

Evolution 181

Chapter 181: Just Ash.

As soon as the countdown ended, the invisible barrier holding each Rifter in place dissolved instantly.

Rooooarr!!

Fifty Sand Gliders roared to life simultaneously... everyone leaning deeper into the board as they flew off the platform, resembling bees on launchpads.

With Levi's position at the front row, he knew he had only ten seconds before his entire world would be turned upside down.

The grace period was the only thing keeping him and the other frontliners from getting blasted by an elemental chaotic storm.

Some of them already bitched out, parting away from the group, knowing that it was a death sentence to remain at the front row for more than two hundred kilometers.

However, those with abilities that could enhance their speed didn't hesitate to abuse them regardless of their position in the pack.

Shadebite, Glassfang, and Red Gale... desired to break from the pack.

Shadebite crouched low, his glider's obsidian frame cutting through the sand... He looked like a starved werewolf, all skin and bones beneath a tattered dark cloak.

The bottom of his face exposed... his mouth wide open, showing the universe his set of sharp teeth and long tongue, playing with the wind.

He looked at Levi and the others, then said cockily with a slight wave of his hand... "Later, losers!"

In an instant, his glider dove into a dune... devoured with no trace left behind.

The Rifiers' eyelids twitched, knowing immediately that the f*cker had a great sense of smell, allowing him to detect the smallest changes in the environment based purely on scent.

It was clear... he found a shortcut relying on this!

Some Rifiers behind him didn't hesitate to give chase through the same hidden shortcut.

As for Glassfang and Red Gale... they chose their own ways to leave the rest behind.

Glassfang manifested a glass-like umbrella and tens of smaller shards... Then, he positioned the umbrella above his Glider while keeping the rest of the shards around it, affixed with his spiritual control.

He looked like a man sculpted from living glass... smooth plates of crystal interlocked over seams of molten light.

Sunlight splintered along his rough edges in shades of color... Beneath the desert's glare, his body flashed with blinding gleams that made meeting his gaze nearly impossible.

Yet, his unique body and powers turned out to be a cheat in this game... the umbrella, glass shards, and his body's structure seemed to reflect a concentrated level of sunlight straight into the Thermocryst Core!!

This made the core absorb more heat, producing more fuel and power.

Wheez!!

His Glider's speed almost doubled, speeding past everyone with a faint smirk.

Last but not least, Red Gale.

Based on his appearance, it was clear that he was built for speed... He was a humanoid hawk with storm-gray and crimson feathers, shifting restlessly in the breeze.

A sharp beak-like mask concealed his features, while his golden eyes pierced the distance.

Flight might be restricted, but he still didn't hesitate to take his Glider into the skies... shouting, "Gale Burst!"

The air compressed beneath the glider, releasing it in a sudden, explosive push that launched Red Gale forward in a short, high-speed dash!

He did this continuously until his Glider was launched into the air following a dune's climb.

"The Favorites have proved their worth!" Gamemaster Biscuits commented passionately. "Will the pack find a way to catch up, or will they turn on each other?!"

Three... Two... One.

"Let's find out!"

Gamemaster Biscuits canceled the grace period... giving everyone the right to hurt each other.

Immediately after, Levi, Sandwich, and every other Rifter at the front of the pack had their instincts tingle in danger...

Those who turned around were forced to gulp a mouthful in dread after noticing the majority of the Rifters had covered their bodies in barriers or shields while creating projectiles, ready to launch!

No hesitation... they fired them off at Levi and the others... their unprotected backs looking too juicy to ignore!

Sandwich waved her hand, and a giant sand palm emerged from a dune, smashing the projectiles away... her mysterious golden-green slitted pupils affixed on something else.

As for Levi? He didn't bother to waste his time on shields as he had no intention of getting hit... While others needed to look behind them to evade the barrage, Levi embraced it.

With his head affixed in place, Levi's glider tore across the dunes like a knife skimming a tide... the fury of the Elemental Barrage raging just behind him!

Boom! Boom! Bam!!...

Explosions split the sky, pillars of molten sand erupting where he'd been an instant earlier.

He turned sharply, skimming the slope so close that his board sent up glittering sprays of sand, then he used the jumping technique he learned in his training.

He pushed down on the Glider until the blades were about to kiss the sand... Then, he jumped like he would normally do, but the air pressure burst out, making him soar for a brief moment.

In that moment... sunlight flashed off his black hood before crashing back down, bouncing across the sand in a blur, dodging bolts of lightning and roaring walls of wind as if the storm could never catch him!

The Rifiers and the viewers were left slightly surprised, not expecting Levi to be this confident in his maneuver skills.

-How does he do it?! Are his ears that sensitive?!-

The viewers commented as they gazed at the zoomed camera on Levi, who was evading the second barrage with the same ease.

His face was a mere void, but the viewers had a feeling that a relaxed countenance must be behind it.

Meanwhile, the others did as they could to either evade or block the projectiles... Unfortunately, none had Levi's omnipotent Harmonic Spine's vision or powerful barriers to eat through the never-ending barrage.

Two Rifters had their shields pierced, forcing them to protect their vitals... Their vitals were spared, but unfortunately, their Gliders couldn't be.

The Thermocryst Core's protective black glass shattered after two small black wooden arrows pierced through it.

In this godforsaken game... Gliders were more important than one's limbs.

Crash! Crash!...

