

Evolution 201

Chapter 201: The Strongest Holy Region.

Unbeknownst to the ongoing spiritual conversation between the two, Lord Hicham accepted Levi as the captain and moved on to the most important discussion... Their rivals in the upcoming Event.

Lord Hicham manifested a giant three-dimensional holographic screen of their planet before the infestation took over... It was as beautiful as a sapphire gemstone.

Before the others could appreciate it, he waved his hand, and the world was no longer the same.

A massive pitch-dark thunderstorm stretched for thousands of kilometers across every continent except Antarctica, consuming the world... The last one loomed over the Pacific Ocean, its singularity at the very center.

The thunderclaps were so powerful, they reverberated across the training center.

"The Seven Eternal Empire nests..." Shia mumbled, dread escaping from her tone.

"Yes... These are the current seven most powerful nests on our planet... Each one is believed to be ruled by a Tier 8 nightcrawler." Lord Hicham smiled, "But, you don't have to worry about them, the CRS Platform is keeping their expansion in check."

"Figures." Arthur nodded, "With this kind of overwhelming strength, they could have conquered our planet long ago."

"Well, they can conquer land through corruption, but if they want to conquer holy regions, they have to deal with our Guardians... They aren't any weaker." Lord Hicham said.

Lord Hicham expected such news to draw some positive reactions... but he was puzzled to see their unchanging stern expressions.

Unbeknownst to him, Instructor Seraphis had already aired out their shitty situation in the first lesson.

Levi and the others knew that their Guardians might be powerful, but they were in cahoots with the high-tiered nests.

They would not attack any nest as long as they didn't attack them back... In this manner, the nightcrawlers' nests could expand their territory slowly through corruption, earning them more yearly rewards.

As for the Guardians? They would also earn yearly stability rewards each circle went by, and their holy region stood strong.

Although the rewards increased with more territory added inside their holy light... the planet was believed to be a lost cause as it didn't have any sort of potential to have it protected for eternity under the Tree of Life's banner.

Thus... they already knew that the moment those seven massive pitch-black thunderstorms consumed the continents as a whole, their planet and everyone on it would be a goner...

"You know... huh?" Lord Hicham smiled bitterly, "Seraphis... how can he burden you with such a harsh truth this early on?"

"He burdened us with nothing..." Levi said while signing simultaneously, "He wanted us to aim for saving our home planet... putting his faith in us."

The others nodded in support, none of them shying away from such a strenuous mission... Whether they could pull it off or not was one thing, but aiming to be strong enough to do it was another.

Seraphis didn't want them to live on the same lie given to others... the lie of humans slowly winning against the invasion.

"He cared for us enough not to let us get blinded by the ugly truth later on in life... We love and respect him for this... Namaste." Jojo clasped her hand as she murmured a soft prayer for his recovery, and for the Hound to remain imprisoned forever.

The others wished for the same as well, under Lord Hicham's pleased smile... he could tell that his students really cared for him even after what happened in the expedition.

He preferred his daughter hanging around with people like them instead of the scum, who cared only about themselves and their contracted nightcrawlers.

There were too many to count, unfortunately...

"Alright, those empires have no business occupying your mind for now... we still have a lot of time before the corruption devours our planet whole."

Lord Hicham waved his hand and hid the storms in the background... Then, he highlighted the existing Holy Regions across the globe, using holy beacons above their territories.

Some regions had holy pillars as small as a five-kilometer radius, barely visible on the map... They were spread out across the continents, with some even being on islands far away from the mainland.

Fortunately, the average was based on Heliodor's region... a hundred kilometers radius more or less, containing the main city and the surrounding outskirts.

Then, there were the supermassive regions... Their holy pillars were large enough to cover a close to a thousand-kilometer radius!

Though there were only seven regions with this kind of reach... Each one was positioned on a continent.

Lord Hicham moved the globe with a finger until it was positioned on the supermassive holy region in the Eastern Asia District... more specifically, Ancient China.

Then, he pressed on the massive beacon of light and had most of the region's public details on display, appearing as such:

//Halamar's Holy Region— Ancient Beijing, China (Northern District, Asia)

Strongest Agency: Imperial Sun Vanguard (Tier 6)

Leader: Zhang Wei-Lan

Strongest Lineage Family: Imperial Sun Lineage.

Family Head: Zhang Wei-Lan

Region's High Chancellor: Zhang Wei-Lan.

Global Ranking: 1st.//

"This is the current strongest region in the world... and our biggest rivals in the upcoming Raid Campaign. They were the only ones to win the Campaign, giving humanity its first-ever legit win against nightcrawlers on a dimensional stage."

"Because of that win, their region has been blessed with a massive increase in their holy pillar, allowing them to gain more territory... in addition to more benefits that helped them snowball their improvement to what it has become now."

After Lord Hicham concluded, he pressed on the agency's name: Imperial Sun Vanguard.

Immediately after, all of its Raiding Squads were listed from strongest to weakest.

When Arthur saw the list crossed a hundred Raiding Squads, his expression turned dumbfounded.

"What the... a hundred raiding squads?"

"Don't be too surprised." Nurah shared calmly, "Halamar's region has only five agencies... all of them have a Blazewarden Daywalker as their leader. Instead of having tens of agencies, they have implemented a rule where only Blazewarden Daywalker has the right to create an agency... the rest of Daywalkers have to swear their allegiance to one of the five available agencies."

"Damn... how could they pull it off?" Arthur wondered.

In his eyes, this couldn't be easy without leaving behind bloodshed... In their region, anyone could create an agency as long as they reached Warden rank. If the High Council were to remove such freedom, it wouldn't end pleasantly since those agencies were tied to the birth of Family Lineage.

"That's the authority of Zhang Wei-Lan and his lineage... He was the leader of the raiding squad that won the Raid Campaign two decades ago and blessed his region. Ever since then, his squad has never stopped performing gloriously in the raids, helping his region increase its size little by little. Once he evolved to Blazewarden rank, he was voted for by the people to become the High Chancellor." Lord Hicham shared with a tint of respect in his voice, "He installed the reformation for the sake of uniting the region even further... everyone respected his leadership and rules, even if it meant allowing their agencies to get absorbed by others. Halamar's region climbed to number one in no time, and ever since then, it has never let go."

Levi and the others showed similar respectful looks, knowing he was a natural-born leader. It wasn't easy to lead a region in this new chaotic era... to lead it to such greatness was even harder.

"Unfortunately for us... His son, and the current most favorable heir to the Imperial Sun Lineage, will be leading his squad in the current Campaign."

Lord Hicham smiled wryly while showing them some videos of the heir and his squad... As they watched the clips of a six-member squad absolutely demolishing any nightcrawler's nest before them, Levi and the rest were left silent.

The squad consisted of three boys and three girls... each one carrying their own unique aura and style.

The leader was a handsome dark-haired man with a long ponytail... He was wearing a skin-tight leather gray armor with a black jacket on top.

He was holding a giant briar pipe crafted out of elegant decorative blue porcelain material... it was emitting a smoky blue aura behind him while he stood above a ruined corpse of a nightcrawler.

A peculiar signature weapon.

"This is Zhang Yanhuan... The Imperial Sun Lineage Heir." Lord Hicham introduced solemnly, "He is believed to have evolved to Warden Rank using nothing but perfect evolutions... They say the only reason he chose to remain at a Warden rank was because he wants to continue on a perfect evolutionary path... His family has hired Dr. Issac himself to help them find the formula."

"Sheesh... Talk about having the resources of an entire region behind you."

Arthur exclaimed, understanding that Yanhuan was literally backed by the strongest and richest region in the world.

Even the greatest evolutionist in their current times was hired by them privately... something not many regions dared to pull, knowing that Dr. Isaac's conditions were simply too ludicrous to fulfill.

"Sure... their region might be rich enough to hire Dr. Isaac, but we aren't completely hopeless." Lord Hicham smiled, "Once we are done here... Lord Idriss has prepared a pleasant gift for each of you."

'As expected... Lord Idriss will handle our evolutions.' Levi thought, knowing that he would share the crafted evolutionary formulas, not the knowledge itself.

The knowledge itself was priceless... and even Halamar's region couldn't afford to pay Dr. Isaac to create two pages of his booklit.

