

Chaos' Heir 31

Chapter 31 - Insults

"Technology and mana" didn't get any more interesting the next morning. Khan was behind compared to his peers when it came to types of machinery, and everything seemed to favor mana on its own anyway.

Instead, "xenolinguistics" continued to stir Khan's interest. He kept guessing right whenever Professor Thogett used the Nak's language, which forced him to disregard the idea that the event was a simple coincidence.

Two lessons weren't enough to make Khan sure about anything, but his doubts inevitably started to transform into reasonable hypotheses. After all, he seemed able to understand the Nak's language even without paying attention to the few words that Professor Thogett used as examples.

The peculiar event didn't let Khan ignore his priorities, especially since he couldn't get clear answers yet. He had to notify Professor Norwell about his attunement with mana and martial art, but he didn't forget to spend time with Martha during the usual break.

"Did you really expect to learn a martial art in weeks?" Martha laughed when Khan told her about his hesitation.

"I'm a simple man," Khan sighed. "I just want superpowers."

"You still have to work hard for them," Martha covered her mouth to suppress her laugh. "Even Luke will have to sweat to learn a few moves."

"That would be a fun scene," Khan joked. "Luke sweating. What a sight!"

Martha laughed again, but the duo eventually fell silent. They had to start their training to make the best out of the time before Professor Norwell's lesson, but they both desired to talk a bit more.

"You shouldn't worry about the wealthy kids," Martha eventually said before Khan was about to close his eyes. "You can definitely keep up with them even if you don't have Credits to purchase synthetic mana. They can't buy determination and experience."

"I hope you are right," Khan revealed an honest smile. "I wish to reach a decent level before the first missions. I might stand out and gain something if I'm stronger than them by then."

"I see you have a plan," Martha commented before a tinge of sadness appeared in her eyes.

Obtaining that level of expertise in less than a semester would be impossible unless Khan spent most of his time training. That would leave them barely any time together. They even had to limit their conversations during the breaks to focus on their meditations.

"Do you miss me already?" Khan winked toward Martha when he noticed her reaction, and the latter promptly wore an annoyed expression.

"Stop wasting time and meditate already!" Martha snorted. "We are here to become proper soldiers, not chitchatting."

"Aye aye, ma'am," Khan chuckled before closing his eyes and moving his focus on the energy flowing out of his nape.

Martha stared at his earnest expression for a few seconds. She inspected the occasional tremors that ran through Khan's face whenever his body tried to oppose the expansion of the mana. He had already learnt how to continue to meditate when the pain wasn't too intense.

Martha heaved a faint sigh before closing her eyes. She decided to dive into a meditative state instead of sorting the thoughts that filled her mind. Her education and financial situation didn't give her the time to handle that stuff yet.

Khan exited the meditative state a few times before the alarm rang and put an end to his training. Martha also woke up, and the duo went toward the basement even if the lesson would take thirty more minutes to start.

The basement held the class of recruits who had scored B in the initial test. Most of them were already exhausted since the lesson was almost over. Khan even spotted Samuel in the corner of the area.

Professor Norwell was walking among the recruits. She shook her face whenever she saw a boy or a girl panting on the floor, and she reacted in the same way at the sight of the red lights on various menus.

Khan raised his hand to attract the Professor's attention, but some of the exhausted recruits also noticed his gesture. Samuel's friends were busy sparring with their partners, but they didn't miss that event either.

Khan and Martha were members of the special class, and their friendship with Luke made them even more famous inside the training camp. Moreover, the other recruits often saw them meditating together in parks or walking at night through the streets, so rumors had inevitably spread.

"You can make appointments through your phone if you want to see me," Professor Norwell whispered after she neared Khan and Martha. "I believe every matter can wait until Sunday."

"My attunement with mana has reached twenty percent," Khan immediately revealed to calm down the Professor. "I've also already obtained a martial art."

Professor Norwell remained speechless for a second. She was aware of Khan's background, so she immediately doubted that statement. However, Martha nodded as soon as the soldier's gaze fell on her.

"Continue sparring!" Professor Norwell shouted after turning back toward the class and gesturing to the duo to go in the corridor.

Then, Professor Norwell reached Khan and Martha in the corridor to explain her recent actions. "Your feat is quite amazing. Did you consider all your options? I can put you in a special program of the army and give you access to good martial arts."

"How good are we talking about?" Khan asked while feigning interest in the offer.

"Are you aware of the classification of martial arts?" Professor Norwell asked before continuing when she saw Khan nodding. "The Global Army will surely treasure your talent. I can probably obtain a medium-level martial art up to sixty points."

Khan faked slight surprise before lowering his head to pretend to think about the matter. He had already refused that offer in his mind, but he didn't want to risk ruining his relationship with the Global Army.

"Do you mind if I continue like this for a while until I learn more about Ylaco?" Khan asked while wearing an honest expression. "I don't want to lock myself on a single path already. I want to keep my options open for a little more."

"That's completely understandable," Professor Norwell announced while revealing a smile. "My offer will stand as long as your talent keeps you above the others. Even matching the growth of your peers will be enough."

Khan expressed his thanks while Martha remained silent and inspected that interaction. She knew that Professor Norwell would probably call the medical bay to confirm Khan's attunement, but the soldier still appeared fooled by his honest behavior.

"You are really great at pretending," Martha commented when she escorted Khan outside of the main building.

Khan didn't need to attend Professor Norwell's lessons anymore, so he could go directly to the prisons of the camp and continue his training with Lieutenant Dyester. Yet, the class would still take ten minutes to start, and he didn't mind spending that time with Martha.

"You have already told me that," Khan laughed before teasing the girl. "Are you jealous that my charm has managed to fool Professor Norwell?"

"She is a beautiful woman," Martha commented, "But you need to get far stronger to get a shot at her."

"I guess you aren't in the mood for jokes," Khan sighed.

"You'll know the reason behind that in a second," Martha closed her eyes before wearing a broad smile and looking in the distance.

Khan suddenly noticed that three girls at the end of the street had started to wave their hands toward Martha. Their faces expressed pure joy, but Khan could smell the pretense from his current position.

"You are always so on time, Martha!" One of the girls exclaimed.

"She works harder than the entire special class," Another girl said. "We should praise her for that."

"I have already told you that you don't have to worry about synthetic mana," The third girl shouted. "My mother will take care of all my friends. It's a tradition of the Blackdell family!"

"Female Luke incoming," Martha whispered before raising her voice and greeting the girls with a tone that Khan had never heard.

"Why don't you introduce us to your friend?" The first girl asked. "He is the boy from the Slums, right?"

Martha shot a meaningful glance toward Khan before resuming her pretense. "Sisters, he is Khan."

"It must have been hard to make the transition from that dirty place," The first girl announced.

"Even Martha had started to gain your bad habits before meeting us. I'm Beth Merwood anyway."

"It's not his fault," The second girl complained. "He has probably survived eating cockroaches. It's a miracle that he knows how to take a shower. It's nice to meet you. I'm Cora Pensloo."

"The background doesn't justify someone's behavior," The last girl snorted. "He is in the training camp now. He should behave like a recruit. I'm Alison Blackdell."

The three girls had spewed insults before announcing their names and stretching their right hands forward. Martha asked Khan for forgiveness with her eyes. A tinge of shame also appeared on her expression, but she had to endure that behavior due to political reasons.

Khan looked at the three hands stretched toward him. The girls clearly wanted something from him, but he had no idea what to do. Still, his knowledge about characters made him understand the three girls would never respect him.

'I might as well make things easy for Martha,' Khan sighed in his mind. 'Nothing like a common enemy to improve a friendship.'

"Is that makeup?" Khan asked while pointing at the girls' faces. "I've never seen it on such young girls. Only the hookers wore it in the Slums, and you never wanted to know what they hid with it. I hope it's not the same for you."

The three girls opened their mouths, and anger filled their eyes, but Khan walked past them while they were busy going through his words. A few screams resounded from behind him at some point, but he was quite far away by then.

Chapter 32 - Unlucky

A message arrived on Khan's phone while he walked toward the prisons of the camp. Martha had immediately questioned him about his recent behavior.

'What was that?' Khan read on his phone.

'I thought she would get it.' Khan thought before writing an answer. 'Use this chance to look good with your friends. Give them some funny story too.'

Martha didn't answer, so Khan could guess that Professor Norwell's lesson had started. She would probably send a message later, but he wouldn't be available for the entire night.

The familiar lawn unfolded in Khan's vision before the trapdoor opened and revealed the path toward the basement. Lieutenant Dyester was waiting for him, and a lit cigarette was already in his mouth.

"Don't waste time," Lieutenant Dyester ordered after the trapdoor closed behind Khan. "You will spend the next months practicing footwork. Get in position! The quicker you memorize the moves, the sooner you can start adding mana and turn them into techniques."

Khan unlocked his phone, muted the notifications, and activated the training program for the Lightning-demon style. Then, he placed the device on the table before pointing its camera in his direction.

The scanner of the training program was active. The holograms would tell Khan whenever he failed to perform the correct moves, and Lieutenant Dyester would add tips that came from his experience.

Khan had the perfect training room. He only lacked countless hours spent sweating and spitting blood now, but he didn't hesitate to start accumulating them.

The night went by slowly. Khan never stopped practicing the basic footwork required to begin the proper training of the Lightning-demon style.

His movement started to grow sluggish as his ankles and overall legs reached their limits. Lieutenant Dyester suggested practicing slower versions of the techniques once the pain became unbearable, and Khan followed his instructions.

Khan felt barely able to climb the staircase when the training session ended. His ankles were killing him, but Lieutenant Dyester didn't do anything to help him.

"I'll make sure to have some lotions ready from tomorrow onward," Lieutenant Dyester announced while he inspected Khan's struggles. "You are on your own tonight."

Khan didn't bother to answer. He limped out of the basement before walking slowly back to his dormitory. The curfew would still take an hour to arrive, so he could avoid hurrying.

Khan collapsed on his bed once he reached his room. The pain on his ankles had only gotten worse after the long walk, but he couldn't allow himself to rest just yet. Two training sessions were still waiting for him.

