long since healed, but she had yet to wake up.

"When was the last time that someone so young has been picked for Onia's tournaments?" Bruce asked without moving his gaze from Martha.

"It has never happened," Luke calmly replied. "Khan is the youngest candidate in history for the fights with first-level warriors."

"Do you think he can win?" Bruce questioned while glancing at his friend.

"I don't know," Luke sighed. "He has surpassed everyone's expectations many times already. Who knows? He might actually win."

"He will be unreachable if that happens," Bruce commented.

"I've always known that he would have gone far," Luke exclaimed. "Yet, I didn't expect that to happen so soon. He isn't even eighteen." Findd new stories on [nov/e\(l\)bin\(.\)com](#)

"And we had him in our class," Bruce added. "I guess you lost your chance to use him."

"You know that I'm not like that," Luke complained. "I even owe my life to Khan. Sure, I want him to work under me in the future, but I won't become like my father to get the best troops."

"Your father is a great man from a political viewpoint," Bruce said. "Still, I agree. It would be a dick move to coerce him into joining you. He doesn't deserve that."

"I won't coerce him," Luke explained. "I don't even want to pay him up. I'd prefer him to join me as a friend."

"Is that why we came here?" Bruce asked. "Didn't you read about his alien girlfriend? He might not care anymore about her or us."

"That's not the Khan I know," Luke stated.

"We both didn't know much about him," Bruce declared. "Come on. Did you think he could pull off everything he did on Istrone when you first met him?"

"And that was only the beginning," Luke added. "That's why I have to try. He'll probably become someone really important in a few years at this pace. Leaving my mission aside, I need to keep him as a friend for my own future. He might be the only ally that my father doesn't control."

"Your father doesn't control me," Bruce replied in an annoyed tone.

"Your father controls you," Luke scoffed, "And my father is his friend. Khan is different. He is still outside all of this."

"So what?" Bruce asked. "How can Martha help you?"

"I'll wake her up," Luke stated.

"How?" Bruce chuckled. "Also, she has already lost an entire year of training. Do you think Khan will remain behind for her?"

"I've put her into a high-tier mana treatment," Luke revealed. "I've also asked the Weesso family for permission. Her parents are quite proud, but they couldn't refuse such a good offer."

"That's expensive even for you," Bruce commented.

"An ally like Khan is priceless," Luke announced. "I hope he won't forget our names by the time she wakes up."

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A spaceship descended among Ecoruta's darkness. Many soldiers had come out of their habitations to create two lines that Khan had to cross before departing.

The soldiers were performing military salutes, and they even wore serious expressions during the event. Khan felt a bit awkward to walk among them, but Captain Clayman had already explained that those gestures were necessary. His battalion had to show respect for someone picked for Onia's tournaments.

Some soldiers nodded at Khan when he met their eyes. Others smiled, and only a few dared to break their salutes to give him thumbs up. Khan did his best to perform fake smiles at those gestures, but he inevitably began to feel strange after a while.

Luckily for Khan, the walk didn't last long. He soon arrived next to the same spaceship that had brought him on Ecoruta. Its pilot had half of his face covered, but he recognized Jakob from the few visible features.

"Make sure to bring honor to the Global Army," Captain Clayman exclaimed after leaving his line. "And don't come back here afterward. I'll take care of you-know-what."

"I'll do my best, sir," Khan promised as the spaceship entrance opened.

"That's more than enough," Captain Clayman laughed before nodding.

Khan took that as the signal to enter the spaceship. The reinforced glass closed above him, and the vehicle set off slowly to avoid causing winds on the surface.

"Do you remember me?" Jakob asked once the spaceship was quite far away from the surface.

"You are about to accelerate, right?" Khan guessed.

"Damn right," Jakob laughed before the spaceship picked up speed and shot out of Ecoruta's atmosphere.

Khan glanced at the shrinking planet before moving his gaze on the enlarging space station. He had experienced a few meaningful moments on Ecoruta but nothing that was remotely comparable to

Nitis. He had unlocked his spells, and his mood had slightly improved, but he wouldn't hold many events dear. Delia had been a nice distraction, but she couldn't give birth to feelings after Liiza.