"Sir... shouldn't we be worried about the competing nightcrawlers' nests?" Arthur scratched his head in confusion, "Although those raiding squads are terrifying, we won't be fighting them, right? In the end, it's us humans vs nightcrawlers in the tournament."

"If only it were that simple..." Lord Hicham shook his head.

Chapter 202: The Raid.

However, instead of explaining the situation, he told them that everything would be understood once they qualified... for now, they needed to earn their spot in the tournament, and the registration period was around the corner.

He handed them a file filled with information about their other rivaling regions, as there were plenty of them signed up for the event... Five noteworthy mentions:

Veythralis' Region – Northern District, North America.

Auravel's Region – Central District, Europe

Eryndral's Region – Southern District, Africa

Thalurean's Region – Eastern District, South America

Elyraeth's Region – Far Northern District, Asia.

Veythoria's Region – Eastern District, Australia.

Those five regions were powerful enough to contest against Halamar's region.

Then, he expanded the holographic globe on the continent of Africa, or more precisely, the Northern District... Heliodor's Region was positioned on the western side facing the Atlantic Ocean. From its location, it was clear that Morocco's capital, Rabat, was the one blessed.

There were other Holy regions near it, the closest being Lumoria's Region... which was across the Mediterranean Sea, positioned in what used to be called Madrid.

But everyone focused more on the highlighted, shadowy pillars covering great areas of the Northern District... Some were small, and some devoured a decent amount of territories.

These were Nightcrawlers' nests, and each of the known ones was documented depending on how many attempts were made to destroy them.

Lord Hicham pressed a relatively small nest about a hundred kilometers east of their region... Its details appeared as such:

//Nest Rank: Shadow Castle.

Nest Leader: Syc'closs (Tier 4)

Leader's Conqueror rank: Invader

Conquest Team: Zyrr'Kalith, Druv'Shaar, Kraev'Morr, Thyss'Rahl, Orr'Vekth.

Conquest Team Name: The Drowned Court.

Successful Defenses: One.

Territory Size: Fifteen square kilometers.//

"After thorough research, we believe this nest shall serve best as your first Raid... It's challenging compared to what other raiders start with, but you aren't like any other raiders." Lord Hicham smiled, "Still, if you feel like it's too much for you, do tell."

Everyone turned to Levi, their captain, who was already in the process of studying the nest's details... he read about the nest's leader, his powers, his team's fighting style, and such.

Once he finished, he nodded in approval. "Seems good."

The others supported his decision immediately.

"When do we start?" Arthur cracked his knuckles with a grin.

"Create a team first, give it a name, and put an application on the CRS Platform... If all the requirements match, it will be approved, and you can start putting out challenges on nests." Lord Hicham shared.

"I believe the team's name is already decided." Levi smiled, "Heliodor's Raiders... no need to make it too extravagant."

"Agreed."

Shia, Nurah, and Jojo nodded in approval.

"Really... it sounds lukewarm." Arthur tightened his fist in front of them, "We need a glorious name, a name that will strike terror into everyone's hearts!"

Seeing his friends' unmoving expressions, Arthur turned to Jasmine and asked for her help with a pleading look.

Alas... Jasmine shook her head and pointed her slender finger at Levi's... her choice was clear.

"Damn it... Fine, Heliodor's Raiders it is." Arthur gave in, seeing that all the girls were on his brother's side.

Once the decision was made, everyone opened their CRS spiritual Profile Interface, which resembled a nocturnal contract, but with their details written on it.

CRS Platform – Raider Faction Profile:

Profile Name: Levi Larson

Raid Team:

Undecided.

Current Rank: Marauder (3000 RP required for promotion)

Total Raid Points (RP): Null

Total Raids Won: Null

Total Raids Failed: Null

Winstreak: Null

Value of Total Treasures Sacked: Null

CRS Genie Wishes Earned: Null

Fastest Raid Recorded: Null

Privileges Unlocked: Null

Next Rankup Requirements: 3000 RP

Achievements: Null

Profile Title: Null

The profile interface was more or less similar to Nocturnal's Ring with slight differences... such as the promotion criteria depending on Raid Points collected.

The Raid Points were collected throughout four criteria: the value of the treasures looted in the end, the size of the territory raided, speed & efficiency (how fast the raid went), and last but not least, the Raid's title... which was connected to the CRS Genie Wishing Mechanism. But more on that later.

Three thousand RP as a promotion was quite significant, but it wasn't based on the individual, but the team... In other words, if the team collected the points, they could be used to get promoted together.

Levi pressed the Raid Team button and was sent to another tab, showing him his name as the team's founder and captain... five empty boxes were listed underneath it with three words written in the center.

-Invite a member-

Levi sent his brother and friends invitations, which they received and accepted in a heartbeat. Immediately, their pictures showed up in the boxes while their details were written beside them.

Once the six boxes were filled, a button lit up at the bottom: -Approve.-

Levi pressed it, and everyone watched three dots appear in the middle of the spiritual screen, resembling a loading screen.

Though the wait lasted barely ten seconds before a sentence showed up.

-Congratulations... Heliodor's Raiders Team has been created! You are eligible to start your Raids... Best of luck!-

"I guess we are in business now," Shia smirked, removing a lollipop from her mouth.

"Heliodor's Raiders... I wish it were taken or something. But again... who will take such a crappy name?" Arthur mumbled under his breath, still not fond of the name.

Everyone heard Arthur's mumbling protests, but no one gave him any attention but Levi, who uttered calmly, "Arthy, a name is nothing... until you make it mean something."

Lord Hicham smiled in approval, knowing that there were thousands of epic-sounding team names across the globe... yet, none seemed to remember them.

"If you want to voice your challenge, just will it, and a similar spiritual map of the world will show up before you." Lord Hicham said.

Levi did as he was told and was fascinated to see a nocturnal contract lie flat in front of him, and then, releasing a spiritual map with black and golden pillars spread out across it.

Levi moved the planet with his finger and zoomed in on the Northern District until he found The Drowned Court team and their nest.

Once he clicked on them, he was met with two choices:

-Standard Raid.-

-Customized Raid.-

Levi pressed on Standard Raid and clicked again on the confirmation message... once he confirmed his decision, four messages appeared on everyone's screens.

-The Raid will be launched in fifteen days... Time is based on the Timezone of the nest.-

-The CRS Platform will choose a Gamemaster, who will handle the Death Game's details... but, as per the rules, the map chosen will favor the defending faction.-

-You will be invited to the Game Hall in twenty-four hours.-

-May your plunder be plenty.-

"The nest should have received our challenge, and will start their preparations thoroughly." Lord Hicham crossed his hands behind his back, his expression stern but tone soft, "Based on the timing, the Raid will begin a week after we register in the Great Campaign, which will help us keep up with the rest of the contestants."

"So, it's best to take those fifteen days seriously and work together to build some cooperation and familiarity." Lord Hicham concluded, "Lord Idriss will take it from here... visit him in an hour, he will be waiting."

Once he finished, Lord Hicham nodded at them with a gentle smile and a gaze that lingered on his daughter's face... then, he turned around and left, knowing that his daughter must be given some alone time with her new friends to get along with.

Jasmine gazed at her father's back for a moment and then turned around to look at Levi and the others, who started talking about visiting the restaurant's rooftop for lunch.

Of course, everything uttered was shown as holograms for her... only Levi was using hand signs since he couldn't use holograms.

Seeing this, Jasmine's gothic dark lips couldn't help but curl slightly in intrigue.

'How can he see? He seems too natural for someone blind...' She thought as she touched her ear, 'I should ask him... maybe he knows a way to help me hear?'

However, just as she was about to ask him, Shia and Nurah slipped their arms around hers and said, "Jasmine, let's go grab some food... There is so much to talk about, and you ain't running away this time."

'Ah...'

Jasmine glanced behind her at Levi's, but in the end, she couldn't muster a sound...

Chapter 203: Cindral Rot Curse.

Jasmine rarely spoke.

Not because she was mute, but because speech without hearing was like painting without seeing the colors... With little to no sound returning to her, every word felt uncertain, unshaped. For Jasmine, who was born deaf? It was much harder.

Some learn to cope with it and still give it their all to speak, and some keep their voice sealed forever.