'I'm definitely going to die,' Khan laughed in his mind before straightening his position. 'Mental training comes first. I can deal with the attunement later.'

Khan was so busy with his schedule that he almost overlooked Samuel. The boy wasn't sleeping. Instead, he was staring at him from his top bunk on the other side of the room.

"What is it?" Khan asked while setting the alarm for the first training.

Samuel opened his mouth, but no words came out of it. The boy seemed to go through a mental struggle before making up his mind and giving voice to a weak "nothing".

Khan revealed a faint smile, but his expression grew cold after Samuel lay back on the bed. Something had changed in his behavior, and Khan could only find one explanation.

'Visiting Professor Norwell's class has started something,' Khan thought.

Of course, Khan was only considering the worst possible reason behind that seemingly harmless gesture. Samuel didn't do anything too strange in the end.

However, Khan didn't dare to relax. His guess could turn out to be wrong, but he didn't want to ignore those signals completely and regret it later.

The conflict in Samuel's expression could only lead to his friends. Khan didn't believe that those bullies had forgotten about him, but the lessons on the training camp had kept everyone too busy to plan an act of revenge.

Still, something might have changed after he visited Professor Norwell's lesson, and Khan didn't dare to overlook that possibility.

Khan put that matter aside for the time being and focused on his training. Hours went by as he obtained an initial success with the mental exercise and continued to endure the usual pain during the meditations.

After his second alarm rang, Khan lay in bed and prepared himself to sleep, but a sudden thought reminded him about Martha.

'She did send something,' Khan sighed before reading the message on the phone. 'I don't want to badmouth you to gain the favor of these harpies.'

'I thought she knew how to handle politics,' Khan chuckled before writing an answer. 'Don't mind me. You might get free synthetic mana with my sacrifice. You can always tell me how great I am when we see each other in secret.'

Khan couldn't help but laugh after sending that answer, but his exhaustion inevitably had the better of him. His eyes began to close as he set the alarm for the morning and went back to his nightmare.

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The week went by quickly and without issues.

Martha accepted the role that Khan had forced her to play, but her pride didn't allow her to ignore him. She even straight-up refused to hide their friendship. Her new friends questioned her about that behavior, but she justified it by describing Khan's devotion to his training as his only good quality.

Professor Thogett's lessons didn't get any more interesting during that week, but Khan still decided to put xenolinguistics as one of his possible subjects for the second semester.

Khan had continued to understand the Professor's words whenever she used the Nak's language, so he had to dive deeper into the matter. Moreover, learning alien languages sounded right since he wanted to explore different planets in the future.

His sessions with Lieutenant Dyester improved after the soldier requested lotions and specific remedies for Khan's joints. He could stop limping back to his dormitory alone at night, and the lack of pain led to an overall better training experience.

Khan continued to grow used to the pain felt during the meditations, and his mental exercises also showed some improvements. His ability to move the mana in his brain developed as he piled nights of training.

Samuel's strange behavior didn't lead to any repercussion, but Khan didn't lower his guard, especially since he found the boy awake at night more often. That situation was strange, and he even saw Samuel peeking at him from time to time.

Something was definitely up, but Khan decided to pretend to ignore the matter until the bullies made their move. The regulations of the Global Army would protect him as long as he wasn't the first to attack.

Sunday arrived and led Khan to have a long training session in the prisons. His body reached its limit on that day, and Lieutenant Dyester felt forced to send him back to his dormitory three hours before the arrival of the curfew.

The Lieutenant didn't feel disappointed in his endurance. Instead, he didn't hold back from giving positive evaluations regarding Khan's determination, dedication, and talent. In his opinion, the boy was improving far faster than he had predicted.

Khan couldn't feel happy about those words since he was still far away from a perfect execution without mana. He had needed only a week to reach a decent level of expertise with the palm force and the shadow step, but the Lightning-demon style required far more training to provide the same results.

His day instantly improved when he saw Martha waiting for him at the entrance of his dormitory. The duo decided to spend the remaining hours before the curfew together, and laughs often resounded between them.

Then, before the clock could signal nine pm, Khan's phone rang. Martha felt immediately interested in the matter since the boy didn't have many contacts inside the training camp, but her eyes widened when she saw that the message came from the Global Army itself.

Khan didn't hesitate to open the message, and Martha even clung to his shoulder to peek at his phone. The communication used the Global Army's profile, but it came from Professor Norwell. The soldier had notified Khan that he could start his training as a mage in the following week.

"She must have requested a training program for your element when you notified her about your attunement," Martha explained before wearing an annoyed expression. "Why did it take them so long? Almost an entire week has passed."

"I have the chaos element," Khan revealed. "I guess it's rare."

Martha remained speechless at that revelation. The elements weren't an important topic among recruits since all of them could achieve similar levels, but there were a few exceptions.

The chaos element was one of the exceptions due to its connection to the Nak. Humankind didn't like to see their soldiers wielding the same power as their enemies, and Khan had preferred to keep it a secret for that reason.

"That's quite unlucky," Martha announced before continuing when Khan shot a confused glance toward her. "I've heard that humans don't really suit that element. Learning chaos spells might take you a long time."

Chapter 33 - Vague

The morning lessons changed again in the third week. A new professor called Ava Holmer took care of teaching "basics of the society" and "politics". Khan ended up hating those subjects, but he desperately needed to learn them.

Ava Holmer was an old woman with long grey hair combed in a large bun and cateye-shaped glasses. Her uniform featured a single star on both shoulders, and her demeanor was quite stiff.

Khan found the lessons incredibly boring, especially since they didn't involve the fantastic qualities of the mana. The only interesting details in those classes concerned the various relationships between humankind and the known alien species.

It turned out that the Global Army had mainly established peaceful alliances with four of the intelligent alien species found throughout the universe.

Obtaining those alliances had required a few battles or compromises during the first meetings, but everything had reached a stable situation now. The last political crisis had been on Istrone when a faction of the Kred had decided to rebel.

"The Kred are a peaceful alien species," Professor Holmer explained, "But they also worship mana. The radical groups on Istrone believed that humans were tainting that energy with their technology. That eventually led to a rebellion."

"My professor in Ylaco told me that the Kred struggle to control mana," Luke added while the lesson continued. "Their bodies are better than ours, but we can surpass them once our attunement reaches high percentages."

Khan never stopped absorbing information about the world. He didn't care that Professor Holmer's teaching style could match Professor Conche's dullness. His attention never faltered, and he promptly lowered his headphones whenever one of his friends added pieces of knowledge to the lessons.

"It's a pity that Professor Holmer didn't say anything about the other cities on Earth," Khan commented once the group hit the canteen. "I hope she teaches something about the social structure of the world."

"Why would you even wait for a professor to teach you that?" Bruce laughed at those words. "You can learn that from your phone. The network of the Global Army can teach you a lot if you know how to look."

"The professors will probably skip what they deem as common knowledge," Luke explained. "They only go through those topics when they have classified information to add."

Khan felt a bit lost. His phone contained some answers to his doubts, but he had never thought to use it.

"I'll teach you how to use the network later," Martha eventually sighed.

Khan revealed a grateful expression when he turned toward Martha, and the other boys and girls on the table couldn't help but stare at that interaction.

"It's quite bold of you to be with him," April Rotston commented. "My mother would kill me if I were to date a boy from the Slums."

Martha and Khan shot a surprised glance toward the girl. They didn't think the rumors already saw them as a proper couple.

"Khan will definitely go far," Bruce added. "He will easily reach high ranks in the Global Army. He is the first in the entire training camp to reach twenty percent of attunement with mana, and he always works hard. Even Professor Norwell wants to rope him into special training programs."

"The soldiers with poor backgrounds statistically go further in the army," Luke continued. "Many known heroes of the Global Army have started with little more than a few Credits."

Luke and Bruce's approach to Khan's background was directly opposite to Martha's new friends. The two boys saw Khan's potential as a valuable asset in future platoons. Instead, the three girls only considered his worth as a spouse.

"Getting my attunement to twenty percent was only luck," Khan tried to tone down those praises.

"Don't sell yourself short," Luke contradicted him. "I know you'll go far. Who knows? You might even enter the personal guard of the noble families."

"You are exaggerating now," Bruce laughed. "He must really become a hero to get there."

"You'll understand later," Martha whispered, and Khan limited himself to nod.

Martha didn't bother to address the rumors. She knew that her words wouldn't change her friends' opinion, so she limited herself to finish her meal and leave with Khan.

Khan could go to the prisons of the camp right away since Professor Norwell had exempted him from her lessons. However, he had to take the training program for his element that day, which would inevitably delay his meeting with Lieutenant Dyester.

Professor Norwell wouldn't arrive in the camp's main building right after lunch, so Khan had some time to kill with Martha. The girl took the chance to walk him through the menus of the phone, and Khan happily discovered that the network of the Global Army was fairly easy to use.

'A large group made of ten representatives from the noble families and one hundred diplomats from the other families govern Earth,' Khan read on his phone. 'The ten noble representatives rarely change due to their privileged position, while the others can vary depending on the political influence of each minor family.'

The explanation on the network was short and lacked many details, but Khan could gain a general idea of how the Global Army administered Earth.

Martha explained how the number of spots for each minor family depended on the achievements of their members. They changed every year, and the ten noble representatives handled that decision.

"The noble families have a lot of influence," Martha revealed. "Building a connection with one of them is the dream of every soldier. They basically have unlimited power on Earth, so even creating a family from scratch wouldn't be a problem once you gain their favor."

"That seems complicated," Khan sighed. "I only want to explore the universe. I hope I don't need to be politically active for that."

"Humankind isn't at war anymore," Martha laughed. "Every soldier has political interests. Their priority is to settle and build a decent foundation for their children."

"Do you have the same ideas?" Khan asked when he heard Martha's superficial tone.

"I need to elevate my family's status and bring it out of poverty," Martha explained. "I'm not willing to resort to political marriages to do that, so I need to serve in dangerous planets and gain merits."

"How did humanity stop feeling curious about the universe?" Khan asked while looking at a random spot in the distance.

"Humanity has always evolved through wars," Martha scoffed. "Maybe we'll go back to who we were during the First Impact if you find a new enemy."