"You never told me that you were so strong," Jakob announced. "Don't tell me that I will have to call you "sir" in a few years."

Khan didn't answer. His gaze remained on the space station as a hangar quickly grew clear in his vision. It didn't take long before the spaceship landed and unlocked its cover to let him out.

"Bring my regards to the Ef'i!" Jakob laughed as Khan left the spaceship and walked toward a familiar figure waiting in front of a corridor.

"Hi Khan, it's been a while," Eunice exclaimed while wearing an odd wide smile.

"Only a few months," Khan replied. "Unless I lost track of time while I was down there."

"Not at all," Eunice happily stated while tinkering with the menus on the screen in her hands. "You have been on Ecoruta for almost four months. It's incredible that you have been able to accomplish so much in such a short period."

"The Stal did the kidnapping," Khan commented. "I only escaped."

"That alone is incredible!" Eunice shouted while entering the corridor to escort Khan across the space station. "It's a pity that you are leaving so soon."

"Did you want me to remain on the battlefield?" Khan said before performing a fake chuckle when he saw Eunice's apologetic expression.

"It's a pity that you couldn't get stationed here," Eunice complained. "The higher-ups want you to reach Onia right away. You'll have to spend the night here, but you'll get teleported early in the morning."

"Maybe one day I'll get a role here," Khan replied without putting any emotion in his words.

Eunice quickly led Khan to an area of the space station that he didn't see the first time. The quarter featured a series of small rooms, and one of them opened when the two passed in front of it.

"I'll pick you up tomorrow morning then," Eunice exclaimed as Khan began to enter the room.

"Is there a training hall here?" Khan asked when he thought about sleeping for an entire night there. "Can I use it?"

"This space station has three training halls," Eunice revealed while wearing an awkward expression, "But you can't use them. Chaos wielders have special restrictions in space."

"That makes sense," Khan sighed. "I'll see you tomorrow then."

"Well," Eunice voiced while stepping forward and caressing her short hair, "There isn't much to do on the space station, but I often hang out with a few soldiers. We only drink and practice at the firing range, nothing special, but it might be a good way to kill the night."

Khan noticed a few expressions that he had learnt to recognize. Eunice's smile, her fingers playing with her hair, and the slight high tone that took control of her voice from time to time stated that he probably had a chance with her. Her last gesture also seemed to confirm that idea.

Still, Khan recalled his first interaction with the woman. Eunice was probably acting like that due to his newfound fame, which worsened his idea of her. He didn't want something similar, not after Delia.

"I think I'll force myself to rest," Khan responded. "I probably need it before reaching Onia."

"Of course!" Eunice quickly exclaimed before stepping out of the room. "You need to bring honor to the Global Army. I'm sorry for even asking you to waste time with me."

"I'm sure it wouldn't have been a waste," Khan declared while showing a fake smirk before sealing the room. He only had the time to notice Eunice's gasping expression before the door slid close.

'George definitely knew a lot about women,' Khan laughed internally before a few memories of Onia surged in his mind.

Khan remembered his cute moments with Martha, the innocent flirt that the two had exchanged for a short period, and her decision to hold his hand before teleporting on Istrone. His memories then moved to her charred figure inside the medical bay, but he still corrected his previous thought after reviewing all of that. 'Some of them at least.'

'Onia then,' Khan thought while throwing himself on the bed.

Khan had no intention to sleep, but he didn't mind spending a few moments reviewing everything that had happened on Ecoruta.. It felt necessary to make a point of his situation now that he was entering the second half of his second year in the Global Army.

Chapter 280 - Slow

Khan had grown used to spending entire nights training, but his schedule featured something different at that time. The Global Army had sent him a book featuring a deep description of the Ef'i's language and grammar, so he deployed the "enhanced reading" to memorize most of its contents.