After spending some time chatting on the rooftop during lunch, everyone seemed to have figured out that Jasmine was the latter.

She never made a single sound, and even when she conversed through holograms, her sentences were brief and precise.

She made them feel like they were talking with an emotionless robot... a question, and an answer.

Though Levi didn't seem to care that much about it... keeping the same serene smile on as he talked with her through hand signs.

As someone with a disability... he knew just how hard it was to fit in, and he refused to give up on Jasmine just because she wasn't as responsive or lively as everyone else.

While the others switched to a different conversation, Levi and Jasmine were left talking alone on the side about their disabilities and why they weren't healed yet.

-I have tried everything... from surgeries to a cyborg eye... My body rejected them all.- Levi signed, pointing at his eyes with a bitter smile.

-Ah... that's unfortunate.- Jasmine tilted her head, -Then, if you don't mind me asking... how can you see? Is it through echolocation, or something similar?-

Levi nodded and added, -Also through spiritual vision.-

He didn't mention his Harmonic Spine mutation since he still hadn't told or shown it to anyone... he wanted to see if it was possible to sneak in the mutation during his evolution through Pathfinder rank.

No one would find it weird even if he had two mutations awakened.

Levi was this cautious because he knew that if it were discovered he had undergone perfect evolution while also helping Shia achieve hers to Pathfinder rank, it would inevitably raise suspicion about his involvement in the treasury's trade.

It was somewhat bizarre that, aside from Jasmine, the entire superteam had their perfect evolutions included in the booklet.

Levi preferred keeping it at the bizarre stage, rather than the suspicious stage.

-Ah... although it's not perfect sight, it is still better than my situation.- Jasmine tapped on her ear with a fleeting, pained smile, -My ears are infected with a curse called Cindral Rot.-

-Cindral Rot?- Levi questioned, never heard of such a curse before.

-It's a curse that causes its victims to lose all sense of hearing due to prolonged exposure to the corrupting howls of the Shadow Dimension.-

Levi frowned, thinking about how she could get exposed to such a heavy dose of corruption to catch the disease and still survive.

He knew that the Shadow dimension's corruption was like a slow-burning radiation beam... they did damage based on their potency and exposure.

Even then, the corruption usually killed the person right away or infected them with so many curses, they wouldn't last a week.

In the case of Jasmine... the conditions for her to survive with a mere hearing loss were too strict.

So strict, his mind came up with a single possibility... a possibility that he refused to accept. Just as he was pondering whether to ask for confirmation or not, Jasmine signed with a calm expression.

-I was born in the Shadow Dimension.-

Levi was left dazed...

He predicted the answer, but he didn't expect Jasmine to air such a heavy secret on the first day of their meeting.

He could tell that her father must have warned her to keep it to herself, since if the news were to get out, many people might consider her a Nightcrawler in a human form, or at least, a Sleepwalker.

After all, to be born in the Shadow dimension as a human and survive to tell the tale? It was no ordinary story.

-I see... Is there any remedy for such a curse?-

Levi asked, not making too big a deal about it. Although he was surprised and curious about the inner details, the news didn't move much in him.

After all, with everything he was hiding... such a situation was a normal Tuesday to him.

When Jasmine saw his genuine casualness on the matter, she couldn't help but smile a little. She could tell he wasn't faking such a reaction to not hurt her feelings.

He really wasn't bothered by her origins.

-I don't know...-

-If you don't know, it only means that you aren't at the right level for such knowledge.- Levi smiled, - Now that we have access to the CRS Platform, you can scour the dimensional network for answers.-

The moment Levi and the others signed the CRS Platform's Rifter contract, they were given access to the dimensional network, anywhere, anytime, free of charge... unlike the Nocturnal Ring that handed such access only to territory owners.

As Levi and Jasmine were speaking, the others were fooling around in the dimensional network, discovering the immensity of the universe with their own eyes.

-Already tried... no one has a tested permanent cure.- Jasmine added, -My goal is to be strong and rich enough to hire an Alchemist to concoct a potion called The All Healing Elixir... it seems to be the sole solution.-

'The All Healing Elixir?' Ash'Kral scoffed, 'Your little girlfriend is living in a fantasy world.'

'Why are you saying that?' Levi's brow twitched, not falling for his teasing.

'The All Healing Elixir is an ancient grade SS Potion capable of literally healing anything wrong with a person, even if they were cursed by the Tree of Death itself. Also, it increases their longevity x10 regardless of one's age.'

'It's that potent?' Levi was startled, not expecting Jasmine to have information about such a sacred Elixir.

The answer came right away.

'It is, and because of its potency, its recipe has long been erased with anyone capable of concocting it... I don't know what kind of information she has, but it's either fake or a scam artist trying to swindle money out of people's desperation.'

The moment Levi heard this, he felt a wave of sympathy wash over him as he gazed at the tint of resolve in Jasmine's eyes.

She really wanted her hearing back as badly as he wanted his sight... real sight, not through vibrations, even though it was superior to what he had.

He was missing something that was part of him, and he wanted it back no matter what... he could tell, Jasmine felt the same way as him.

Thus, he kept such knowledge to himself... because he knew that if someone came to him right now and told him that his chances of retrieving his eyes and sight back were zero, he would feel more devastated than appreciative.

'I have no right to shatter her dreams... the universe is vast, and Ash'Kral doesn't know everything in it.' Levi murmured inwardly, 'As long as she keeps treading on her journey, an opportunity might arise... but, if she gives up without trying, her fate will be sealed forever.'

Levi lifted his cup of bubbling minted tea and pushed it in front of Jasmine with a serene smile. Understanding that he was going for a toast, Jasmine lifted hers, and they clicked their cups together while doing almost the same sign.

-To retrieve what's ours.-

-To take back what was stolen.-

Meanwhile, when Nurah and Shia saw those two hitting it off and even making toasts, they couldn't help but glance at each other... they saw it in each other's eyes.

A real threat was here.

Sometime later...

Everyone gathered at the Blood Hunters' Headquarters main training center... Lord Idriss and Madam Naima met them together, their expressions stern, yet failing to hide away the euphoria of finding the perfect evolutionary formula booklet.

They weren't foolish... when they found the cleared-out treasury and those pages stuck on the walls, they were utterly outraged. They understood that someone came after and cleared them out, avoiding the eyes of their scouts.

They didn't put any scouts from their agency alone, but hired powerful ones from the Midnight Slayers as well... for the treasury to still get cleared out, it made them understand that either a much more powerful entity had done it or someone had sneaked within the mountain through the Shadow dimension.

But, before their rage could consume them, they found the pages and had their details checked by their private Evolutionists... they didn't expect much from them, believing that it was some kind of a joke. Yet, their Evolutionists had proved the validity of the formulas, telling them that each one had a perfect theory!

That's when it hit them... they might have just gotten the best trade of the century.

Still, they didn't celebrate until they tested each formula in the Boundless Expanse, hiring the services of one of the many Alchemists who had turned their territories into private testing grounds for any type of formula or potion... With their high omnipotent authority, they provided testing subjects fitting each formula's requirement.

Of course... they were real testing dummies.

This costed a fortune compared to testing formulas the normal way... through trial and error. Thus, they tested only a couple of formulas using this method while leaving the others to their private Evolutionists to test out on desperate Daywalkers for evolutions across the world.

One would be surprised how many would sign up for human trials if the formula's grade were perfect.

With results coming back positive, Lord Idriss and Madam Naima were on cloud nine ever since then.

"Lord Hicham has updated me on the situation... Congratulations on becoming Raiders." Lord Idriss nodded once and then continued before anyone could feel happy, "Your first raid is in two weeks, which isn't a lot of time, but we have been working hard in the background to kickstart your preparations."

Madam Naima stepped forward and announced calmly, "We have decided to help all of you push three stages at least and evolve if it's possible before your raid... but first, you have to sign an NDA contract."

"NDA contract?" Shia frowned, "We have signed our lives to fight against monsters for our region's glory and benefits, and yet, we are still required to sign such contracts?"

The others weren't as ballsy as Shia to phrase it like this, but from their expressions... it was clear, no one liked it.

"The NDA is to keep you and us safe from what we are about to give you."