That topic didn't lead anywhere, and the duo eventually decided to meditate while Khan waited for Professor Norwell's arrival.

The alarm rang and awakened the two, but Martha limited herself to exchange a few words before going back to her meditation. She didn't need to see Professor Norwell, and Khan would head for the prisons of the camp afterward anyway.

Khan reached the basement of the main building in an instant. Excitement had started to build inside him as he approached the meeting with Professor Norwell. She would finally grant him access to magic, and he felt restless about it.

"You are early," Professor Norwell said when she noticed Khan standing in front of the basement.

"I'm excited," Khan honestly revealed.

"I would tone down that feeling," Professor Norwell suggested while taking out a small casket from her bag. "This is only an initial training program. It will teach you the basics of your element and one easy spell, but nothing more."

Khan's excitement disregarded those words. It continued to fill his mind and forced his eyes to remain glued on the casket.

"You'll understand soon," Professor Norwell announced. "I suspect that Lieutenant Dyester has already warned you about your element."

Khan lowered his head to mask his confusion, but he quickly wore a faint smile that fooled the Professor. Lieutenant Dyester didn't mention anything specific about the chaos element. Khan had learnt about some of the hindrances through Martha.

"How did you learn about Lieutenant Dyester and me?" Khan asked while Professor Norwell handed him the casket.

"The Global Army pays a great deal of attention to potential talents," Professor Norwell revealed before winking at him. "And it's hard to hide something inside the training camp. I've also heard the rumors about the Weesso girl and you. Nice catch, kid."

Professor Norwell didn't linger in the corridor any longer and entered the basement. The metal door of the room closed and began to reflect Khan's speechless figure.

'Why does everyone think that we are in a relationship?' Khan wondered. 'I guess they have too much time to kill. I wouldn't even know how to put a girlfriend into my current schedule.'

Khan soon put those thoughts in the back of his mind before running toward the prisons of the camp. The trapdoor opened as soon as he stepped on the familiar lawn, and Lieutenant Dyester greeted him with the usual fuming cigarette in his mouth.

"You are late today," Lieutenant Dyester snorted before moving his eyes on the casket in Khan's grasp. "Did you take a look at the mage training yet?"

Khan shook his head, and Lieutenant Dyester promptly pointed at a spot on the table. Khan placed the casket there and unlocked it before lifting its lid.

A dark red fabric that featured purple shades covered the insides of the casket, and a tiny disk occupied its center. Khan glanced at Lieutenant Dyester before picking the item when the soldier nodded, and a small knife soon appeared on his shoulder.

Khan picked the knife and bound the disk before placing it on his phone. The device absorbed the item and added a new magic device to the specific menu.

'Chaos element for beginners,' Khan read on the phone before pressing the icon.

Holograms quickly came out of the phone, but Khan immediately noticed that they had fewer details than the Lightning-demon style's training program. They even had fewer options and only a tenth of the lessons.

"They don't even give credit to the Professor," Lieutenant Dyester snorted after inspecting the holograms.

Khan shrugged his shoulders before pressing on the first lesson. The holograms morphed and transformed into a human figure that had vague facial features. The images appeared damaged, but Lieutenant Dyester explained that the program was simply old.

"Welcome to the basic training for the chaos element, unlucky fella," The slightly mechanical voice of a man came out of the phone. "First of all, my condolences for your Tainted status."

Chapter 34 - Viral

Khan glanced toward Lieutenant Dyester while stopping the recording, and the latter showed a confused expression.

"How does he know about my Tainted status?" Khan asked.

Khan knew that Tainted humans could inherit the chaos element, but he believed that some would have it without the Nak's influence.

"The chaos element isn't natural for humans," Lieutenant Dyester explained. "The only ones who can have it without the influence of the Nak's are sons and daughters of Tainted men and women. I thought you knew that."

Khan shook his head, but he let go of the matter and played the recording.

"Mages usually require specific emotions and thoughts to turn the mana inside their brain into spells," The mechanical voice continued. "Elements have different features, so our minds need to enhance them to summon the magic properties of our energy."

Lieutenant Dyester nodded and added a few lines to that explanation. "The fire element needs thoughts like heat, fire, and other similar ideas. The emotions can be anger, jealousy, and those that share the same recklessness."

"The chaos element doesn't have any of that," The man in the hologram suddenly said. "This power is something that originally belonged to creatures made of mana. The Nak don't have to think or feel about deploying their power. They only have to desire it, and the mana autonomously takes the intended shape."

The explanation made sense. Both Khan and Dyester remained silent as they did their best to learn as much as possible from the training program.

"The chaos element is also unstable," The mechanical voice continued. "It will try to oppose your commands, and it will use every slip-up to escape your control. Only the steadiest minds can learn how to turn this energy into spells without risking their lives."

Khan scratched his head, and Lieutenant Dyester revealed a helpless expression. The latter knew that controlling the chaos element was hard, but he didn't believe it to be far harsher than the other elements. After all, they didn't try to fight their user.

"I can't teach you much," The man in the hologram explained. "I dare to say that no other chaos wielder can do that. Every mage with this element has to find a personal path, which mostly requires years of training."

"Don't tell me that he won't teach me anything at all," Khan scoffed.

"That shouldn't be the case," Lieutenant Dyester replied, and the training program soon proved him right.

"However," The hologram continued, "There are a few key points that those with the chaos element must pursue. This training program will teach you many exercises to improve your sensitivity to mana and control over that energy. Also, it will have a simple spell at the end. I suggest you don't try it until you have completed all the previous steps."

Khan's mood improved after hearing those words, and Lieutenant Dyester even patted his shoulder to reassure him. Then, the duo exchanged a meaningful glance before Khan scrolled through the lessons and selected the last one.

"I see that you have mastered all the exercises," The man in the program exclaimed. "You have reached the level of sensitivity and control required to learn your first spell. Pay attention now."

The vague figure of the man gained a few details, and stats even appeared around him. Khan and Lieutenant Dyester could read the amount of mana required for the spell and a few examples of thoughts that have worked to activate it.

The man raised his palm, and a sizzling noise came out of the phone. The hologram showed waves of energy coming out of the soldier's hand, but Khan couldn't understand much without the usual training dummy placed as an example.

The hologram seemed to hear his thoughts, and a training dummy quickly appeared in front of the man. The soldier placed his palm on the puppet before activating the spell again, and the images suddenly became vague for an instant.

The images stabilized after a second, and Khan could see that the dummy was in pieces. Only the small stick that supported its metal figure had remained in its place. Everything else had crumbled during the spell.

"The chaos element always causes problems with the recording devices," The man revealed after straightening his position. "Only top-tier gear can get a proper footage of chaos spells, but a few frames end up disappearing anyway."

Khan quickly tinkered with the recording to reveal all the stats recorded during the spell, and Lieutenant Dyester studied them to give a professional opinion.

"The sheer destructive power is great considering the small amount of mana required to activate the spell," The Lieutenant announced. "I can't say the same about the other requirements."

Khan didn't take much to understand what Lieutenant Dyester meant. The notes next to the spell were quite vague. They indicated a few thoughts and different movements of the mana that could lead to the same effect.

The program seemed to be sure only about one stat. Khan could read that the spell required the complete absence of emotions during the casting.

"It won't be easy to achieve that level of control," Lieutenant Dyester commented when he read that detail. "Can you even think without feeling? It will take you a while to master that part."

Khan reactivated the lesson to ignore the feelings that were surging in his mind.

"This spell is called Wave," The man resumed his explanation. "It can virtually pierce any material, be it metal, human flesh, or alien skin. Chaos has the best destructive potential among the elements, but it often ends up hurting the user. Your previous exercises were necessary to avoid that outcome."

The recording ended at that point, and Khan scrolled the program back to the initial lessons to count them. He could see twelve exercises meant to enhance his control and sensitivity to mana, and their difficulty increased as they neared the spell.

"You can drop my mental exercises to focus on this training," Lieutenant Dyester announced while sitting on the steps of the staircase. "They mostly have the same purpose. These even seem more advanced than mine, which only proves how hard it is to control the chaos element."

"Everyone will have fireballs and other cool stuff while I'll remain stuck at mental exercises," Khan sighed before turning off the hologram and activating the Lightning-demon style's training program.

"The other kids will also have it hard," Lieutenant Dyester replied while lighting another cigarette. "They'll probably learn to cast spells before you, but that's the very reason behind your martial art."

Khan revealed a confused expression, and the Lieutenant exploded into a laugh.

"Why do you think I've contacted the higher-ups?" Lieutenant Dyester laughed. "You needed something good to compensate for your element. The Lightning-demon style even focuses on speed, so you'll be able to reach most of your peers before they finish preparing their spells."

Khan remained speechless for a second. Lieutenant Dyester had already considered everything. His experience had allowed him to understand Khan's flaws and find solutions before even starting the training.

"I don't know what to say," Khan honestly whispered.

"I don't want words," Lieutenant Dyester snorted. "Pay me back in blood and sweat. Come on! You have been an entire week on the basic footwork without showing any result. I want at least fifty perfect executions before your ankles start to give up!"

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Time inside the training camp moved quickly. The lessons and the many projects filled everyone's routines and left them with virtually no free time. Only those who slacked on their training had the chance to enjoy the beauty of their youth.

The end of the third week signaled the arrival of new lessons. The Global Army couldn't teach only subjects related to mana since it had to give a complete education to its recruits, so a few unrelated courses began to appear.

Khan had to attend lessons featuring general science, anatomy, chemistry, engineering, and other subjects that could lead the recruits toward specific courses once the second semester started.

Most of the advanced courses required a mixture of those subjects, so the recruits needed to gain a clear idea before choosing what to do in the second semester. They would still be in time to change their lessons later on, but it was wise to get them right the first time.

It was rare for unusual events to happen inside the training camp. The Global Army wanted everything to be perfect for the recruits, and that required a stable routine.

The recruits didn't need stress or other external influences since they had to focus on their training. The first semester wouldn't even feature tests for that very reason. Everything had to exist for the sole purpose of creating good soldiers.

