

## Evolution 173

Chapter 173: The Buried Treasury.

Sometime later...

Levi could be seen on top of Vyra's back, cruising in the skies... Their destination? It already started to show over the horizon.

Mountain Thurnak, or at least whatever was left of it.

After its collapse, the broken peak was closed too... This retired the gas-spraying nightcrawlers from polluting the skies, clearing it at last.

With the moon and stars shimmering from above, Grave'Maw's devastated and corrupted territory was finally healing.

Slow... but still, healing.

Levi didn't fly straight to the mountain... He knew that the Blood Hunters must have left some of their members to scout it from a distance.

Their treasures were still buried, and if it wasn't for the fear of The Hound coming out at any moment, most of them would have remained behind.

But Levi knew that the Blood Hunters would start digging tomorrow with the help of the government.

Before they did, Levi wanted to check if the treasury had any treasures that could be used for his Void+Sun evolutionary paths... Most importantly, to feed his gluttonous Crimson seed.

After he evolved to the Junior rank... He had grown by less than 0.5%... This progress was two times slower than the first rank since his reserve energy tank had doubled in size too.

It was already ten times bigger than average Daywalkers in his rank, which meant... His energy tank might be as massive as a Warden Daywalker's.

However, this blessing came with a price... It took time to fill it up and much more to grow the gluttonous prick.

Since the Crimson seed could feed on any type of energy, he wasn't limited to just solar energy... Levi had no plans to stay at this snail-like pace forever.

After descending a far distance from the mountain, Levi scouted for any underground caves or such... Once he found one, he didn't hesitate to approach it, knowing it was a Stygian Gate.

At the moment, the nightcrawlers were near extinct from this territory, overlapping with the Shadow dimension.

With Levi's Umbral Crown, he had no fear of the corruption... Although this was the first time he would be testing it, Levi wasn't too scared.

After all, he wouldn't be alone.

With an eager expression mixed with some nervousness, Levi adorned the shadowy crown... When the crown noticed his close proximity to high levels of corruption, it sent shadowy tendrils in front of his face... In a moment, they turned into a shadowy mask, covering his nose and mouth.

Levi wasn't surprised by this... He was told corruption might be dealt with, but oxygen levels were at a bare minimum inside the Shadow dimension... If it wasn't for oxygen coming in from the Stygian Gates, it might not have it at all.

Although it was there, it wasn't breathable when mixed with the corrupting atmosphere... Even a heavy-duty mask would fail to filter it out.

It wasn't a welcoming place for humans... Or at least, the weaker ones.

Fortunately, the creator of Umbral Crown also needed oxygen, which pushed her to improve the mask beyond corruption protection... She also added a filtration mask, which absorbed the contamination by 99.9% near Levi's nose and mouth, leaving him with some oxygen to survive.

With a crown and a mask on, Levi stepped into the pitch-black darkness for the first time.

The moment Levi crossed over, color abandoned the world.

A vast, empty void stretched in every direction, swallowing both light and color, had met Levi's Harmonic Spine... leaving it incapable of painting it.

Levi found himself standing upside down on a massive, cracked floating island... It was also upside down, as if gravity itself had been reversed.

"How are you feeling?"

Suddenly, Ash'Kral's voice came from the side, reverberating three times... like it had an inbuilt echo to it.

Without turning his head, Levi noticed Ash'Kral's existence akin to a sore thumb... His colorful appearance stood out amidst this depressive dimension.

"Every movement feels strange and unnatural..." Levi murmured, but his voice was barely heard.

"In this place, your volume needs to be adjusted." Ash'Kral gave a tip, "If you speak normally, no one will hear you..."

Levi tried it and found that he was strangely right.

"Why is that?"

Not needing to shout, Levi modified his volume output using the Resonance System... He had already reached 3% and was granted the basics of access to manipulate the sound element.

It was enough to make him master the easiest technique: Voice and Volume modification.

"I don't know, to be honest... It's rumored that physical sound waves behave strangely because the very fabric of space here is warped by lingering dark energy and residual echoes of forgotten memories... Hence, the echo." Ash'Kral shared lazily, while leading the way to Mountain Thurnak's Stygian Gates.

