

Evolution 152

Chapter 152: Anyone Who Moves... Dies.

The ground beneath the vile totem cracked into perfect lines, forming a five-meter black cube etched into the dirt, each corner hissing as if resisting existence.

Then, silence... before the cube arose.

A cubic void emerged from the ground, pitch-black and dead silent, a perfect square of nothing swallowing everything above it.

Around its edge, the light bent... then vanished entirely, as if it were consumed.

Darius watched for a moment, his voice calm.

"You did well... You should leave now, before the Hound sees you. Also, stay nearby, I might need you again."

Mantis glanced at the cubic void, gulping a mouthful in dread after sensing that something was moving.

Having no plans to see what it was, Mantis swiftly took off, running and tripping along the way until he was out of sight.

Meanwhile, the darkness cube was becoming more concentrated with each second, the sunlight failing to break it apart.

It was illogical, as darkness was the lack of light. If there were light, there shouldn't be any darkness... This was the common sense, but unfortunately, Vile Totems had no respect for such.

Vile Totems... The opposite of Solar Totems.

Unlike Solar Totems, they consume dark energy, but produce similar if not more potent effects than Solar Totems.

Just like nightcrawlers couldn't use Solar Totems without the risk of getting burned to ash, humans and other races had to be extremely careful with Vile Totems... Its dark energy was extremely corruptive, leaving civilians sick by simply being near its presence.

Whoosh!

Usually, it took fifteen minutes before a dimensional link was established between the Shadow Dimension and Earth, but not with this.

In less than a minute... the cube had turned into an active, temporary Stygian Gate even though it was in the presence of sunlight.

It was extremely dim, and barely noticeable, but still...

Thud...

Immediately after the link was established, R'hytha stepped forward, followed by ten Tier 3 elites, and a never-ending army of low-tier nightcrawlers.

Hundred... Two hundred... Three hundred.

Only after the entire area around the cube was filled to the brim did the nightcrawlers stop emerging.

The army was comprised of a mix of golems and other species, including some related to insects, mammals, reptiles, and others of unknown origin. It was a hot pot of monstrosity with unfulfilled desire to devour light.

"Clear a way, the Hound is coming out."

R'hytha shouted coldly, but his tone had a tint of dread in it. It was like he feared being the one to upset the Hound.

Without him needing to say anything, the nightcrawlers' army cleared a path defiantly, the instant they picked up on a tyrannical spiritual aura running rampant.

Thud!

And then... he appeared, stepping out of the cube, his nasty, hairy feet sinking into the dirt until they disappeared.

R'hytha gulped a mouthful as he kept his head lowered, refusing to meet the Hound's eyes.

"Sir Hound... The targ...et is in front." He informed, stuttering a bit after feeling his oppressive, vicious aura land on him, akin to a truck.

The Hound gazed below at R'hytha, standing over two meters tall, his form stretched and warped like something that should have stayed in a nightmare.

His legs were monstrous... three times the size of his narrow torso. They were veined and swollen with unnatural muscle.

His arms were strapped tightly against his chest by a clinical red restraint vest, the kind you'd see in high-security psych wards... or on prisoners too dangerous to move unbound.

His hair, long and tangled, was deep red like dried blood on sun-scorched concrete.

It hung over his face in greasy strands, barely hiding the hideous mutilation where his lips had been carved open all the way to his ears.

The wound exposed a mouth full of rotten, crooked teeth... hound-like, yellowed, and uneven, as if he'd chewed through steel more than food.

A thick and reinforced black muzzle, like the ones used on rabid military dogs, was clamped over his lower face.

He wore only tight, faded black shorts, stretched over his waist like they were made for someone half his size.

This exposed his massive, twitching, hairy thighs, ready to spring.

His appearance screamed of a man once human, now too far gone to return...

R'hytha's heart pounded heavily, sensing the indifferent gaze that had been on him for a while now... Yet, he refused to lift his head.

He still remembered his lord's words... Never look at the Hound in the eyes. Otherwise, you wouldn't know before you find your head in his mouth.

Thud, thud...

Steps as heavy as thunder, the Hound started walking in the direction of Mountain Thurnak, the nightcrawlers shivering in his presence.

The moment he arrived at the front of the army, he took a deep breath with his head lifted to the skies... Then, he howled. Once.

Awooooooooooooo...

His howl echoed across the distance, a warning or an introduction for his arrival? No one knew, but it did arrive at Mountain Thurnak's perimeter.

'Hmmm?'

Levi was the first to pick up on the howl, his head swiftly turning in its direction.

Not awaiting Seraphis' orders, Levi unleashed his echolocation to its limit, putting tens of kilometers in its range until... it detected him and them.

Heart pounding in dread, Levi stood up, his back leaning against the tree. His auditory vision reflected hundreds of nightcrawlers grouped in one place with two humanoid auras at the front.

Levi ignored the humanoid purple frog aura and focused on the scarlet monstrosity before him. At once, Levi held the Sensebound Pearl in his hand, activating its refinement. Then, he unleashed his spiritual vision until it landed on him.