The attunement with mana of some of the recruits from the special class inevitably reached twenty percent as the days passed. Those kids could finally start the real part of their education, and Khan's social life vanished at that point.

Khan continued to see Martha, Luke, and the others during the morning lessons, but all of them gained full schedules after their attunement reached the intended level. Masters from Ylaco even arrived in the training camp and began to follow their respective disciples to teach martial arts and spells.

Khan went through solitary days that consisted of many hours of training and Lieutenant Dyester's shouts. He didn't mind that routine, but his mood inevitably suffered from the endless pile of exercises he had to repeat every day. Only his steady improvements allowed him to remain sane.

The lessons seemed to follow a cycle. The Global Army alternated one month of subjects connected to mana with one month of general knowledge.

The cycle then restarted, featuring the same lessons that went over more specific subjects. For example, "history of mana" would analyze the many families that had stood out during specific periods after the First Impact.

Khan often decided to download some lessons on his phone, and his device eventually became a pile of information that he could review whenever he had doubts about certain subjects.

Memorizing everything in mere weeks was impossible, especially since the army wanted the recruits to focus on their training with mana. Their instruction was secondary, and only those interested in pursuing a career in some subjects would divide their time into both parts.

Some recruits still decided to use part of their days to hang out with friends or flirt around. They inevitably sacrificed their growth to enjoy their youth, but most of them ignored that aspect of their training since they aimed for eventual infusions of synthetic mana.

A few recruits had fallen behind their peers in the special class, leading them to go back to the normal courses. Distress and anger inevitably built inside those boys and girls, and their desire to work harder ended up vanishing due to their failures.

That mood led some of them to make bad decisions to vent their anger and regain some form of superiority inside the training camp. It was hard for some of the wealthiest kids to be considered inferior to poorer recruits, so they felt the need to re-establish the chain of command.

"Are you sure that we won't suffer any repercussions for this?" Bloke Seylor asked while Samuel and the other two bullies stood behind him.

A girl was sitting in front of them on the steps that led to a dormitory. Two girls were behind her, and the three of them were watching the video of Khan kicking the four bullies on the groin.

"How could you let this go for almost three months?" Alison Blackdell asked.

"He rarely is alone," Bloke replied. "We have followed him at night from time to time, but he always returns home late. We would risk breaking the curfew to attack him."

"Lieutenant Dyester is also his Master," One of the bullies added. "He will never let us go if we did something to his disciple."

"I don't care how you do it," Alison Blackdell snorted. "I can't allow a boy from the Slums to remain in the special class when I'm not there. I couldn't do anything when the Cobsend kid was around him, but everything should be easier now that everyone is busy training."

"I think we should ignore Khan," Samuel eventually said. "I didn't think you could develop muscles so quickly. He honestly scares me."

"You four are still struggling to reach twenty percent attunement!" Alison snorted. "You also have grudges with the kid who dared to compare me to a hooker. You can choose to gain synthetic mana and my protection or see this video going viral. The choice is yours."

Chapter 35 - Vibe

Ambushing recruits inside the training camp was hard. Drones patrolled the streets non-stop, and groups of boys and girls often occupied the various parks and benches.

Some of the older recruits even ran from one building to another at random hours. It was almost impossible to find someone completely alone.

"Does he ever get tired?" Bloke asked his three friends.

The four bullies had gathered in the corner of the fence that surrounded Khan's dormitory. Professor Norwell's lesson had ended just a few minutes ago, so the curfew would still take a few hours to arrive.

The group had the time to plan their ambush, but Khan's tight schedule made it almost impossible to find the right moment. He had never changed his habits during those months, but that consistency didn't help the bullies.

"I told you countless times already," Samuel complained. "He comes back late and starts to meditate. I swear. I've never seen someone training so often."

"He must sleep or show an opening at some point," Duke, one of the bullies, said.

"I have been in the same flat for almost three months," Samuel continued, "But I've never seen him sleeping. That guy is a damned robot!"

"How much can someone even learn in three months?" Kyle, the other bully, said. "He has been the first to push his attunement to twenty percent, but martial arts are something entirely different. I bet he can't use them in battle."

"He will still be stronger than us," Samuel added, hoping that his friends would change their minds. "He has spent more than two months with attunement above twenty percent, while we have yet to reach that stage. We can't match his physical prowess."

"You don't need to remind me about my attunement," Bloke snorted. "I would have already reached twenty percent if I weren't still growing! Also, these damned mandatory lessons leave us drained. How can anyone even meditate in these conditions?"

The three bullies looked at Bloke, and the group exchanged meaningful glances. They were aware that they were lying to themselves, but that was better than accepting the truth.

Their cores weren't exceptional, but their routine didn't help their training either. The four boys had spent their time outside the lessons sleeping or hitting on girls. They even had the chance to bully some of the poorer kids.

In their minds, the four bullies believed that their families would fix their power through synthetic mana. Yet, they didn't expect that the complete disregard for their training would have put them in a situation when they couldn't use that energy.

The bullies' attunement had to reach twenty percent to use the synthetic mana. Their failure to achieve that result in almost three months had forced their families to reconsider their priorities.

The synthetic mana was expensive, and its price rose exponentially depending on its quality. The four bullies had decently wealthy families behind them, but they were losing their claims on that energy due to their lack of progress.

After all, the families could always wait a few years for a better descendant. Using good synthetic mana on recruits who couldn't even bother to meditate was a waste since it probably wouldn't lead to decent achievements.

The families had to produce results to obtain spots in the government of Earth, so balancing their expenses on their descendants was an essential part of their financial and political experience.

Samuel and his friends clearly weren't good material. Their current performance showed that they wouldn't seize any merits for their families. They were a bad investment.

However, everything would change if they managed to get their hands on synthetic mana on their own. The four bullies could make up for the time lost during the initial months in the camp and generate wealth for their families.

The only hindrance in that plan was the hardworking and astute Khan.

"I still think that this is a bad plan," Samuel almost begged his friends. "Why don't we all start meditating? I bet we can hit twenty percent in two weeks if we work hard."

"We will pass the third month in two weeks," Bloke replied. "Our families will never believe in our talent."

"Face it, Samuel," Duke continued. "We messed up. Getting the help of the Blackdell family is the only way to regain some credit."

"Our families might even reward us if we establish a decent relationship with Alison," Kyle added. "The Blackdell family has connections with the noble families. We have the chance to hit the jackpot here."

Samuel bit his lower lip. He didn't like the plan, but there seemed to be no way out of his situation. His friends didn't share his worries because they didn't see Khan as often as him. Samuel had studied his roommate in the last months, and he had been one of the few witnesses of his transformation.

"Alison isn't a patient girl," Bloke eventually announced. "We should prepare our ambush soon. I think that attacking at night is our only option."

"Sunday then," Duke added. "That's the only day when Khan goes back to his dormitory slightly earlier than usual."

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Khan was completely unaware that the bullies from the first week were planning to ambush him. He had even started to forget about them since his training occupied the entirety of his days.

His demeanor had changed during the last months. The exercises for his element had forced him to develop a firm control over his thoughts and emotions, and his face showed his improvements.

Moreover, the relentless training with the Lightning-demon style had removed every trace of fat from his body, giving him a slender body that hid firm muscles.

Khan didn't do anything special during the past months. He had only alternated the morning lessons to the various exercises featured in his two training programs.

The training program for the chaos element had made his expression grow aloof since most of its exercises forced him to separate his emotions from his thoughts. Khan's mind had grown sharper, but his face now lacked its previous vitality.

Still, his new mindset had ended up benefitting the training in the Lightning-demon style. Khan could focus harder on his martial art since his mind had grown far more resilient, and his emotionless thoughts had even given him a few advantages during the practice of the various moves.

'I should be able to succeed in the fifth lesson tonight,' Khan sighed as he walked back toward his dormitory. 'Then, I have to master it before moving to the sixth. Dammit. I still have seven exercises to complete before the Wave spell.'

It was the Sunday night before the change of the lessons. The Global Army would resume teaching general subjects unrelated to mana starting from the next week, and that trend would last until the end of the fourth month.

Khan's mood was quite poor due to that event. He couldn't help but find the subjects related to mana far more interesting. He would rather have an entire month of Professor Conche than following math and other boring lessons four hours a day.

'I'll definitely pick xenolinguistics and politics,' Khan thought as he crossed the familiar streets that separated him from his dormitory. 'I probably need to add something else, but I still have three months and missions before the second semester.'

Khan had started to gain an idea of what he wanted to become in the Global Army. Remaining a simple soldier that patrolled dangerous planets was a decent option, but he had found a better one thanks to Martha's help.

The Global Army needed ambassadors to handle the relationships with the alien races. Those political figures could travel from planet to planet easily, and eventual scouting parties even required their presence.

It was the perfect job for someone who wanted free access to the map of the universe and priority over interplanetary travels. Also, that role would prevent Khan from becoming a simple pawn in the hands of his superiors.

Becoming an ambassador would even give Khan merits helpful in the political ladder. He didn't care about his rank in the army, but he didn't forget Lieutenant Dyester's words either. He had to become a Colonel to gain access to the classified files about the First Impact.

The path was still long, and Khan had yet to understand all the requirements for that political role, but having a goal helped him. He didn't feel like a foreigner anymore after setting his eyes on a target. He had become like the other recruits who wanted to become someone inside the army.

Khan checked his phone. It was already half past nine, and a sigh inevitably escaped his mouth.

'My body has become used to the Lightning-demon style,' Khan thought as his dormitory appeared in the distance. 'I barely need lotions anymore, and I can endure a full day of training even on Sunday.'

Lieutenant Dyester was a severe Master, and Khan was a dedicated disciple. He never skipped a training session, and he always tried to push his limits.

Khan had basically convinced himself that the wealthy kids would surpass him if he dared to go easy on his training. Losing his spot as a talented recruit would close the doors opened by Professor Norwell, which he wanted to keep open.

Maintaining the halo of the talented recruit from the Slums could help him becoming an ambassador, and Khan didn't want to lose that chance. Also, remaining without any clear affiliation would increase his value once offers from other families appeared. Khan only had to hold on to his status until he became a first-level warrior.