'Sounds interesting... How about being reversed?' Levi switched to telepathic communication, noticing that he was having difficulty breathing every time he spoke.

"Gravity works in mysterious ways in this place." Ash'Kral shared, "Upward, downward, to the sides... Gravity here pulls you wherever she pleases... So don't get too lax and keep an eye out for changes; otherwise, you might step into a powerful gravitational field and get yanked into the void or worse, crushed instantly."

Hearing this, Levi gulped a mouthful, and each step taken was with more consideration now. To live in a place where gravity was lawless, colors were dead, and the future seemed bleak, Levi started to understand why nightcrawlers were forsaking their home.

They fed on light for growth, but this place had literally nothing... but death and ruin.

How could they not be pushed into joining the platform and seeking a better alternative in other dimensions?

Although Levi understood their plight, it didn't change his perspective on them that much... After all, most nightcrawlers were still naturally born evil, always prioritizing their selfish desires above all.

"Is that?"

"Yep... The Gloompuffer farm."

Ash'Kral nodded after Levi noticed a small mountain turned on its head, its ragged peak pointing downward into the emptiness...

Levi could see with his Harmonic Spine that a thick black smoke was being released from the opening.

"So, that was the Stygian Gate connected with the Broken Peak... How strange, this whole place is too strange."

Levi's curiosity for mysteries and knowledge kept tingling... imagining how both peaks were connected dimensionally, allowing such a bizarre plan to take shape.

Two mountains, one straight, one reversed, kissing each other across dimensions... Once connected, but now separated... Yet, still a better love story than Twilight.

"Are they aggressive?" Levi asked, "Will they notice my light?"

"No... Just don't get close to their mushrooms." Ash'Kral replied, "Umbral Crown masks your sunlight completely, making you part of this dimension's inhabitants."

Levi was relieved as this meant no one should think of him as a pure human, but a humanoid nightcrawler... This opened another sea of options.

But for now, he focused on one thing... finding a Stygian Gate connected to the underground of the crumbled mountain.

After Levi entered the reversed mountain, the first thing he saw was hundreds of rat-like nightcrawlers, fighting amongst each other on top of a field of shimmering green mushrooms.

With Grave'Maw and his elites' deaths, the Gloompuffer's farm had no one to manage it. This pushed the nightcrawlers to turn back into their default setting... Food above all.

Levi spectated the ongoing bloody battle royale with a tint of fascination.

Imagine a black and white scene with hundreds of half-meter black-furred rats biting each other while their bodies were upside down... gushing out strings of bright red blood everywhere... Everything was vibrating ever so slightly.

This was Levi's vision with his Harmonic Spine... It was pure cinema.

"The Shadow dimension... The Boundless Expanse... Every realm is more bizarre than the other."

Levi murmured inwardly, walking around the rats until he arrived at a swirling dark portal... One of many around the place.

Some were as small as a fist, and some were big enough to give Levi hope... Hope that the treasury wasn't completely ruined.

Without hesitation, Levi jumped through the first portal... His body blurred as the world shifted and twisted.

Then, he landed lightly on a narrow ledge between broken stones. Levi swiftly strung a sound from his spinal silver threads.

The melodious frequency spread out everywhere until it painted close to thirty meters of details in his mind.

Every nook, every hole, every dead end... The underground was pitch-dark and resembled a maze of rubble... Yet, in Levi's mind?

All paths were drawn... Unfortunately, nothing was at the end.

"I guess nothing here."

Not wasting his time, Levi returned to the Shadow dimension and picked another portal, wanting to appear in a different location.

Once he reappeared, he repeated the same process.

Still nothing.

Levi kept skipping between the Shadow dimension and the real world, appearing like he was teleporting all over the place.

Unfortunately, he still came out empty-handed.

"As expected, he must have dug his treasury at the depths... So deep, the treasures wouldn't get affected by the mountain's collapse." Levi murmured as he gazed below him.

His Harmonic Spine hadn't discovered any tunnel that confirmed his theory, but Levi knew... The treasury's road not being there was the confirmation he needed.

He understood that the CRS Platform enforced a strict rule on the nightcrawlers to have their treasuries within their territories.