Memorizing words and grammatical rules wasn't enough to grant Khan mastery over that alien language. His accent would remain off without practice, and he would still fail to apply everything he had learnt in an actual conversation. His understanding wasn't natural enough to speak properly, but he planned to fix that issue on Onia.

The morning arrived before Khan could complete his usual training routine. Eunice knocked at his door, and he left in a hurry to follow her through the many corridors. The two exchanged casual words, but she soon understood that his mind was elsewhere.

A familiar area eventually unfolded in Khan's vision. Eunice remained behind while Khan entered the room with the teleport and consoles that he had seen when he first arrived in the structure.

The soldiers in the room stared at Khan with strange expressions. Some appeared disappointed, while others experienced conflicting feelings that their faces didn't even try to hide.

Khan wasn't as unaware of the situation as before. The nomination for Onia's tournaments had even improved his status greatly, so he quickly approached the Guko next to the teleport and voiced a loud question. "Are they disappointed that they didn't get my mana core?"

"Yes," The Guko replied before anyone could stop it.

Khan wore a fake smile as he stepped on the teleport and glanced at the soldiers on the consoles. The latter avoided his gaze, and they stuttered when they voiced the indications necessary for the teleport.

The soldiers didn't know that Khan was only teasing them. They were afraid that he could report them to a superior and use his status to make their lives harder. Of course, Khan had no interest in all of that, but their reaction gave him a clearer understanding of how important he had become.

'I guess I need to win the tournament,' Khan thought as synthetic mana began to fill his surroundings.

A series of orders rang before a blinding light filled Khan's vision. When the glow vanished, he found himself in a similar room that featured a far different atmosphere. Green metal covered most surfaces, and dark consoles stood at the edge of the circular area. Still, the alien figure standing in front of the teleport claimed most of Khan's attention.

"Welcome to Onia," The male Ef'i exclaimed in perfect human language. "A Lieutenant is waiting for you outside the building."

"[Thank you]," Khan said with the best accent he could muster while stepping out of the platform.

The Ef'i wore a polite smile before adjusting his white medical coat and approaching one of the consoles. Khan glanced at his pointy tail before moving his eyes toward a soldier that approached him.

"Sir, we must perform a routine check before allowing you out of the building," The man said in a polite tone while showing the way toward a corridor.

The man had a single star on his right shoulder, but he still addressed Khan as "sir". Khan ignored that matter and limited himself to nod before following the soldier across the corridor. A series of scanners stood in his way, but he went through all of them quickly.

"Do you mind if I check my stats?" Khan asked when the building exit appeared in his view.

The soldier at the end of the tunnel nodded before handing over the screen in her hands to Khan. He only cared about one stat, and a bit of disappointment appeared inside him when he read it.

'Only fifty-three percent attunement with mana,' Khan exclaimed in his mind. 'I had to fight and travel for entire weeks, but I still meditated a lot.'

Gaining only two points on his attunement with mana in almost four months left Khan surprised. He could sense that the next checkpoint was still far, but he didn't expect to have improved so little.

'I'll be a second-level warrior in my third year at this pace,' Khan thought while handing back the screen. 'This is far too slow.'

Khan's thoughts inevitably went on the [Blood Vortex] after acknowledging the limits of his meditations. He had something that could make him improve faster, but his ability to manipulate mana had yet to reach the intended level.

'I need to work harder on my Niqols' techniques,' Khan decided. 'The [Blood Shield] isn't a problem for now, but it will also need to reach the next level after I become a second-level warrior.'

His thoughts stopped when the exit slid open and a familiar face appeared in his view. Lieutenant Unchai wore a broad smile as soon as his eyes fell on Khan.

"Sir, I didn't expect to see you here," Khan stated.

"I decided to receive you as soon as I heard about your nomination," Lieutenant Unchai chuckled as his smile saddened. "I thought that you would have liked a familiar face here."

Khan nodded without adding anything else. His eyes moved among the red-brown environment as he inspected the small camp that contained the teleport. Tall buildings and a few squads of soldiers were visible from his position, but the almost unbearable heat remained the most striking feature in the area.