Their Gliders crashed into dunes and left them there, wounded and with no way to keep moving forward... Yet, they toughed through the pain and defended themselves, knowing that the f*ckers wouldn't leave them alone.

As expected, any Rifter passing by didn't hesitate to take a chance on slaying them for extra credits.

"Don't mind me if I do."

Razer's cheetah-like grin widened sinisterly as he glided in their direction, his arms stretched outward with razor-sharp claws... The claws were at least half a meter long, resembling genuine bladed weapons.

Once he was near them, his thin-like body frame was no more... His body suddenly swelled in size until he resembled a muscular, juiced-up humanoid cheetah!

Slice! Slice!!

Razer took advantage of their weakened state, his sharp claws passing through their necks, akin to butter... no resistance.

Then, he brought his claws to his mouth, licking the blood clean off them... his slitted pupils flashing red in hunger.

"Delicious," he said.

"Two out already!! The Razer showed his merciless side right from the start!" Gamemaster Biscuits shouted. "Once he craves blood, there is no stopping him... Who's the next poor victim?!"

Razer's voice suddenly resounded within the spread-out pack, who started to keep their distance from him... knowing that in his current state, he should be avoided at all costs.

"Bring me them cheeks, boy!"

Razer ignored them all, his bloodthirsty eyes affixed on Levi... his beating heart appearing in his sight.

It was steady, showing Levi's calmness... and yet, Razer still wanted a piece of him. He knew that once he eliminated him, he would have his viral moment that would propel him much higher on the platform.

He swiftly sped across the pack, leaning his body near flat on the board, like his bones were made out of rubber.

The Sand Glider pierced through the rising chaos, evading everything until he was mere ten meters or so away from Levi.

'How persistent...'

Levi murmured coldly, leaning lower to increase his speed while breaking off the path towards the finish line.

"Cute try... But, once I set myself on someone... my hunger will be satiated only by his blood!" The Razer laughed maniacally, his crimson eyes pulsing nonstop.

It was clear... his rational thinking was hijacked by instinct.

"The Celestial and Razer have broken off the pack!"

Gamemaster Biscuits switched the focus from the main pack to the Razer's chase, knowing that the viewers wanted to see how it was going to end.

And thus... everyone watched.

Levi and Razer were climbing up a tall dune, the distance between them narrowing bit by bit.

Once Levi neared the peak, he accelerated to the limit, launching himself in midair with a burst of sand sprinkled in the skies.

Then, as calm as the air before a storm... Levi did a wide backflip while transforming the staff into the Starpiercer Rifle.

Mid-spin, the Starpiercer Rifle locked into place in his hands, its frame fully painted black... Levi had customized it as well to minimize any similarities.

'Ignition Marks.'

Phew! Phew!

Two Sunflame Ignition rounds burst from the muzzle... one grazing past Razer's head, avoided only by reflex, but the other... There was nothing he could do but try to defend his face with his clawed arms.

Hsssss!

The mark imprinted itself into a sun-shaped brand on his skin, burning off his fur and sending a painful jolt across Razer's system.

'This... it can't be...'

As a Nightcrawler... The Razer was all too familiar with sunlight-related injuries. He had been burned many times, narrowly escaping death.

Each time, he had to cut off a limb to avoid the flames spreading across his body... Sunlight and sunfire were like a plague to Nightcrawlers... A relationship similiar to a gasoline and a match.

And Levi was holding the match.

The moment he completed the flip and landed smoothly atop the dune, he snapped his finger... Razer was still mid-air, still questioning if what he felt was right.

He didn't have to question it any further...

BOOOOM!

The mark flared... then his arms exploded into fierce golden flames, catching his entire body off guard!

AAAAAAAAaaaa...

The Razer managed to let out a single harrowing scream as the sunflames consumed his body like it was made out of paper.

No more taunts, no more insults, no more... Just ash.

Under the stunned eyes of the viewers... The Razer's ash scattered instantly in the air... leaving not a single strand behind.

His glider was the only thing that spoke of his existence, smashing against the dune uncontrollably before lying there... silently.

The silence matched the atmosphere... no one uttering a single word, the eye-filled skies merged into a single reaction.

Disbelief.

Meanwhile, Levi glided away without looking back... his Starpiercer Rifle breaking off into shadowy flowers, leaving him to focus on catching up with the rest of the pack.

Woaaaaaaaah!!! The Celestial!!! The Celestial!!!...

Then, time unfroze... The already die-hard fans of Levi didn't hesitate to chant his name at the top of their lungs, their eyes turning bloodshot from excitement.

They had no idea what had just happened, and they didn't seem to care that much... purely relishing the moment!

But the rest were different... Shocked murmurs rippled through the skies.

-Was that...? No... that's impossible.-

-The staff... it changed shape, didn't it? When was that a thing for this rank?-

-What kind of shot can instantly burn one?!-

-The kind none of us dare touch...-

A spectating veteran Nightcrawler uttered solemnly, his eyes affixed on Levi's back... Many thoughts roamed through his mind, doubting them nonstop.

Was that the actual Radians' infamous Sunflames? If it were, how could Levi wield them when Radians' starting rank in both platforms was not the same as the rest?

Two words landed on his mouth... Half-Blood.

Those thoughts roamed through many viewers and Gamemaster Biscuits as well.

'Half-Blood Radian in my game... This, this game's viewership is going to explode!!'