Lord Idriss pulled out four boxes from his dimensional wallet... each box appeared luxurious, making everyone's breath hitch a little.

"I am down." Arthur immediately caved in, offering his signature.

Chapter 204: Equilibrium of Chaos.

Jojo and the others rolled their eyes at him and did the same... although they still weren't too pleased with it, they knew that Lord Idriss wasn't the type to mess around.

Once they signed, Lord Idriss and Madam Naima showed two beaming smiles and opened the boxes, exposing four shimmering evolutionary formulas contained in glass bottles... Each one looked more unique and mysterious than the other.

"Are those?" Jojo's eyes widened in disbelief... a reaction shared by everyone besides Jasmine.

Even Levi acted surprised, not wanting to draw suspicion on him... Jasmine was quiet and expressionless by nature, but not him.

"Yes... Four perfect evolutionary formulas for your next evolution." Madam Naima nodded, "It took the top three agencies and the government a massive amount of resources to test the formulas in the Boundless Expanse and purchase the materials for it... But we promised you full support, and that's what you will get from us."

Everyone was still in a daze after the confirmation, feeling like a prank was being played on them... they understood just how expensive such formulas would have cost if they were to purchase them from the dimensional network or other sources.

Don't even mention the price for the materials, and to check the validity of the formulas... A fortune was an understatement.

But no one was foolish enough to ask them if they had gotten them like this or through other means... not even Arthur.

People got killed for such knowledge, and this made them recognize the importance of the NDA to avoid slipping up and airing it out.

Also, the NDA contract was in place to slightly chill their souls as a reminder to keep their mouths shut, not as a punishment.

"We all know perfect formulas are priceless treasures... so, if anyone were to ask you about your evolutions or future mutations, you lie..." Lord Idriss uttered sternly, "It's one thing for a region to have a couple of perfect evolutions spread out, and another to have a full team of them... especially when our region isn't the richest out there."

"Wait... what do you mean by all of us?" Arthur tilted his head in confusion, "I only see four?"

'Good, don't screw your brother over... he trusted you with the information, don't make him regret it.'

Khu'zan approved of Arthur acting ignorant about the situation.

'I know, I would never...' Arthur's eyelids twitched, disliking being treated as a child.

But, he kinda had it coming with his big mouth.

Khu'zan was requested by Levi personally to keep his little brother's mouth shut, knowing that he had no locks on, and almost always aired secrets out without realizing it.

As for the recording? Levi told him when the device was 'charging'...

Levi couldn't risk exposing his Three-Body Problem identity to Arthur since it was much more serious than this, but he didn't hesitate to bring him in on what he did to the treasury.

They were brothers who never hid anything from each other... complete trust. If it weren't for Neuralink getting in the way, Arthur would have been knowledgeable about everything... maybe, even the Three-Body Problem situation, as Levi knew he couldn't hide the truth forever from him.

Though for now, Levi refused to keep hiding anything with a slight inconvenience outside of his little brother's scope... They would be on each other's sides always, and Arthur needed to be brought in on Levi's secrets one by one until the day he got his wisp inside his spiritual Leywell or vice versa... Only then could they communicate in utter privacy.

'Good... Khu'zan is fixing him straight.'

Seeing his reaction, even Levi smiled in approval.

Meanwhile, Lord Idriss had just finished explaining to everyone that they currently had only formulas for Levi, Arthur, Nurah, and Jojo... the ones needing to evolve to Pathfinder rank.

As for Shia and Jasmine, one was at the Pathfinder rank, and the other at the Warden rank.

"Also, we have perfect evolutionary formulas for your evolution to Warden rank... We are still struggling to collect all the materials required for their creation." Lord Idriss turned to gaze at Jasmine and said, "Unfortunately, we have yet to find yours to Solarbound rank."

Reading the holographic sentence under his lips, Jasmine shook her head with a neutral demeanor... then she replied, -I am okay... help my teammates first.-

Seeing this, Levi didn't show much of a reaction besides respect... he respected Jasmine being cool about them getting perfect evolutionary formulas without her.

It would make anyone feel left out and unappreciated... although she was already at the Warden rank, seeing them receive Perfect evolutionary formulas while they failed to help her obtain even a Remarkable evolutionary formula was an upsetting situation for anyone.

Yet she didn't seem bothered in the slightest.

"We want you to reach at least the second stage of Pathfinder rank before your first raid, and we are planning to invest a heavy amount of growth totems to make it happen." Madam Naima added, "Also, for the next two weeks, you will be training under the three agencies' roofs, six times a week for three hours each."

"I hope that's not a problem?" Madam Naima gazed at Levi as she said it, not forgetting how he went missing for a week to 'train'.

Everyone chuckled at Levi shaking his head with a wry smile. Then, she clapped her hands twice and handed them the formulas... she told them to keep the formulas secured before they reached the evolution stage, as it was their own responsibility.

If they lost or broke them... There was no second bottle.

After the meeting concluded, everyone was sent home and was told that tomorrow would be the official start of their preparations... today was for signing the contract and meeting their last member, Jasmine.

They didn't forget to hand them boxes filled with tens of growth totems, with Levi being handed the most due to his condition... reaching up to sixty growth totems!

If the government and the three biggest agencies said we got you... They actually meant it!

Levi thanked them for the generosity, as he knew that they were placing a massive bet on him... they had no clue about his ability to absorb divine light, and they still committed to putting him on the team and shouldering the responsibility of his growth.

A blind Daywalker's true problem was always in the Pathfinder rank, where the resources needed to evolve would dig a hole in anyone's pockets.

...

After the squad split up to go on a feeding session with those growth totems, Levi decided to do the same and push his evolution to reach at least 5% to unlock his first spiritual-based Aspect, and start the music.

Once he got home with Arthur, they both entered their rooms and closed the door... having the same plan.

Arthur was already at the first stage and wanted to push straight to the third stage of his junior rank to prepare for the evolution... meanwhile, Levi wished that the growth totems and the divine light sessions would help him get close to the second stage.

If not, he would use his nocrix credits to purchase what he needed in the Infinity store... With that expensive business plan in his mind, he was trying to be frugal.

"Here we go..."

Levi started his cultivation session after using his echolocation to scan the perimeter like always.

After he completed his first session, stopping once he felt his body about to change colors, Levi checked how much he had gained.

'0,05%... Horrible as always.' He frowned.

'Well, you used to stop only after smoke started to rise from your body... but now, there is too much heat on you, anyone can be spying.' Ash'Kral said lazily.

Levi knew he was right... he still couldn't forget how Madam Ysara had gotten so close to him in the auction without him realizing it.

It made him recognize that if she decided to spy on him, he would never be able to spot her... not at his current level.

'It's best if you go out on your little pet like always... no matter who follows you, they can't keep up the same speed while still maintaining their camouflage.' Ash'Kral said, 'Not when your senses are too sharp.'

'It seems like the only way... damn it, I can't even feel at peace in my own home.'

Levi sighed while standing up, realizing that keeping so many secrets wasn't a good feeling at all.

About ten minutes later...

Levi did a massive circle around Heliodor's region and then reentered it when he noticed that no one was behind him... only this time, he didn't return home.

He settled in an apple forest on the outskirts, near the borders... Since the divine light was blessing the entire territory, he could cultivate here just as effectively as in his home.

This time... Levi didn't stop absorbing the divine light until he reached his limits, with smoke arising from his red skin. Only then did he halt it and take a deep gasp, feeling his throat as dry as the desert.

Still, Levi wasn't that satisfied after checking his progress.

'0,3%... It's an upgrade... but still, too slow.' He held his chin thoughtfully, 'Although I have the freedom to go anywhere I want as long as I attend the six weekly sessions, I can't afford to remain this slow when I still have two more seeds to deal with... There must be another way to optimise the Nine Senses seed growth.'

Levi used the break to think more thoroughly about enhancing his cultivation pace... the divine light was still amazing, though, it was his body that couldn't handle an extended session.

'The Nine Senses seed can absorb any type of energy... this means also dark energy filling the Shadow dimension. but...'

Levi shook his head, knowing that if he wanted to absorb dark energy, he couldn't use Umbral Crown... The dark energy was a big ingredient in the Shadow Dimension's corrupting atmosphere.

Levi could not absorb it alone without getting corrupted... Jasmine was living proof of what corruption could do to one without immunity for it.