"Nothing has changed here," Khan sighed before glancing at the second star on the Lieutenant's left shoulder. "Well, almost nothing."

"You aren't the only one who has been busy," Lieutenant Unchai announced while leading Khan toward one side of the small camp. "Instead, Onia is as hot as always. Even a catastrophe wouldn't change that."

"I thought you would have gone back on Earth after our training session," Khan stated.

"Earth has been a bit of a mess after Istrone," Lieutenant Unchai explained. "The Global Army had a shortage of recruits, so many teachers decided to switch professions or find temporary jobs. The situation has started to stabilize lately due to the new year."

Khan went silent. Istrone had been a tragedy that had caused deep consequences in many aspects of the Global Army. Humankind had basically lost a year to recover from those losses.

Lieutenant Unchai led Khan in an area with a few cars. A few soldiers stood next to them, and they didn't hesitate to perform military salutes when they saw the two. One of them even approached one of the vehicles, but Lieutenant Unchai waved his hand to dismiss him.

"Do you know how to drive?" Lieutenant Unchai asked while placing a hand on a car.

"I never had the chance to learn, sir," Khan replied.

"You are learning now," Lieutenant Unchai stated while jumping on the passenger's seat. "It's pretty easy. Hop in, and I'll show you."

Khan imitated the Lieutenant and jumped on the driver's seat. The car was completely black and had no roof, but its comfortable insides and metal surfaces weren't hot even if Onia's two suns had shone on them for a while already.

"Press that to turn it on," Lieutenant Unchai explained while pointing at a button and the two pedals under Khan's feet, "That to accelerate, and that to stop. I told you, easy."

Khan didn't know why Lieutenant Unchai was giving him that chance, but he didn't ask any questions. He turned the car on and timidly pressed on the accelerator. The vehicle began to move forward, and he instinctively held himself on the steering wheel to keep it still.

"Try to turn on the right," Lieutenant Unchai ordered. "Get used to how the car reacts."

Khan followed the order and performed slight turns inside the camp. He learnt all the basic functions quickly, and the Lieutenant eventually told him to leave.

"You can accelerate here," Lieutenant Unchai said as soon as the car left the tall fence around the camp.

Khan immediately pressed on the accelerator, and the car shot forward. Hot winds blew on his face as the vehicle sprinted through the barren plain outside the camp. A smile even appeared on his face as he recalled the feelings experienced when he flew with Snow.

"Can you handle this speed?" Lieutenant Unchai asked in a surprised tone.

"Sir, I used to fly far faster," Khan exclaimed as he tried to perform sharp turns without slowing down.

The car remained stable as Khan kept testing it. It was completely different from an Aduns. If it weren't for the wind, he would barely notice that he was moving.

"You need to learn how to fly a spaceship then," Lieutenant Unchai suggested. "Those things can go far faster than any Tainted animal."

"Do you know the Aduns, sir?" Khan asked.

"No, I've only searched a few things on the network after studying your profile," Lieutenant Unchai explained. "Did you really fly on those creatures' backs?"

"It's safer than you think," Khan laughed.

"Is it?" The Lieutenant questioned, but Khan limited himself to shaking his head without interrupting his laugh.

"Ok, slow down a bit now," Lieutenant Unchai said while tinkering with the screen in front of his seat. "You need to turn to the right and continue straight for a while to reach our destination."

"Where are we going, sir?" Khan asked while following the indications.

"Our destination is one of the largest human camps on Onia," Lieutenant Unchai revealed. "The humans have built it around a big mine of faswite, but the Ef'i have a few buildings there. The tournament for first-level warriors will also happen there."

"I thought the event would have been grander," Khan responded. In his mind, something like the tournaments would need a city or vast settlements.

"Wait until you see it," Lieutenant Unchai replied. "Also, the surface is never important with the Ef'i. Life thrives underground here."

Khan nodded before falling silent. His eyes went on the screen in front of Lieutenant Unchai from time to time to make sure that his direction was correct. He didn't know how the car could know its exact location in areas that the Global Army's network didn't reach. Still, he didn't voice questions and decided to focus on the winds blowing on his face.