Of course, Khan didn't think about that on his own. Martha had to walk him through that scheme. It was nothing too complicated, but Khan still felt like a stranger to the political environment.

A strange sensation eventually hit Khan's mind. He felt a peculiar fluctuation coming from a dark area in the park next to the end of the street.

His sensitivity to mana had increased after the training for the chaos element. Khan felt sure that something that contained mana was behind the bushes and trees near the end of the street.

'Robots?' Khan thought, but he quickly disregarded that idea.

Some of the robots inside the training camp contained mana that Khan could sense. However, the sensation coming from behind the bush and trees was different. He even felt a familiar vibe.

'Is that Samuel?' Khan wondered.

His sensitivity to mana wasn't exceptional. It was the best among the recruits but still weak compared to proper soldiers. Yet, he had slept in the same room with Samuel for the past three months, so he couldn't fail to recognize his vibe.

Chapter 36 - Minutes

'What is he even doing here?' Khan wondered before recalling the many glances and peeks of his roommate. 'Did they finally decide to make me pay for the scuffle from the first week?'

Khan could sense that Samuel wasn't alone. His ability didn't allow him to understand how many recruits were hiding in the darkness, but his knowledge could fill those gaps.

'They should still be under twenty percent of attunement,' Khan thought while stopping his tracks in the middle of the street. 'Martha told me that they have started to hang out with the three harpies now that I think about it.'

The gossips were one of the best forms of entertainment inside the training camp. Martha, Luke, Bruce, and the occasional friends from the special class who ate with Khan often talked about the other recruits. Alison Blackdell came out often since her demotion to the normal course had been quite a scandal.

Khan couldn't make the connection between the four bullies and the three harpies. He considered the possibility that the three girls had enhanced the bully's anger, but he couldn't imagine that the latter were trying to ambush him due to a threat.

Still, his failure in understanding the true reason behind the ambush didn't change his situation. Khan had to deal with the four bullies, and the clock was ticking. He only had twenty-eight minutes before the curfew.

Khan suppressed a smirk as he laid his back on a street lamp and took out his phone. He pretended to browse through the menus, but his eyes never left the clock.

Minutes passed, but Khan didn't move. The clock inevitably reached twenty to ten pm, but he remained at ease.

Khan needed less than ten minutes to reach his dormitory with his running speed. Moreover, only Samuel lived in the same block. The other bullies' flats were elsewhere in the camp, so their time was running out.

'They must do something in the next five minutes,' Khan thought while keeping his eyes on the phone. 'No recruit dares to break the curfew.'

The bullies proved Khan wrong. Five minutes passed, but they remained hidden in the darkness. None of them seemed willing to move.

'What are they waiting for?' Khan wondered. 'Are they willing to drag me down with them? I have only busted their balls a few times, and that was three months ago!'

The ambush began to resemble a suicidal plan as time continued to flow. Khan almost considered the possibility that the bullies had fallen asleep in the park when only thirteen minutes separated him from the curfew. However, he didn't dare to underestimate the boys.

'Do they think that their families will get them out of eventual punishments?' Khan wondered. 'My Master is the damned Lieutenant in charge of the prisons! How can they fail to consider something like that?'

Khan used another minute to consider every possible option. The plan didn't make sense unless the bullies had access to some influential figure inside the Global Army who could override Lieutenant Dyester's authority.

'They do have wealthy backgrounds,' Khan eventually considered in his mind. 'Bloke couldn't stop mentioning his father in the prisons, and Samuel's family has already prepared synthetic mana for him. Maybe they can make Lieutenant Dyester powerless.'

Khan had no proof to back his worries, but he wouldn't dare to risk breaking the curfew. Yet, the situation would only worsen if he ignored the bullies completely. He couldn't even touch Samuel inside the flat due to the harsher regulations connected to that type of aggression.

'Eleven minutes to the curfew,' Khan thought while putting his phone back in the pocket of his trousers. 'I would have wasted the last three months if I couldn't deal with them in three minutes.'

Khan wore an aloof expression as he left the street lamp and resumed his walk back to the dormitory. He stepped into the dark area after a few seconds, but the bullies didn't move yet.

'Did they really fall asleep?' Khan wondered without stopping his walk.

A few faint steps eventually resounded behind him when he crossed the end of the street. The presences sensed by his mind drew near and reached his back in an instant.

'I need to let them attack first,' Khan sighed in his mind before closing his eyes and clenching his teeth to prepare for the imminent blows.

His arms casually covered the back of his head before sharp pain spread from four different spots. The bullies had hit Khan's forearms, back, and legs with something other than their punches.

Khan jumped forward to avoid losing his balance. He turned as soon as his feet stepped on the street, and his swift movement allowed him to face the bullies before they could catch up with him.

The dim light radiated by a nearby streetlamp allowed Khan to see the faint figures of the four bullies. He recognized Bloke, Samuel, and the other two boys from the first week. They were all wielding long bats made of cheap alloy.

The bats were already swinging toward Khan. He didn't have much time to react. He could leap backward to dodge the incoming attacks, but that would only prolong the battle.

Khan pointed his right foot before twisting his ankle and performing an anticlockwise rotation. His left leg rose while following his body, and his left feet soon met Duke's shoulder.

A cracking noise came out of Duke's shoulder. The boy didn't have the time to complete his attack, and the impact lifted him from the ground as it pushed him away.

Meanwhile, three bats landed on Khan's side and threatened to push him to the ground. However, he endured the pain and completed his form.

Khan's right arm shot forward when his leg touched the ground. He rotated his ankles and waist to fill his hook with incredible momentum.

His punch reached Kyle's jaw, and a cracking noise resounded after the impact. A few teeth also flew out of his mouth as the boy rotated on himself and fell.

Only Samuel and Bloke remained on their feet, and the two boys couldn't help but glance at their companions. Kyle had fainted, and blood was flowing out of his mouth. Instead, Duke was crouching on the ground two meters behind them, and whimpers resounded from his figure as he held his left shoulder.

Khan flowed directly into another attack. He bent his legs before leaping forward while rising his knee. Bloke promptly defended his chest with his bat, but his eyes widened when he saw his weapon curving and obtaining a V-shaped form.

Samuel swung his bat toward Khan, but the latter blocked it with his arm. Then, Khan wrapped his hand around the boy's arm, and his body began to rotate as he waited for his right leg to touch the ground.

Khan rotated his feet as soon as it touched the ground. The technique filled his body with momentum and gave his raised left leg enough power to reach Samuel's ear.

The boy lost his balance and let go of the bat, but he clung to Khan's arm before falling to the ground. Bloke exploited that chance to swing his oddly-shaped bat toward Khan's head, but the latter raised his arm to protect himself.

Bloke didn't stop attacking, and Samuel did his best to remain gripped on Khan's arm. The latter couldn't move freely with that weight disrupting his balance, but he never lowered his arms.

Bloke suddenly felt unable to move his weapon. Fear filled his face when he saw that Khan had managed to grab the bat during the last swing.

The boy quickly let go of his weapon and took a step back. His good reaction allowed him to dodge a kick aimed at his stomach, and a tinge of determination appeared on his face when he studied Khan's situation.

Samuel was still hanging from Khan's arm, and the latter had to risk his balance to deliver his kick. Khan was standing on a single leg while enduring Samuel's weight. It was the perfect moment to push him to the ground.

Bloke jumped forward and wrapped his arms around Khan's neck. He used the entirety of his body in a desperate attempt to make his opponent fall, but astonishment filled his mind when he noticed that Khan managed to endure the blow.

Khan had Samuel hanging from his right arm, and Bloke clung to his neck, but he didn't falter. His legs could endure the additional weight. He didn't even sway when the two boys struggled to push him backward.

Khan grabbed the back of Bloke's uniform and pulled. The boy did his best to push his waist back on Khan's chest, but a sharp pain suddenly spread from his groin.

A sense of weakness filled Bloke. He let go of his opponent and slid on Khan's knee while falling toward the ground. Khan had raised his leg when Bloke tried to wrap himself around his chest, and his groin ended up hitting the knee.

Khan turned toward Samuel at that point. The boy had basically fainted. He was continuing to hang from Khan's arm out of pure willpower

'What a waste of determination,' Khan couldn't help but think as he threw a kick on Samuel's chest and flung him away.

The battle had been messy, but Khan had successfully defeated his four opponents. Moreover, he had deployed part of the footwork learnt from the Lightning-demon style, and that feat left him happy.

"You lose," Bloke weakly said while covering his groin. "You will break the curfew."

Khan promptly drew the phone from his pocket. The device informed him that the curfew would arrive in less than seven minutes. He was late, and even running might not solve the issue.

'Why are they so confident about the punishments?' Khan wondered when he noticed Bloke's satisfied smile.

The boys definitely had something in store for Khan, but he didn't know what to expect. Yet, he wouldn't risk finding it out.

'I can only pull it off one out six times,' Khan thought as he closed his eyes and bent his legs. 'I also need to prepare for thirty seconds. Still, I don't see other options.'

Bloke's smile froze when he noticed Khan's serious expression. The boy kept his eyes closed and performed deep breaths as his legs slid on the street.

Then, Bloke blinked, and confusion appeared on his face when he reopened his eyes. Khan had disappeared. Bloke didn't even hear his steps.

Chapter 37 - Sliding

Everything was vague in Khan's vision. The darkness of the night fused with the dim lights of the streetlamps to create a strange spectacle that dried his eyes.

Khan tried to keep his eyes open, but a burning sensation forced them to close them every time he failed to control his body. His skin also hurt as the friction with the air scarred the flesh that his uniform didn't cover.

The faint image of a building suddenly appeared in Khan's vision. It disappeared in the next second since his eyes closed, but he still planted his feet on the ground to stop his incredible momentum.

The same burning sensation that afflicted his skin began to spread on his feet. Khan gritted his teeth, but he lost his balance and fell to the ground.

Khan kept his eyes closed as his body slowed down. His back began to hurt, but that sensation vanished once he stopped sliding on the ground.

His eyes opened and struggled to focus on his surroundings. Khan blinked many times to regain his vision, and the world slowly lost its blurriness.