The nightcrawlers could use whatever treasure they owned... However, any treasures awarded by the Yearly Stability Reward must be stored in the treasury.

In addition, it could be used only after two years of sitting in the treasury.

The CRS Platform enforced such a rule to give a good ending to the viewers and the Raiders, who won their raid... After all, it wouldn't be called a raid if there was nothing to take.

The nightcrawlers had complained about this rule many times, but nothing changed... The only reason they were on this planet, earning those treasures, was because of the CRS Platform.

If they had problems with their rules, they could always give up their nests and turn into free-roaming nightcrawlers... antagonizing humans like jobless bums, as Levi remarked in the beginning.

"Grave'Maw seems of the type to sleep next to his treasures... His territory might have exceeded hundreds of kilometers; I am certain it's down here." Levi said, stomping on the ground below him.

He used his echolocation on the seismic shockwaves as a guiding system, wanting to spot any sort of disorder.

When his feet weren't enough to emit longer waves, he used his staff... He repeated this process over and over again until... Ting.

A peculiar, faint soundwave bounced back to him, different than the others... Noise, resembling metal being struck, but amplified until it could be heard.

"Here."

No hesitation, Levi walked, crouched, and even crawled amongst the rubble until he was near the location.

Then, he stood on top and murmured, "About fifty meters downward... I heard from Shia that Grave'Maw can merge with stones. It makes sense that he benefits from this advantage."

If he were capable of merging with stone and dirt... There was no need to create a path to the treasury.

In the case of Levi, there was no other way but to get dirty and dig. Levi tightened his grip on the staff, which had its tip positioned slightly above the floor.

Then, he murmured, "Echoforging: Resonance Drill."

The tip of the staff began to glow and buzz, transforming into a spinning drill made entirely of compressed sound waves!

It hummed softly at first, then grew louder, creating a loud disturbance... Levi came prepared to make noise, which made him think of a construct to negate it.

"Echoforging: Resonance Barrier."

The other crown of the staff created a strong field around him, which kept getting stronger and tougher, absorbing more noise... It was like feeding on vibrations.

With noise contained and an active drill in hand, Levi got to work.

He pressed the drill against the stone floor... The sound construct spun faster and faster, carving through the rock with a precision no ordinary tool could match.

Tiny shards of stone fell away, but the structure around him remained steady, untouched by cracks.

Levi pushed deeper, his arms straining as the drill pierced into the stubborn stone.

Dust stirred around him as he kept tunneling through the mountain's heart, the passage growing deeper with every rotation.

Minutes passed... and Levi was forced into a break.

His arms turned into noodles; the pressure wasn't a joke... Machines were used to dig for wells at depths much lower than this.

Although the Sound Drill was sharp enough to pierce through the stone, Levi still needed to push it through.

Sweat appeared on Levi's forehead, but he did not stop for too long... He went at it again, clearing the way toward the hidden treasury.

After a couple more breaks and about an hour or so... finally, the resistance lessened.

The staff's hum shifted tone... became lighter, almost melodic. That's where he saw it... a perfectly sealed door of stone, smooth and untouched.

"I made it," Levi mumbled.

He swiftly tightened his grip on the staff and dug through the door, separating him from untold riches.

Crack.. Rumble!!

The door couldn't stand against Levi's hunger for improvement... The instant a hole was blown in the door, Levi fell through it, landing on the floor.

His Harmonic Spine already showed him a shaky image of what to expect behind the thick door, but once it was gone?

A colorful world exploded in his mind... mostly lying in a soft golden glow.

The treasury was lit up dimly under a crystal chandelier emitting a soft yellow hue. But Levi had no use for such light, knowing its sole purpose was to keep the treasury from turning into a Stygian Gate.

If it were to happen, everything would have spilled into the Shadow dimension.

The shelves were carved from ancient wood and stone, which held countless natural treasures... gleaming crystals, rare herbs, and shimmering minerals harvested from unknown places.

The intricate artifacts of various grades were placed on top of small platforms in a straight line near the wall. Countless other treasures... jewels, scrolls, and enchanted books.

"Now this is a proper treasury." Levi grinned, his hands shaking a bit from exhaustion and excitement.

Wherever he looked, a rare treasure was there.