'If the Shadow Dimension is off option at the moment... how about I absorb dark energy from the spiritual bridge of darkness as I have been doing while simultaneously absorbing the divine light?' Levi pondered deeply, 'Will the heat and coldness negate each other or make it worse?'

Levi had this idea swimming in his mind for a while now, but he had never gotten the chance to test it out thoroughly since he needed to find concentrated dark energy around the region... He was too busy to go on such a tiresome hunt again.

Levi didn't bother asking Ash'Kral if his past partners had tested it... Ash'Kral had told him that he was the only partner he had with the Radian bloodline, giving him access to absorb the divine light.

The others had some sort of bloodlines with an extremely thin link to Radians that helped them a bit with the Sun Origin Seed, but none could touch a genuine Radian Bloodline.

As Levi started searching for a concentrated cloud of dark energy, using his sound-based radar... The Titan was sipping tea with Ash'Kral, watching him work hard on his growth.

"The boy is quite special... a blind Half-Radian human Daywalker with stolen special eyes, who can also sense dark energy... how bizarre can he get?" The Titan chuckled, "Yet, for such an impossible problem... this uniqueness will come in handy."

"Why do you think I have decided to groom... cough, to keep my eye on him when he was young?" Ash'Kral continued against the Titan's judgmental look, "He fits too well... it's like his purpose in life is to solve the Three-Body Problem."

"Purpose..." The Titan murmured, "I don't think the universe will ever give birth to such an entity... Equilibrium of Chaos has long been tested by others, using different multiple Origin seeds. Yet, no one grew more than two trees to their mature selves without ending up dead on the spot."

"It's a theory that has been killed and buried for so long... I truly don't know what has gotten into you to give it another attempt, and even change its name? Desperation?"

"Did I help you restore some of your memories to spread negative vibes or what?" Ash'Kral's lips twitched, not a fan of having his hopes dashed like this.

Chapter 205: Failed Cultivation Method.

Levi believed that Ash'Kral was the creator of the Three-Body Problem, but in reality, the theory itself had existed before Ash'Kral was even born.

He was simply the last one daring to give it another attempt... using the Nine Senses Seed, Void Seed, and Sun Seed as the ingredients.

He knew that if Levi were to ever hear about any of this, he would truly start to feel that he was a dead man walking.

Ash'Kral's expression turned solemn as he gazed at Levi, who finally located a spot with dark energy, then he uttered, "Just because others failed, it doesn't mean we will too... Old Bark, this is our last chance... we are way too behind."

"Figures... the race started before we knew it existed."

"Believe... we will be the ones on the finish line." Ash'Kral murmured the last part to himself, "Belief is the last thing we have left..."

But the Titan heard it and couldn't help but show a bitter smile. 'Ash... he has been working hard all this time with no one's help but his partners.'

'But no more...' The Titan's expression turned assertive as Arthur's foolish face with a wide grin appeared in his mind.

Although neither Levi nor Ash'Kral had spoken in detail about Arthur, they didn't need to... the moment Arthur came in front of Levi, the Titan had sensed the bloodline of his sons and daughters coursing through him.

He knew the bloodline belonged to Khu'zan... yet, he didn't care, as long as one of them had it.

"Ash'Kral... how will your boy feel if I decided to inhabit his little brother's Shadowlife seed?" The Titan asked with a faint smile.

"Old Bark... I thought you would never ask." Ash'Kral chuckled.

"Well, it's no easy decision to make, but I would like to make myself useful... this is my fight as much as it is yours."

"What can I say?" Ash'Kral smirked as he gazed at Levi, who had finished his setup and was about to launch his experiment, "He will like it and hate it at the same time."

Having no clue that his little brother's path was being discussed, Levi took a deep breath and started the absorption session... He allowed the divine light to pierce through his pores, burning him from the inside out, but he gritted his teeth and waited until it started to get uncomfortable.

'Dark energy... come!'

Levi channeled the cloud of dark energy into his pores as well; its path was supposed to end on the Void Seed... but alas, the glutinous Nine Senses seed sucked it off the instant it entered their orbit.

This seemed to piss off the Void Seed and the Sun Seed equally, abhorring sharing space with the Nine Senses seed and its insatiable hunger...

It was literally feeding on both divine light and dark energy simultaneously, not leaving a single drop for the other two.

Just when Levi's expression started to brighten at the cold sensation rising from within, bringing his heat levels to a moderate level, the two livid seeds fired off two flares!

'Argh.... f*ck me!'

Levi instantly curled up on the ground with his teeth chattering in coldness, yet his first instinct was to remove his clothes due to the insane heat he was in.

The cultivation process was interrupted instantly... not being able to handle such unbearable agony.

'F*ck... enough, enough, I won't do it again!' Levi could only beg, desiring nothing more than to have the seeds put a stop to their rage.

This was absolutely nothing like the cold and heat flares he felt during his sleep... they were at least five times more brutal, and when combined together? Pheew...

Soon, the flares died out, and Levi was left gasping on the ground, his clothes and hair were all a mess... every breath he took was painful as his lungs didn't know if it was hot, cold, or both.

The same goes for the rest of his body, leaving him sweating in one place while emitting a chilling air in another.

Levi quickly reached into his dimensional wallet and pulled a recovery totem with his hand shaking all over... then, he drank the green liquid and continued lying on his back.

'Ash'Kral... what the f*ck has just happened?' Levi asked, his tone carrying a tint of dread.

'Hmmm, it seems like having the Nine Senses Seed absorb both divine light and dark energy while already being ahead of them has ignited their full rage.' Ash'Kral disclosed, 'They took it as disrespect.'

Levi remained silent... his throat too dry to utter a single word out loud.

He had too many questions coursing through his mind, but he knew no one could answer them besides the three seeds... they were like hormonal pregnant wives, one would never know what version the husband would get for the day.

But Levi guessed that he had crossed a red line... the other two seeds were punishing him with soft flares in his sleep for his choice to prioritize the Nine Senses seed, but this was different.

He wanted to use their own heat and cold mechanism, not for their benefits or growth, but for their rival... the Nine Senses seed?

Like it wasn't enough to be ahead of them, absorb their energies, and now they had to put up with such crap? Not on their watch.

Soon, Levi recovered a bit to stand up... he dusted his ass while sighing helplessly, 'I genuinely thought this might be my way out.'

'It's too early to give up on it.' The Titan shared with an encouraging smile, 'The Sun and Void seeds hated seeing you use their powers for the benefit of the Nine Senses seed... but, if you got it out of the picture...'

'The method will work.' Levi continued, his voice carrying a tint of delight.

He realized that once he reached the third stage of his Nine Senses evolutionary path, he could use this method to accelerate the cultivation of the other two seeds.

Since both of them were benefiting from it, they wouldn't punish him!

Though this put him back to where he started... the pacing problem for the Nine Senses seed remained unaffixed.

'F*ck it... my body is still tingling from pain... I ain't trying anything new.' Levi's skin shivered at the thought of going through that pain again.

'That's the kind of pain my past partners suffered from daily... forcing most of them to commit suicide.' Ash'Kral shared calmly, 'It starts automatically at Pathfinder rank if you were to grow your seeds into young trees without a valid solution.'

'...'

Levi's heart skipped a beat; his respect for Ash'Kral's past partners increased tenfold... if this was the shit they went through on a daily basis, he couldn't imagine how they lived their lives.

Simultaneously, it finally gave him a perspective of what awaited him if he failed to pull off Ash'Kral's soul-split theory.

'Screw this, I can earn money for my business later...'

Levi instantly made up his decision to spend his precious credits and coins on resources to feed his seed... not wanting to go through such a grueling, slow experience.

As for the growth totems? He planned on using half and saving the other as an emergency fund for solar energy.

Sometime later...

Levi was seen inside the Nine Senses Ancestral Rooted Plane... he had just blown over half of the entire reserve of growth totems, and close to thirty thousand Nocrix credits on energy-based resources.

All to reach the second stage of his Junior rank!

As Levi gazed at the massive nanogram flower filled with millions of abilities, he didn't feel the same amount of excitement as before... his heart was cold.

He finally started to understand how Ash'Kral had gone broke.