The fence that encircled the dormitory soon became clear. Khan even noticed two soldiers standing on the sides of the gate and shooting confused stares toward him.

A satisfied smile appeared on Khan's face when he glanced at the clock hanging on the side of the gate. The curfew would still take three minutes to arrive. He had reached his destination on time.

"Do we need to call the medical bay?" One of the soldiers asked when Khan pointed his hands on the ground and struggled to stand up.

Khan's condition was far from ideal. His face, neck, and hands featured multiple scarred patches of skin. The sole of his shoes had also vanished during the abrupt stop, and the ground had torn his uniform.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," Khan promptly said while wearing a fake smile and limping through the gate.

His feet hurt whenever they touched the ground, but he only cared about returning to his flat. Khan had stored a few lotions during those three months, so he wouldn't have to skip his usual training to visit a doctor.

The two soldiers followed Khan with their eyes before disregarding the matter. The clock soon marked ten pm, and the gate closed on its own. The easiest part of their job had finally arrived.

'I'm still far away from a complete mastery of this technique,' Khan complained in his mind as he entered his flat and crouched to take a few lotions from under his bed. 'Still, this move is great. I can't wait to learn how to deploy it in battle.'

His mind played the images of the fight against the four bullies while he applied the lotion on his scarred skin. Khan could see how inexperienced he was in that type of battle. His moves were good, but they had yet to become natural. Moreover, he often mixed them with random attacks.

The images then reached his last technique. Khan could finally understand what Dean Ulluw meant during his explanation of the Lightning-demon style. Expressing more power wasn't an issue. The problem was that the human body wasn't always able to endure it.

His scarred flesh proved how dangerous mana could be if deployed incorrectly. Khan had only performed the simplest sprint of the Lightning-demon style to reach the dormitory, but he didn't calculate how much mana he had to use.

It was clear that his body still couldn't endure that speed. Also, the execution of the technique wasn't completely perfect, especially during its end.

'Mana is so dangerous,' Khan sighed in his mind as he put the lotion under his bed, 'But it's so damn cool. How fast did I even go? Those bullies couldn't even do anything against me. I could break their bones with a few blows!'

Khan was excited about the path ahead, but he suppressed that emotion when he recalled his schedule. He still had his mental training and the usual meditation to complete.

'Fifth lesson here I come,' Khan shouted in his mind as he crossed his legs on the bed and focused his attention on the insides of his brain.

His brain contained a few azure specks of light, and Khan focused on the largest. His mind went blank as a few simple thoughts filled him and forced the mana to transform.

The small azure sphere split. It divided itself into two dots before repeating the process and creating four identical specks. Then, Khan imagined a series of invisible hands pinching their edges and giving them a different shape.

The spheres slowly stretched to transform into dimmer hexagons. Thin lines grew inside their edges until they reached the opposite sides. Then, more branches grew and tried to give birth to an intricate figure.

The theory behind the mental exercises of the training program for his element was rather simple. Khan had to manipulate the mana inside his brain to shape it in the form of intricate diagrams.

The execution of those exercises was far harder. The training program forced Khan to increase the number of diagrams every time he stepped on the next lessons.

The first lesson only saw one diagram, but the third already wanted two of them. The fifth required four, and the seventh would need six of them.

Everything had to culminate in the eleventh lesson, where Khan had to create ten diagrams. The process also had to happen at the same time. He couldn't handle the different figures separately.

Learning how to manage different diagrams at the same time was a hellish process, but the training program didn't end there. Every even lesson forced Khan to repeat the previous exercise without involving emotions, which was far more difficult than it sounded.

Khan shaped the diagrams as described by the training program and kept them in that state for a few seconds before doing the backward process. He dismantled those figures and returned them to their original form of a single speck of azure light.

'Again,' Khan faintly thought before repeating the exercise.

The training program required Khan to repeat the exercise five times in a row without mistakes to claim complete mastery. He could proceed on the next lesson only after meeting those standards, and he planned to succeed that night.

Khan started to reshape the mana again, and his second execution succeeded. The third also went well, but his speed diminished when he approached the fourth.

His mind began to feel tired and sloppy, but Khan pressed on. He didn't want to find justifications that night. The pain that filled his body couldn't reach him in that state. He had to succeed because he was dying to reach the Wave spell.

Khan completed the fourth execution before moving to the fifth. He felt on the verge of falling asleep, but his control didn't waver. Growing each line on the diagrams took far more time, but that wasn't a good reason to stop.

It took an entire hour to complete the fifth execution, but Khan didn't lose control for even an instant. He built the diagrams before dismantling them one last time and opening his eyes. His back

inevitably landed on his bed when the process was over, and an intense sense of weakness filled his body and mind.

However, excitement raged in his mind. He could finally move to the sixth lesson. He had reached the halfway point before the Wave spell.

'It's already one am,' Khan thought when he glanced at his phone. 'Doing one hour of meditation will only make me more tired tomorrow morning. I should let my body recover tonight.'

The fifth lesson of the chaos element's training had taken far longer than Khan had predicted, so he set the alarm and closed his eyes. He didn't even glance at the empty top bunk on the other side of the room. He knew his roommate wouldn't come home that night.

The nightmare arrived as usual. Khan went back in time and relived the Second Impact. His mental training had allowed him to develop a unique coldness toward those images, but the long scene annoyed him anyway.

Yet, a sudden noise interrupted the nightmare and awakened Khan. His eyes immediately went on his phone, and a confused expression appeared on his face when he noticed that it was still four am.

The noise then resounded again. It spread through the entire flat and made some of the walls tremble. Khan inspected the event from his bed, but he eventually heard a few knocks on his door.

'Did I get into some trouble?' Khan wondered as he stood up and opened the door.

The two soldiers that patrolled the dormitory were standing in front of their flat. The duo wore severe expressions as they waved their phones and confirmed Khan's identity.

"Why didn't you answer your doorbell?" One of the soldiers asked.

"I didn't even know this flat had a doorbell," Khan honestly replied.

"Where were you tonight?" The second soldier asked.

"I went to the prisons of the camp to train with Lieutenant Dyester," Khan explained. "Then you saw me sliding on my back when I returned to the dormitory."

"We indeed saw you," The first soldier continued. "Only mana can create that acceleration. Do you know that it's forbidden to deploy mana outside of training rooms or without supervision?"

"I'm sorry, sir," Khan scratched his head. "I must correct you. The regulations of the Global Army forbid the use of mana to attack other recruits, but it doesn't say anything about training in the open, especially in isolated spots."

Both soldiers remained speechless, and one of them even browsed through the menus of his phone to find the regulations.

"The technique didn't even have offensive purposes," Khan continued. "It was an enhanced sprint meant to make me reach the dormitory on time. I was only trying to be a good recruit, sir."

Khan didn't share his father's stubbornness. He could continue to pretend even when the soldiers had clearly missed the mark.

The soldier found the regulations and showed them to his companion. Khan was right. He didn't break the rules with his last sprint.

"What can you tell me about this?" The second man asked while activating a few holograms on his phone.

Khan saw the battle against the bullies. He didn't feel surprised that the robots around the camps had recorded it, but he still didn't see anything wrong with it.

"They ambushed me," Khan explained while studying the battle. "It was self-defense."

"The tape is currently under investigation," The first soldier said. "You have been involved in two fights in only three months. I hope you don't mind if we pay more attention to you from now on."

"Not at all, sir," Khan continued with his act, but his eyes remained glued to the holograms. "You are just doing your work. I'm happy to comply to improve the situation in the camp. By the way, can I have this tape?"

Chapter_38 - Mistakes

"A broken shoulder, a shattered jaw, a pierced eardrum, a few cracked ribs, and other minor injuries," Lieutenant Dyester read on his phone while Khan prepared the holograms for his usual training. "They will be out for two entire weeks even if Doctor Parket personally oversees their recovery."

"They seemed desperate," Khan commented. "I don't want to say good things about them, but they shouldn't be so stupid to attack me after three months of training."

Lieutenant Dyester stepped off the wall and neared Khan to inspect his injuries. The lotions had done a great job on the scarred skin, but he still had a few marks on his face.

The injuries caused by his sprint couldn't heal in a single day, even with the great lotions of the Global Army. Khan had to attend the morning lessons in that state, with a constant annoying feeling spreading from his feet. Luckily for him, his friends didn't investigate further after he justified the marks with his training.

"Did you watch the battle?" Khan asked after Lieutenant Dyester let him go. "How did I do?"

"You were awful," Lieutenant Dyester snorted as he picked his phone and activated holograms depicting Khan's battle. "You have studied it. How many mistakes did you find?"

"Three," Khan honestly replied. "The front kick against Bloke and the jumping knee come from my bad habits while letting Samuel hang on me was pure inexperience."

"What about the initial jump?" Lieutenant Dyester asked. "Why did you lower your leg both times? You have practiced techniques in that stance. Why didn't you flow into them?"

"I didn't think about it," Khan said while scratching his head. "These moves still don't feel completely natural. I kept thinking during the fight."

Lieutenant Dyester heaved a helpless sigh. He inspected the video again and played with the holograms a bit before lighting a cigarette. There seemed to be some annoyance on his face, but Khan couldn't understand the reason behind that feeling.

"You can't limit yourself to the exercises anymore," Lieutenant Dyester sighed again. "It seems that someone is trying to get to you."

Khan showed a confused expression, and Lieutenant Dyester didn't hesitate to continue. "Those boys didn't fear breaking the curfew. They only cared about forcing you to break it. They were even quite determined. Their reasons probably had nothing to do with you."

"Why would they even attack me then?" Khan asked.

"Did you make anyone with some really good background angry?" Lieutenant Dyester questioned Khan.

"I'm as good as they come," Khan said while wearing a fake smile, but a memory suddenly surged in his mind. "I might have insulted Alison Blackdell and her friends, but that wasn't much. I wouldn't even recall her name if she weren't at the center of the gossips."

Lieutenant Dyester stared at Khan with a blank expression. The latter even waved his hand on his face since the soldier didn't seem able to move anymore.