Immediately after, a chaotic, bloodthirsty red pillar took shape in his world of darkness... It was wild and murderous like the man behind it had nothing going on in his mind besides killing.

"Sir!! An extremely powerful entity is ambushing us with an army of nightcraw..."

Before Levi could deliver the scary news, his heart stopped for a split second at the sight of the spiritual crimson pillar, rushing in their direction with a frightening, unfathomable speed!

He was so fast, the moment the Daywalkers turned around to focus on the howl's origin, the Hound was already falling from the skies above them!

"SKY!!"

Levi managed to scream a single word before the Hound landed tens of meters away from them, akin to a meteor!

BOOOOM!!

The ground trembled at once, releasing a powerful shockwave in every direction... Levi took cover behind his little brother, who instinctively held onto the tree.

Meanwhile, Melissa, Rayan, Jojo, Nurah, and the rest of the helpers were all sent flying, shielding their grim faces.

Thud! Thud...

Some landed against trees, and some rolled on the floor until they reached the mountain's entrance.

Yet, everyone toughed through the pain and bolted up, entering a defensive formation, their hearts beating out of their chests as they stared at the massive cloud of dust in front of them.

"Is everyone okay?"

Instructor Seraphis asked solemnly while standing at the very front, the shockwave not moving him an inch.

He wanted to help his trainees and underlings, but he refused to move his eyes from the Hound... He could feel it, the moment he looked away, his head might be gone.

'Huh... No, it can't be...'

But soon, his senses tingled... This bloodthirsty aura, he knew it, no, he could never forget it.

A scene flashed in his mind, showing the Hound and two more monstrous entities bathing in a rain of blood and ash as they stood on top of a mountain of mangled corpses...

His vision was cloudy, his body, mind, and pride were shattered beyond recognition. All he could feel was the wind howling behind him as he kept pulling away from those three monsters.

The memory ended with him awakening to his old friend Lord Idriss and his memories shambled of that cursed day... The day of his dethronement and the fall of his Holy Region.

"The Dishonorable King... We meet again."

Suddenly, he was jolted awake by the Hound's suppressed voice... He sounded like a man who forgot how to speak softly, and only spoke when hurting or biting down on rage.

Then, he emerged from the dust cloud, displaying his nightmarish monstrosity before all.

Melissa and the rest felt their hearts jump to their throat in primal fear. They couldn't look at him for even a second without their minds forcing them to faint, thinking that it was protecting them.

Immediately, many had lowered their heads, sweat coating their foreheads and palms.

They knew... They were in the presence of a predator.

But soon, Seraphis's proud golden aura was released, washing over everyone, putting them in its protective warm embrace... Even Levi felt safe to look at the Hound, using his Harmonic Spine to weave his appearance before him.

'Instructor Seraphis is a Solarbound Daywalker.'

'As long as we remain behind him, we are safe.'

'Phew... Got me scared for a second.'

The Daywalkers were relieved, their thoughts exuding nothing but confidence in Seraphis's prowess to protect them.

Only Levi thought otherwise... His mouth was turning dry after his refined spiritual vision gave him the full readings of the Hound's strength. Solarbound... Peak third stage.

As for Instructor Seraphis? His aura was barely near the second stage.

'Retreat to the mountain's entrance. I will deal with him.'

Seraphis ordered sternly while unsheathing his golden-excalibur-like sword... Lionheart's Fang.

Just as Arthur was about to move, Levi held him tight, forcing him to remain in his place.

Before Arthur could turn his head in confusion, his eyes were left stunned at the sight of ten Daywalkers, exploding into bloody misty clouds...

Selene was one of them, and the nearest to Levi, Arthur, Omar, and the rest of the C2 classroom.

"Anyone who moves... dies." The Hound uttered indifferently.

Silence.

As everyone's eyes looked down at their tainted clothes and faces with their allies' blood, their bodies refused to move an inch.

Some even froze with one leg above the ground, their backs facing the Hound. Yet, they preferred staying in this position rather than going against the Hound's order.

Seeing this sight, Seraphis's grimace turned frigid... He brought his students with him, fully embracing that their protection was his responsibility. Yet, Selene was killed, and he could do nothing to save her in time.

Seraphis refused to have the same fate repeat itself.

"Hound! You filthy abomination, I left you in the past, and you still chased me. Then, answer to your king!"

Seraphis pointed his sword at the Hound as he invoked Lionheart Arts: King's Judgment.

Whoosh!

A shockwave of golden pressure burst outward, shaking the ground and skies with his royal voice.

Any other man would've buckled... Screamed. Dropped to his knees with their soul laid bare.

But the Hound didn't flinch.

The golden light washed over him... and broke like rain against stone.

Nothing.

"You think your words still chain me?"

He spoke, the muzzle creaking with each word uttered. Then, he took a single step forward, the ground giving in to him.

"The days of kneeling... crying to a god too high to see me..."

He leaned in, breath fogging through the muzzle.

"Those days died with her..."