Levi floated in the direction of the Nanogram crimson flower and stood in front of the Spiritual Perception section of abilities.

Then, he reached out to the second line of abilities, which were slightly higher in quality than the bottom ones... He picked two leaves this time and turned them one by one.

//Aetheric Grasp: The user can project invisible spiritual strands to grasp, hold, or manipulate objects from a distance... these strands behave like extensions of your own limbs through Aether energy, but they are intangible to normal senses... no sound, no sight... only powerful spiritual vision can see them.//

//Whisper of Influence: The user plants subtle impulses or ideas into a target's mind, guiding their thoughts or actions without them realizing it. It doesn't force obedience, but gently nudges decisions, creates hesitation, or shifts focus... the higher the difference in spiritual prowess, the more likely for the influence to take effect and go unnoticed.//

Chapter 206: Awakening Spiritual Perception(Second Sense)

"Interesting... the abilities might be somewhat simple in design, but you have unlocked an additional Aspect from them... Aethermancy Aspect, and that's what truly matters." The Titan shared his pool of knowledge, which was slowly filling up.

"Aethermancy? Sounds promising." Levi nodded with a satisfied smile as he absorbed the abilities' details in his mind.

He understood that Ash'Kral's perfect innate abilities were considered the sole fastest bridges to unlocking Aspects... Levi's first four abilities were all related to the sound Aspect... even Death Chime Field was nothing but high-pitched frequencies used aggressively.

If he had unlocked a single Melody-based ability, like a song or something... he would have gained access to Melody Aspect, which would have made it easier for him to learn its related techniques... the same went for Vibration Aspect.

The easiest way to explain this was to imagine a Tree... At the top, there might be The Law of Resonance.

Now, anything related to this Law... from abilities, techniques, to aspects... they would split up: Aspects as branches, innate abilities as the roots connected to them, and techniques as the leaves.

Now that Levi had unlocked Aetheric Grasp, it was the same as lighting up the root leading to the branch of Aethermancy Aspect... If Levi invested his time in this Aspect, he would be led across hundreds of leaves or more, lighting them up one by one.

Simultaneously, if he wanted, he could invest in the Sunflame or Darkness Aspects and all of their related techniques... though, his resonance access was at 0% for their Ancestral Trees, so the option wasn't available for now.

The goal wasn't to illuminate the entire tree, but to reach the top at any cost, even if it meant illuminating a single path to it, giving up on everything else.

Hence, the reason why Ash'Kral had advised Levi to focus on a single stance, instead of greedily tapping into every single sense and its related aspects.

That's because the Nine Senses could be considered as nine separate Law Trees under one Origin Seed!

Yet, Levi still refused to choose a single stance, wanting to learn and master them all... he wasn't greedy for power purely, his greed was knowledge motivated too.

After awakening the Spiritual Perception, Levi swiftly changed his location to his Spiritual Leywell... then, he summoned his violin and threw it in the air.

Just as it was about to land on the still lake, Levi gestured with two fingers... the violin froze a mere meter above the surface.

With a pleased smile, Levi started moving the violin around the place, using nothing but his fingers and spiritual energy.

While it appeared like he was using telekinesis or magic... in reality, it was a bit more complex than that.

"Aethermancy... the mystical practice of manipulating the unseen essence that separates the physical and the spiritual." Ash'Kral smiled, "This Aspect is considered an intermediate grade, a grade higher than Telekinesis."

"Well, it kinda feels just like telekinesis, but given a fancier name," Levi replied while bringing the violin closer and making it hover slightly further than his shoulder.

This helped him position his arms in a perfect violin stance, without needing the violin to be held by his head and shoulder.

"You see the green tether between you and the violin?" Ash'Kral said.

"Yes."

Levi nodded, noticing that his violin was covered in a green-like container, which was connected through a string linked to his two fingers.

"That is Aether... the invisible energy I mentioned." Ash'Kral continued while moving on top of the violin's fingerboard, "Telekinesis uses Will, which is fueled by spiritual energy to move objects and such, it has one-dimensional utility... on the other hand, you are using your will, fueled by spiritual energy to control the Aether itself, making it three-dimensional."

"Aetheric Grasp is nothing but a single ability that allows you to mimic Telekinesis... In reality, you can do much more with Aether energy." Ash'Kral grinned, "Do you want to limit-test your spiritual energy with something fun?"

Seeing his grin, Levi knew that some foolery was involved... but he took the bait anyway, his curiosity leading him as always.

Sometime later... An hour before dawn.

Levi was seen standing in front of a corrupted mountain god knows where... Vyra was munching on some snacks beside him, purring in delight.

He wasn't alone... all of his teammates had decided to tag along after finding out that he was going out to test his new abilities.

He asked Nurah for a favor, wanting the coordinates of a Midnight Dominion nest ruled by a Tier 3 nightcrawler... who hadn't chosen to join the CRS Platform.

She told him the information on the condition that she tagged along... but Levi ended up telling everyone in the group to join him on an outing to test out their new evolutions and abilities.

While this seemed to annoy Nurah for some reason, Levi realized that as the captain of Heliodor's Raiders, he needed to shift his ways of thinking a bit to involve his teammates in most of his actions in real life.

Plus, he truly wanted to see Jasmine's powers and the others in action.

When he was using those hours to create some new Aethermancy techniques under Ash'Kral's teachings, the others had enough to push for their evolutions, becoming Pathfinder Daywalkers.

Right now, besides Jasmine, who was a Warden, and Levi, who was still at second-stage Junior rank, the rest were all Pathfinders at varying stages... Shia was the highest, already at the evolution stage.

"Who's going first?"

Arthur asked with a faint grin as he summoned his shield, which now had three gemstones embedded on it.

Black, Vermillion, and the newest addition... a Pink gemstone!

His shield wasn't the only one with new additions... Orryn's gemstone had integrated with his body, forming crystalline veins along his limbs and chest.

These veins hardened his bones and muscles, allowing him to withstand much greater impact and absorb major forces directly through his body. Cosmetically, the bottom of his dark ponytail changed to a vermilion hue.

Although the mutation was more or less similar to the first one, Arthur and Khu'zan were pleased... they knew that Arthur's power limitation depended on his physical strength and how much he could endure the gemheart's force. Whether absorbing it or releasing it.

"Isn't it obvious? The captain." Jojo replied calmly.

But soon, her eyelids twitched after noticing everyone looking away while stifling their laughter each time they looked at her.

Alas, Arthur wasn't as subtle.

"Baldy... I have to ask? Does your mutation give you powers to talk to goats?"

He asked with a wide grin as he gazed at the tiny horn emerging in the center of Jojo's forehead.

The horn was pure white with faint runic writings on it, looking quite holy and solemn... However, it was still a horn.

With her already being bald, not even the most serious person could hold it in at her new 'cute' appearance.

Jojo heard what he said and murmured something under her breath.

"Huh? Speak louder."

Jojo continued whispering until Arthur couldn't hold it anymore and leaned his ear next to her mouth, repeating with a smug smile, "What, too ashamed to sp... Ahhhh!!!"

Alas, before he could finish, Jojo headbutted the side of his temple with her sharp horn, piercing a layer of his skin.

"Happy with your answer?"

Jojo looked at him, holding his bleeding temple with a shocked expression, not expecting her to headbutt him like an actual goat.

Meanwhile, the others swallowed their laughter immediately as they watched her clean the tip of her horn from his blood... using her holy monk-like robe.

Once a menace, always a menace.

"Cough... Arthur, it's not the time for any of this."

Levi swiftly took control of the situation after noticing Jasmine's dazed expression. He was worried that they would scare her off with their antics on her first day with them.

Yet instead... Jasmine ended up showing an amused smile, already informed about the two's dynamic by Shia and Nurah.

In fact, they told her a bet was already in place if they were going to get together by the end of the year or kill each other.

"You're lucky Levi got in the way." Arthur showed her the middle finger while leaving his wound to heal up on its own... the hole might be small, but it closed in less than three seconds at a noticeable speed!

A perk of his double physical enhancement mutation.

Knowing that it was best to split them up for now, Levi said while signing with his hand, "Arthur, Nurah, Jasmine... this nest is for you."

All three nodded in approval.

"The rest of us will pick another nest after you finish."