"What did they even put in that brain of yours?!" Lieutenant Dyester eventually shouted while grabbing Khan from his shoulders. "The Blackdell family has connections with the noble families, and you decided to insult one of its members! She even failed to remain in the special class! I bet she will get back at anyone who dares to speak badly about her."

"How can anyone remember stuff from months ago?" Khan complained while Lieutenant Dyester continued to shake him. "You are exaggerating. No one has so much free time."

"She is a kid born in a family with connections with the noble families!" Lieutenant repeated while letting go of Khan and walking through the corridor that divided the cells. "She has never faced a problem in her entire life! What do you think will happen when she suddenly finds issues that her name can't solve?"

"Work hard to improve herself?" Khan asked, but Lieutenant Dyester's face told him that he was wrong.

"Do you think that honest excuses will calm her down?" Khan asked when he understood that the situation was quite bad.

Lieutenant Dyester sighed before massaging his temples. He didn't know what to say in that situation. His disciple wasn't stupid, but he had yet to realize how the wealthy kids reacted to some interactions.

"You will only worsen your situation," Lieutenant Dyester shook his head. "She doesn't seem the type to let go of this stuff, especially in her state. I can only prepare you for the worst."

"Worse?" Khan didn't understand what Lieutenant Dyester meant, but the latter suddenly shot forward.

Khan couldn't even react to that sudden event. Pain spread from his chest while his feet left the ground. The attack directly flung him toward the wall.

Khan hit his back and head on the wall. Everything became confused for an instant while he fell on the floor. His vision quickly regained its focus and allowed him to see that Lieutenant Dyester's foot was about to reach his face.

Khan instinctively closed his eyes to prepare for the imminent blow, but nothing touched his face. Instead, a low noise resounded from above him, and tremors reached his back.

"You had it too easy with those boys," Lieutenant Dyester said as he kicked the table next to the staircase away to create some space. "It's easy to fight against weaker opponents. Let's see what you can do against me."

The situation had turned upside-down in an instant. Khan was barely keeping track of the events, but everything became clear when Lieutenant Dyester bent his legs and took a battle stance.

Khan stood up slowly. His hand went on the back of his head, and a warm sensation spread from his palm. He was bleeding, but Lieutenant Dyester didn't seem to care about that.

"I don't think the other kids train like this," Khan exclaimed.

"The other kids don't have to worry about being ambushed at night," Lieutenant Dyester snorted. "Besides, this will teach you how real battles are. The martial arts try to make them appear flashy and precise, but they are messy most of the time."

"Can I use mana?" Khan asked while taking a battle stance.

"Of course," Lieutenant Dyester replied as a smirk appeared on his face.

Khan took a deep breath and summoned the mana in his body. He couldn't match Lieutenant Dyester's physical strength, but he might be able to achieve a similar speed since his martial art focused on that feature.

However, right after part of the mana inside his body started to activate, a sharp pain spread from Khan's waist and forced him to open his eyes. His back landed on the wall again as he stared at the kick that Lieutenant Dyester had delivered.

"First lesson," Lieutenant Dyester announced while turning and lighting another cigarette. "Never use something unreliable. I'm faster than your mana, so you can't rely on it."

'It was a trick!' Khan shouted in his mind before resuming a battle stance.

"Second lesson," Lieutenant Dyester continued while turning and delivering a fast roundhouse kick that slammed next to Khan's head. "Study your opponent. I'm a third-level warrior and mage, while your attunement with mana has yet to reach fifty percent. Why are you even trying to fight me?"

Khan stared at the leg next to his face. Lieutenant Dyester didn't bother to lower it, and Khan could notice the bulging muscles under the uniform at that distance.

Lieutenant Dyester's physique was quite massive. His uniform hid part of his muscles, but Khan understood how much power his body contained in that situation.

'How can he be so fast with that body?' Khan wondered as he gulped and glanced at the trapdoor.

"That should have been your first thought!" Lieutenant Dyester shouted when he noticed that gesture. "You shouldn't feel safe because I'm here. Remember that I've killed many aliens and even

a few humans. You are locked in the same room with a murderer. You should never lower your guard."

"Who can I trust then?" Khan asked as his face abandoned every expression.

"Trust your senses," Lieutenant Dyester replied. "Trust your training, your body, your mana, and your achievements. Your situation is different from the other kids. No one would bother to look for your corpse if you were to die somewhere problematic."

Khan was using the mastery over the fourth lesson of the mental training to hide the mana flowing through his body. He filled his ankles with that energy before moving part of it in different directions.

"How can I even trust you to trai-," Khan began to say, but his leg moved while Lieutenant Dyester was busy listening to his words.

Khan launched a frontal kick that aimed at Lieutenant Dyester's groin. His attack was quick. His leg almost created afterimages as it moved toward the soldier.

However, Lieutenant Dyester grabbed his ankle before it could reach its target.

"Masking your emotions was a smart choice," Lieutenant Dyester explained, "But you can't hide your intentions to my senses, especially since you only mastered the initial exercises."

Lieutenant Dyester pulled Khan's leg and forced him to fall on the floor.

"We'll do this once a week," Lieutenant Dyester announced. "The next times won't be complete beatdowns. I'll give you the chance to use a few moves in battle."

Chapter 39 - Meeting

Khan's friends didn't immediately give much thought to his condition. They would see a few injuries on him or a pale complexion every Monday, but they initially disregarded those features since training with mana could lead to those events.

Even they would show a few wounds from time to time. They weren't as evident as Khan's tiredness, but they still suffered from their training. The presence of proper Masters from Ylaco couldn't prevent them.

However, worries inevitably appeared when they noticed that Khan's situation didn't improve even after a few weeks passed. Usually, recruits would learn how to avoid suffering injuries as their expertise with mana improved, but Khan didn't seem to follow that progress.

"Are you ok?" Luke eventually asked during a Monday afternoon in the canteen.

"Everything is fine," Khan replied as he wolfed his fourth plate.

Martha, Luke, Bruce, and the two kids from the Rotston family didn't buy his plain answer. Khan almost had a sick complexion, and a large bruise encircled his right eye.

"You come every Monday with a new set of injuries," Martha pointed out. "It has happened for almost two months."

"Lieutenant Dyester is teaching me how to fight," Khan briefly explained. "His methods aren't for softies."

The group didn't know how to react to that statement. Masters could be harsh, especially during actual combat training, but Khan seemed to go through a beatdown every Sunday.

"I wouldn't trust Carl Dyester so much," Luke exclaimed. "I asked my Master about him. The rumors about him aren't good at all."

"What can you expect from someone called 'butcher of Istrone'?" April Rotston commented. "That guy is the only survivor of a rebellion. Stuff like that leaves deep scars."

"It's worse than you think," Luke continued. "My Master knows someone who has reached Istrone right after the crisis. The soldiers had yet to clean the battlefield back then, so he saw the reason behind that title."

"Which is?" Jacob Rotstone asked.

"Khan is still eating," Luke replied. "I don't want to ruin his meal."

"Go on," Khan promptly said while munching his meat. "Nothing can ruin my appetite."

Luke glanced at his other friends before heaving a helpless sigh when they nodded.

"This soldier saw piles of fuming alien corpses," Luke said while lowering his voice. "His platoon found Lieutenant Dyester sitting on one of them. According to the story, he didn't even notice the reinforcements. He remained there with a cigarette in his mouth."

"He must have snapped during the battle," April Rotstone sighed. "It's a common thing for soldiers on the frontlines. I'm not surprised he decided to lower his rank on purpose and isolate himself in this training camp."

"I can find you another suitable Master, Khan," Luke revealed while turning toward him. "Your training feels like abuse. Don't put up with his methods because you don't see other options."

"Don't worry," Khan replied while giving voice to a fake laugh. "Thank you for your concern, but I'm getting better with this training. I know you disagree with his methods, but they are perfect for someone like me."

"You are hopeless," Bruce laughed while shaking his head. "Both Luke and the Global Army want to give you a hand, but you stick with the traumatized soldier who handles the prisons. Is this another Slum thing?"

Bruce had always treated Khan with respect. Khan knew that those words carried no ill intention, so he didn't feel offended by them.

"It's about matching characters," Khan explained. "He pushes me to go beyond my limits, and that's all I want. I need a firm hand to get better."

Martha's worries quieted down after that revelation. She was afraid that Khan was enduring that treatment because of her, but there seemed to be more to it.

Lieutenant Dyester seemed able to appeal to Khan's true character. The driven and resolute man hidden behind that young face wouldn't accept sophisticated Masters who barely made him sweat. He needed a warden who taught him the practical uses of his abilities.

Luke and the others didn't reach the same conclusions, but they let go of the matter anyway. They wanted to help Khan, but they couldn't fight his stubbornness. They only hoped that he wouldn't suffer any permanent injury during that hellish training.

The group finished eating and began to leave the canteen. All of them had to rest or reach their Masters, but a message arrived on their phones before they could split.

'Mandatory meeting in the first basement at three pm,' Khan read on his phone.

"This is from the Global Army," Khan exclaimed while turning toward his friends. "Do you know what's happening?"

Khan saw surprised expressions on his friends. It seemed that even their knowledge of the Global Army didn't help in that situation.

"It's strange," Luke commented. "There's more than a month before the end of the semester. This shouldn't be about the missions."

"Maybe they want to address Khan's issue," Bruce added. "They didn't say anything about the four boys who attacked him two months ago. No one has seen them since then either. The Global Army might give an official statement."

"The other recruits didn't receive anything," Jason contradicted him when he inspected his surroundings. "It seems that only the members of the special class received this message."

"They might still follow a precise order," Martha continued. "Anyway, the meeting is in half an hour. We can wait in the corridor."

The group changed direction and moved toward the staircase that led to the lower floors. They continued to suggest ideas that could explain the reason behind the meeting, but Khan remained silent during the walk.

Khan had thought about the four bullies from time to time, especially since Samuel's bed had remained empty during those months. Even Lieutenant Dyester didn't know how that matter had ended.

Still, Khan didn't suffer from similar events anymore. Two months had gone by peacefully. He had even started to believe that Lieutenant Dyester's worries about Alison Blackdell were mere exaggerations.