"This is too slow," Khan thought as he slowly pressed harder on the accelerator.

"You have changed," Lieutenant Unchai eventually announced. "I guess that's normal after everything you have been through."

"How so, sir?" Khan asked while feeling glad that the Lieutenant wasn't scolding him about the car's speed.

"You look mature," Lieutenant Unchai explained.

"I have always been mature," Khan declared.

"Maybe you didn't change too much," The Lieutenant scoffed, and Khan laughed. Then, the soldier noticed that something was off and turned toward Khan to question him. "Are we going faster than before?"

"Not at all," Khan promised. "It must be the heat, sir."

"What heat?" Lieutenant Unchai shouted before heaving a helpless sigh. "Fine, you can go as fast as you want, but slow down once the camp is in sight."

"What are the rules of the tournament?" Khan questioned now that the Lieutenant mentioned the camp again.

"One versus one fights," Lieutenant Unchai began to list the rules, "No weapons allowed, and avoid killing if you can."

"That's it?" Khan asked.

"That's it," Lieutenant Unchai confirmed.

"Can I really kill them?" Khan continued.

"Do you want to?" Lieutenant Unchai asked in an emotionless tone.

"No," Khan replied before continuing with words that brought a pensive mood to his mind, "It's just easier."

"You have really changed," Lieutenant Unchai sighed. "You can use spells, but I'd avoid it in your case."

"I guessed as much," Khan revealed.

The Ef'i were a battle race. They would respect Khan if he won, but they would inevitably hold grudges if he ended up killing many of their young soldiers. That went in the opposite direction of his goal.

"Will you be fine without your knife?" Lieutenant Unchai asked.

"I don't know," Khan admitted. "I'll come up with something."

"They are stronger than us before the evolution," Lieutenant Unchai reminded. "Their tail is also a natural weapon. I don't need to tell you that they are quite challenging."

"I remember," Khan sighed. "I'll just hurt them badly if I must."

"You have grown confident in yourself," Lieutenant Unchai commented. "That's good."

"It's pointless to lay low right now," Khan added. "I need to win."

Lieutenant Unchai stared at Khan for a while before moving his eyes on the sterile environment. He almost couldn't recognize Khan. The latter had gone from a playful kid to a confident soldier in a single year. The sight was almost depressing.

"Do you know anything about Lieutenant Dyester?" Khan asked after a while.

"As far as I know, he is the same as always," Lieutenant Unchai explained. "Ylaco's training camp has gained new recruits, so he has to work again from time to time."

Khan nodded, and silence arrived again. The car continued to shoot through the barren path until a series of structures appeared in the distance and forced him to slow down. Gêtt the latest chapters on [no/velbin\(.\)com](http://no/velbin(.)com)

The camp was far larger than Khan had predicted. It wouldn't be wrong to call it a small town due to its sheer size. A tall fence stretched for hundreds of meters around multiple dark buildings. A few green structures also stood among them. The settlement could contain thousands of soldiers, and that was only the surface.

"So?" Lieutenant Unchai asked in a proud tone.

"I don't understand why you call this a camp," Khan stated, and the Lieutenant laughed.

A few soldiers stood in front of the fence's entrance, but they moved aside when they noticed Lieutenant Unchai. Khan led the car inside the parking area to the right, and his inexperience with those vehicles became evident in that situation. It took him a while to complete the procedure correctly.

"You'll get better," Lieutenant Unchai comforted Khan after they stepped out of the car.

"I bet the spaceships are harder to ride," Khan sighed.

"Not really," Lieutenant Unchai revealed. "You can't hit anything in space, and you can complete some procedures with the auto-pilot."

Lieutenant Unchai led Khan outside the parking area, and a few soldiers quickly approached them to be their guides. However, a scene that Khan found familiar played in his vision before the two men could say their names.. He could see a group of Ef'i approaching his position, and he even recognized Teco among them.