Hearing this, everyone's eyes gleamed for a split second besides Levi and Jasmine... just like they could read each other's minds, they simultaneously suggested.

"The slowest team pays for breakfast!"

Then, Nurah, Arthur, and Jasmine sprinted in the direction of the mountain... Jasmine didn't know what was going on, but she didn't seem to mind it.

She kept smiling, happy to be involved with people who didn't seem to care about her origins, inability to talk, or her weird, silent persona.

'I should help them win the bet.'

Chapter 207: The World is My Canvas.

Making her decision, Jasmine's hidden eye turned into an erased swirl again... immediately, color was sapped out of the real world, making it resemble the Shadow dimension in her vision.

The only colors shown were those of the hundreds of nightcrawlers infesting the mountain... they were all sharing a similar race... giant brown-furred moles with horrific claws and two frontal sharp yellowish teeth protruding from their mouths, almost touching their stomach.

Jasmine ignored them and kept her vision focused until it landed on their leader, who was hiding in the depths of the mountain with two more tier 3 nightcrawlers.

All three were sitting around a table, playing cards, and smoking cigarettes, embracing the earthlings' lifestyle in peace.

The moment she saw them, Jasmine extended her arm to the side and summoned her signature weapon from droplets of black ink.

As the droplets combined, a two-meter otherworldly inkbrush emerged into the world... its size as big as a spear, but its appearance was nothing like it.

Its shaft was a pale glasslike spine, sharing a similar color to Jasmine's skin... Its handle was an inscribed, beautiful white sphere that seemed to be made out of white wood.

The white bristles at its crown spiraled inward, each filament untangling like trapped smoke, yet never dispersing... This formed a mesmerizing brushstroke attached to the glass-like wooden shaft.

The moment it fully manifested, the brush felt weightless yet dense in her grasp... a familiar sensation she was already used to.

When Levi saw it, he couldn't help but be surprised by her weapon choice... having no idea what kind of powers she wielded.

Levi asked Nurah and Shia about her powers after they were given the evolutionary formulas, but they told him it would be better if he saw it in action.

Hearing this, Levi didn't impose on Jasmine, knowing that she was bound to use them in their training.

"If that's your weapon, what kind of powers do you wield?!" Arthur exclaimed in disbelief, but he forgot Jasmine was deaf, so she ignored him.

While Levi used to see darkness all around... Jasmine's world was like a TV with a permanent mute button pressed. Life was happening all around her, yet all she could hear was her own thoughts... even then, those thoughts had an inner voice of her nightcrawler.

For she had never spoken to hear her own voice and have her mind register it as the default.

Yet, this was much better than thinking in signs or images, as those born deaf had their thoughts often manifest as flashes of hand shapes, movements, and facial expressions in their mind... essentially, signing internally.

Some people think that being deaf was peaceful, and might not be a bad disability to have to curb their chaotic world... but it was such a cruel thing to wish for, when one had no idea how horrible it was to not perceive anything or have your own voice.

Once Jasmine entered the mountain's area, she stopped, making Arthur and Nurah stop too.

-Do you want to win or test your abilities?-

Seeing the peculiar holographic question, Nurah and Arthur glanced at each other... then, Nurah giggled.

"Win, of course." She said, knowing that Jasmine was about to go all out.

"Win." Arthur nodded too, having no clue what he had signed up for.

-Oki.-

Jasmine showed them an okay sign with her hand and a harmless smile... then, she swiped her brush on the ground three times until it somehow became as yellowish as an empty aged scroll.

'The f*ck is this magic...' Arthur's lips parted slightly, but he kept his questions to himself.

Jasmine was about to start.

'Midnight Calligraphy Arts: The World is My Canvas.'

The moment she activated her battle arts, a sphere of liquid ink manifested next to the scroll. She dipped the brushstock in it once and lifted it... dripping with ink that seemed almost alive, absorbing the light around it.

With swift, deliberate strokes, she traced the outline of a mountain, its rough peak rising across the scroll.

Every ridge, every cliff, and even the forest near it, was etched into the parchment... sinking at the weight of her intent.

Then her brush moved faster, drawing something that made Nurah's pupil widen in disbelief... a reaction not earned easily from her.

Meanwhile, Arthur was scratching his head in confusion, having no clue what any of this meant.

Finally, Jasmine dipped the brush once more, signing her name at the bottom in flowing, authoritative strokes.

The moment the ink touched the paper, the scroll shook violently, and then... everything about the painting came to life inside the scroll.

Jasmine and Nurah immediately turned their heads, looking behind Levi and the others' backs, who were standing above a small mound at a far distance.

Seeing this, Levi and the others glanced at each other in confusion.

"Are they looking at us?" Jojo tilted her head.

Just as Levi was about to answer, his ears twitched once, picking up on a peculiar howl behind them...

'Hmmm?'

He turned his head and released his echolocation's range to reach the source of the noise, thinking that maybe some Daywalker was flying around.

But, as his echolocation landed on the source of the noise, Levi's lips parted slightly in disbelief at the sight before him.

Seeing his weird reaction, Jojo and Shia turned around too.

That's where they saw it... a scene snatching their souls at once... a gigantic pitch-black meteor was blocking the moon as it pierced through the clouds, plummeting toward the mountain with unstoppable force!!

Its surface gleamed like moonlit obsidian, smooth yet unyielding, exuding an aura of impending doom!

-We should retreat.- Jasmine signed with the same harmless smile.

Seeing this, Arthur glanced at Jasmine and then at the scroll that came alive... he gulped a mouthful as he watched the gigantic meteor in the sky, getting closer to the mountain, just like the inked meteor on the scroll.

It didn't take a genius to understand what was going on.

"I thought you drew the f*cking moon!"

Just as Arthur was about to run away, not wanting to be close to the mountain during impact, Jasmine stopped him with her palm raised.

Then, she created another scroll on the ground and drew one swirling dot, connecting it with an inked line to another similar dot on top of her friends' mound.

Then, she signed it, and it came to life as well, creating a swirling, inked gateway before them.

She gestured with her head for them to follow her... Seeing the approaching meteor getting bigger and bigger, they swiftly stepped into the inked portal and emerged on the other side... their confusion matching Levi's and the others.

Just as they turned to Jasmine for some 'questions', the meteor flew past their heads and landed on the mountain at last... It was roughly a one-hundred-meter-diameter black rock, landing on a mountain no taller than half a kilometer hundred meters.

The impact was earth-shattering!

"Arthy!"

"Heavens Breaker Arts: The Last Bulwark!"

Hearing his brother's voice, Arthur swiftly created a vermillion fortress around them, sealing all of the walls and the roof.

BOOOOOOOOM!!

The aftershock smashed against it in no time, followed by colossal fragments; rock and earth thrown into the sky like shattered glass!

The thunderous roar consumed the mountain, and the nightcrawlers below were utterly obliterated, unable to escape the crushing weight of the ink-born meteor.

"I raise you..."

"Heh, foolish mistake."

"Shit, I fold, you bastards are cheating someh..."

BOOOOOOOOM!

The chilling three Tier 3 nightcrawlers' lives were instantly extinguished, having no clue what happened before their corpses got buried under the mountain's weight.

The same happened to the rest of the hundreds of nightcrawlers, not even their digging mastery could save them...

After the dust cloud was carried away by the wind, Arthur removed the castle and absorbed the kinetic energy inside Orryn's heart.

Then, everyone was left to gaze at the aftermath with their jaws agape at the scale of destruction Jasmine had wrought.

No words could capture it... only the silence after the storm, heavy with the weight of powers none seemed to understand.

None but two.

'Well, I will be damned... Their bloodlines haven't gone extinct after all.' Ash'Kral murmured with a flicker of astonishment in his eyes, not expecting his original assumption of Jasmine to be proved correct so soon.

'I remember now...'

The Titan uttered... a written myth resounding in his mind, akin to an old man telling a story of pale-skinned people wielding giant brushes, pens, quills, and such creative tools meant for drawing and painting, but they were using them to paint the universe.

A myth, older than time itself...

A myth, so old, only a select few might still know it across the entire universe...

'First Levi and now this... what's so special about this tiny region in such a desolate planet?' Ash'Kral murmured to himself, his brain failing to accept such a ludicrous coincidence.