The group waited in front of the first basement. Other recruits from the special class gathered on that spot, but they weren't enough to fill the corridor. Less than twenty boys and girls had remained in that course after almost five months of training.

A familiar figure eventually descended from the staircase. Khan recognized Lieutenant Rupert Unchai, the soldier who had overseen his initial test.

Khan could finally inspect his features. The last time he had seen the Lieutenant in the shape of a hologram, so he had failed to notice the dark color of his short hair and the clear shades of his eyes.

"I will hold the meeting," Lieutenant Unchai announced once he stepped off the staircase and made his way through the group of recruits.

The first basement opened, and Lieutenant Unchai gestured to the group to follow him. The soldier quickly walked toward the stage on one side of the hall and connected his phone to the floor while the recruits simply gathered around him.

"Let's make a few things clear first," Lieutenant Unchai announced as a series of holograms appeared on the walls behind him.

Khan widened his eyes when he saw that the holograms played the scenes of his last battle against the bullies. The images even depicted the damages suffered from the four boys during the various exchanges.

"The Global Army condemns these actions," Lieutenant Unchai continued once the tape ended.

"Your background doesn't matter here. Your family might have connections with the noble families, but the same goes for the higher-ups of the Global Army. Every soldier is equal. We only look at your achievements."

Khan pretended not to notice the series of glances that ended on his figure. He had even heard a few surprised gasps while the tape was still running. It seemed that some of the recruits had liked the show.

"We have expelled the four boys," Lieutenant Unchai explained once the audience focused on him again. "Ylaco's training camp has even placed an additional fee on their families. I hope this can solve part of the grudges that this shameful event might have generated."

Lieutenant Unchai didn't look toward Khan, but it was clear that his words were for him.

"He is worried that a lack of punishments from the Global Army would have ruined its chances to get you," Martha whispered while tilting her head toward Khan.

Khan limited himself to nod. He had understood that part. Attending "politics" for another month had given him some insights into that environment.

'The real culprit might still be out there,' Khan complained inside his mind. 'Punishing these four doesn't prove that I'm safe.'

"The recent situation has forced the Global Army to understand its flaws," Lieutenant Unchai explained. "It's rare to have this degree of violence inside the camp, and it's evident that most recruits lack battle experience. We can't punish before the actual illicit event, but we can give you the chance to learn some self-defense."

The audience fell silent at that point. The recruits didn't know where Lieutenant Unchai's speech led, but its topic sounded interesting.

"We can't offer this to everyone in the camp," Lieutenant Unchai continued. "Only the special class will have access to this. The Global Army is giving you the chance to continue the rest of your lessons on Onia, where you will receive real-combat training."

Chapter 40 - Preparations

The news left the audience speechless. The Global Army was offering a free journey to Onia where the recruits could get real-combat training.

Needless to say, whispers began to resound among the recruits. None of them managed to remain silent in that situation. Even the wealthiest kids felt excited.

"The Global Army can't pay for your Master," Lieutenant Unchai explained, "But they can join you on Onia if they can cover the expenses of the travel. Yet, some of them will need to obtain permits, so make them contact the related offices."

The few recruits who still had doubts about that chance felt relieved to hear that. Some of them had strict training programs to follow, and a trip could considerably delay their improvements.

"Please understand that this is a special situation," Lieutenant Unchai continued. "We must make sure that the members of the special class know how to protect themselves. Also, this travel won't affect the normal schedule of your lessons. You will still have to face the missions at the end of the semester."

"What do you think?" Martha asked Khan while keeping her voice down.

"They are giving me the chance to go to another planet," Khan said while wearing an excited smile. "How can I even miss it?"

"This sounds so interesting," Martha exclaimed as excitement inevitably seeped into her voice. "I have never been to another planet. We will also get the chance to see the Ef'i!"

"I wonder how off my accent is," Khan whispered. "I've only learnt a few words."

"I saw you taking notes during Professor Thogett's lessons now that I think about it," Martha teased him while pulling his sleeve. "Tell me something in their language."

"[Hello, peace,]" Khan said in a strange language that featured guttural sounds. "I only know these two words."

"Are they useful?" Martha asked.

"I hope," Khan laughed before moving his attention back to Lieutenant Unchai.

The Lieutenant had removed his phone from the floor and had begun to descend from the stage. The recruits opened a path for him, and the soldier raised his voice once more to explain the last details behind that mission.

"We depart in one week," Lieutenant Unchai explained. "Your phones will gain access to a new menu tonight. You must sign it to become part of this event. You can also find other important information there, so read carefully."

Lieutenant Unchai then made his way through the crowd, but he slowed down when he passed next to Khan. His eyes inevitably fell on him, and a faint smile even appeared on his expression.

"You were a natural-born fighter apparently," Lieutenant Unchai whispered before going on his way and leaving the basement.

The recruits remained in the hall, and their voice inevitably rose now that the soldier had left. Everyone was excited. The sole idea of going to another planet made them unable to contain themselves.

Even the usually calm Luke seemed interested in that opportunity. His fingers tapped on his phone non-stop as he made plans for the imminent mission.

"What is it?" Martha asked when she noticed Khan's pensive expression. "I thought you would have loved this chance."

"I do love it," Khan replied while scratching his head, "But I don't know how to warn my father about this. He should have gotten out of jail by now."

Martha's excitement slightly dispersed when she remembered about Khan's situation. His father was in the Slums, where contacting a single person was fairly difficult.

"Try asking Lieutenant Dyester about that," Martha suggested. "He might not be able to find him, but he can warn him if he visits the camp."

"That sounds good enough," Khan exclaimed. "Thank you, Martha. I don't know where I'd be without you."

Khan then left the basement in a hurry. He had to attend his usual training with Lieutenant Dyester and warn him about the mission. His schedule would probably change after that news.

Martha stared at his departing figure. She remained a bit disappointed that he didn't even bother to exchange a few more words with her, but the excitement about the incoming mission made her forget about that.

After all, her entire class would go to another planet. She would have time to spend with Khan.

Khan ran toward the prisons of the camp, and the trapdoor promptly opened as soon as he stepped on the lawn.

"You are late, Dog," Lieutenant Dyester shouted from the bottom of the basement.

Khan ignored the new fake name that the Lieutenant had chosen for him lately. He ran down the staircase and began to explain the contents of the meeting as soon as the trapdoor closed.

"A training camp on Onia sounds interesting," Lieutenant Dyester said while lighting a cigarette. "I wonder if they'll make you fight against Ef'i. Maybe the self-protection thing is just an excuse to prepare you for the tournaments."

"I didn't think about that," Khan honestly revealed. "Still, should I go? I can't miss this chance, right?"

Khan was almost begging Lieutenant Dyester to share his opinion. His curiosity was exploding, but he would accept the soldier's words if he happened to be against the travel.

"You must go," Lieutenant Dyester announced. "You have fought against weaker kids and sparred with me for two months. It's time to understand your actual level and get a real idea of where you stand compared to your peers."

"Peers and aliens," Khan reminded him.

"We should stop sparring then," Lieutenant Dyester continued while ignoring his previous words. "Focus on your forms without using mana. Let's maximize your muscle memory before the trip."

"No mana?" Khan asked with a disappointed tone.

His training with the Lightning-demon style was going well, and the mental exercises only helped in the process. His meditations even strengthened his body and made it able to memorize different moves quickly. Khan had almost reached the point when he could perform a few correct techniques with mana.

"Mastery beats unstable performances," Lieutenant Dyester snorted. "You have almost removed your bad habits, but your ability must go past that. Stabilize your foundation before building on top of it."

Khan nodded, but he still felt a bit disappointed. Regular techniques were nice, but their versions with mana were far stronger. He had superpowers ready for him, but his Master wanted him to stick with the basics.

"You will get there," Lieutenant Dyester said when he noticed Khan's expression. "You must breathe, dream, and live for the Lightning-demon style. Adding mana will be far easier if you don't have to think about your movements. Moreover, it will make you less useless in an actual battle."

Khan nodded again. He understood Lieutenant Dyester's point. He only felt restless about using mana.

"Stop looking so depressed if you understand!" Lieutenant Dyester suddenly shouted. "Activate the damned holograms! You have a long day ahead of you. I want at least two hundred perfect executions of the entire training program."

"I don't have enough time for that!" Khan complained.

"Then you keep trying until you make the time!" Lieutenant Dyester shouted. "Go on. Start from the first and reach the end. I hope you won't commit mistakes during the first cycle."

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Khan's training became even harsher during that week. Lieutenant Dyester didn't let him rest for even a second. He wanted to finish imprinting the Lightning-demon style on his body and remove the last trace of his bad habits.

Khan also mentioned his father during that week. He had no way of contacting him from the training camp, but Lieutenant Dyester promised that he would take care of the matter.

Lieutenant Dyester didn't have a good reputation, but that only helped Khan's cause. The soldier could warn all the buildings that handled the acceptance of guests and similar about Khan's father. Those in charge of those offices would send Bret to him if he happened to visit the camp.

The week eventually passed, and Khan prepared for the imminent travel. The new menu on the phone had instructed him about the event. It would last only two weeks, and all the recruits would go directly toward the location of the semestral missions after that period.

His first semester inside the training camp would end in a mere month, and Khan could already sense how much he had changed during that short period. He had friends now, and his body had never felt so strong.

On Monday, the special class gathered in a distant area of the training camp early in the morning. No recruit roamed through the streets at that hour, so no one could question the reason for their presence in that place.

Lieutenant Unchai soon appeared in the distance. The soldier greeted the recruits and led them toward an immense building nearby. The structure resembled a three-story-tall stadium that occupied a large area.

The group entered the building through large metal doors that slid open as soon as Lieutenant Unchai neared them. They had to go through a series of body scanners and sign a few forms before the soldiers protecting the entrance allowed them in the insides of the structure.

A series of soldiers wearing white medical coats tinkered with the many consoles placed at the sides of a large circular room. Khan could identify all of them as scientists, but he ignored the reason behind their presence there.

"I've never been to a teleport," Martha suddenly said when she pointed at the large structure at the center of the hall. "They say that everyone pukes on their first time."