He could understand finding a Half-Radian thrown here by some miracle... but to find another half-blood in the same region, the same city? Nah... his senses were tingling, something was going on. Something must have happened in the distant past in this exact area.

Meanwhile, Levi and the others stood frozen, their eyes fixed on Jasmine... mouths half-open, words caught somewhere between shock and silence.

-I guess breakfast on you?- Jasmine smiled as she gazed at the stunned Levi.

Chapter 208: Ink and Erasure.

"Breakfast... You razed an entire mountain for breakfast? No, no, no... how do you even raze an entire mountain while still being a Warden?!" Arthur exclaimed, his shocked reaction shared by the rest.

"We have seen you fight before, but it was nothing like this..." Nurah muttered, "What kind of Aspects do you wield exactly?"

Nurah and Shia had seen a video of Jasmine partaking in an international mission with her father and some agency members... In the video, it showed Jasmine was summoning an army of Ink-based sculptures flooding down a nest.

Thus, they knew her powers allowed her to bring ink-based constructs to life after painting them on the scroll.

But this? A hundred-meter meteor? An ink manifested gateway? Nah... not in their wildest dreams did they expect her powers to have this much creative freedom.

Seeing everyone crowding her with eyes burning in intrigue, Jasmine told them to relax with her hands and then sent a holographic sentence.

-I command two Aspects... Ink and Erasure... Erasure allows me to turn any piece of land into a canvas for my creations... this Aspect connects me to our reality and gives me the key to shift it to my paintings or writings, using Ink Aspect.-

"Shift reality..."

Levi and the others were left stunned, their lips parted... they wanted to disapprove of what they heard, but the meteor scene was still playing in their minds.

'Ash'Kral, Elder, is she telling the truth? Do such Aspects exist?' Levi asked the experts in his mind.

'Well... they used to exist.' Ash'Kral replied, his tone solemn.

'Hmm? What do you mean?' Levi frowned.

'It means those Aspects are part of the Ancestral Aspects that require a special type of bloodline to wield them... Just like you.'

Hearing this, Levi's heart skipped a beat as he glanced at Jasmine, who was still explaining her powers with a patient smile to her friends.

Once she felt a little comfortable being around them, Jasmine slowly started to show her patient and gentle real persona.

A persona hidden behind that deathly expressionless appearance of hers.

'This... what kind of half-blood is she?' Levi wondered.

He already knew that Aspects were split between bloodline-locked and free-for-all... They were formally referred to as Ancestral Aspects and Unbound Aspects by everyone in the dimensional network.

Ancestral Aspects were tied to ancient lineage, such as the Sunflame Aspect, which was wielded by Radians... It was not like a regular Fire Aspect, which was considered Unbound.

This made him understand that Jasmine was also linked to an ancient lineage.

'She is Half-Inkrith...' The Titan answered.

'Who are they? And what happened to them?' Levi knitted his eyebrows, recalling that Ash'Kral said her Aspects used to exist.

'All we know is that they have gone extinct a very, very long time... longer than we have been living... probably existing during the Age of Origins.' Ash'Kral said.

'Their Lineage is so ancient... I doubt anyone knows of its existence anymore, besides a select few.' The Titan added.

'Age of Origins...' Levi murmured inwardly.

He didn't bother asking Ash'Kral about it, knowing that he was going to ignore him... as for the Titan? His memories were too fragmentary to count as a reliable source for now.

Though Levi understood that Jasmine's bloodline might be as divine as Radians'... or maybe, even more.

After all, they made it sound like the Inkrith were as old as the first days of the universe. For now, he lacked the necessary information to form a decent timeline, so he noted it and left it for later.

'But... how come her nightcrawler looks the same as her? It also seems to possess the ability to manipulate the two aspects.' Levi wondered, switching his vision to the bridge of darkness, to gaze at Jasmine's peculiar nightcrawler... N'ibby.

'That thing... I have no clue what it is, and how it came into existence.' Ash'Kral said.

'...'

Levi didn't expect such a response. He was too used to having Ash'Kral having all the answers, but being an asshole and keeping them to himself.

To hear him express his ignorance? On a nightcrawler at that? Him... who had spent his entire life researching nightcrawlers and had an unfathomable level of knowledge related to them.

It made him understand more than ever... Nightcrawlers weren't a simple race in the slightest.

Sure, his first assumption was that Jasmine's nightcrawler ancestors must have possessed an Inkrith in the Age of Origins.

But this would mean that nightcrawlers existed even in that distant era... and more so, how could her bloodline endure for so long, when nightcrawlers were known to have their purity easily diluted through constant merging with other species and races for survival?

Levi could accept either Jasmine's bloodline surviving or her Nightcrawler... not both, and by some miracle, finding each other in this ever-expanding universe.

The math wasn't mathing, as the odds of that happening were slim to none.

'Jasmine... the veil around you only thickens.'

In the end, Levi could only stare at Jasmine in silence, his brain failing to come up with an answer to explain such an enigma.

It seemed Ash'Kral was in the same boat as his eye never left her nightcrawler... many thoughts coursing through it, scouring through infinite possibilities.

Until... he found one possibility.

But Ash'Kral kept it to himself, for he knew that if it was right... the universe might just come to a halt.

'Pspssps, cutie... come, come.'

As Ash'Kral watched Jasmine's nightcrawler N'ibby calling for him with a hand stretched like she was calling for a cat, he didn't even seem annoyed.

Instead, he welcomed it with a wide grin.

'Those two will be vital in my grand scheme... Levi needs to impregnate Jasmine or something, anything to keep them on our side.'

If Levi were to hear Ash'Kral's thoughts, he honestly wouldn't know whether to curse or laugh... the f*cker wouldn't hesitate to bring in anyone who had a shot at helping him fulfill his goal.

-Why so quiet? Have you given up already?- Jasmine signed at Levi, seeing that he had been absent-minded for a while.

Seeing this, Levi broke out of his daze and showed a faint smile, throwing everything to the back of his mind for now... he didn't bother considering asking Jasmine about any of the things he had heard.

At least, not until he studied her from the shadows.

-Given up? It's too soon to celebrate.-

Levi turned to Nurah and requested, "Do you have any information on another unaffiliated nest to the platform?"

"Plenty." Nurah teased, "Don't tell me you still have hope to win this? Jasmine has obliterated the nest in less than thirty seconds."

"Ahh... just give it up, Levi." Shia shook her head while blowing a lollipop's bubble gum, "Jasmine is at a Warden rank with Aspects I still fail to understand... clearing a nest as fast as her isn't gonna happen with our current strength."

Even Jojo seemed to agree with her, knowing that they needed to kill hundreds of nightcrawlers in less than thirty seconds... with their current utilities, it didn't seem feasible.

As for Jasmine? All of them had an inkling that she might have evolved using a couple of perfect evolutions, even if she hadn't confirmed it.

Otherwise, such insane prowess couldn't be explained under the structure of their Daywalkers' system... unless she was a hidden Anomaly-class talent.

"How can you lose faith in your captain?" Arthur sneered, "My big bro might not have evolved like us to Pathfinder rank. But, it doesn't really matter."

"Oho? Why is that?"

Nurah and the rest showed teasing smiles, knowing that Arthur easily got offended when it came to Levi... Shit, they could curse him, and he wouldn't react as heavily.

"He has unlocked a spiritual ability."

"..."

"..."

"..."

The moment everyone heard this, their teasing smiles froze... but Jasmine, unaware of what it meant, only blinked... her long black eyelashes fluttering in curiosity.

She had been away from the region during the assembly, and even if she hadn't, she was never one to bother with news about it.

"Arthur..." Levi's brow twitched... his big mouth at it again.

Although he didn't tell him to keep his abilities a secret as he planned on showing them anyway... still.

"Cough, my bad."

Arthur swiftly sealed his mouth shut under Khu'zan's helpless sigh in his mind.

"Levi, is that true? How strong is it?"

Shia, Nurah, and Jojo immediately crowded Levi, their eyes burning with the same intensity showered at Jasmine earlier.

They had longed for the day Levi would display his spiritual talents, knowing that as an Anomaly classified talent, it was bound to be an unforgettable experience.

"I am about to find out as well."

Levi smiled as he jumped on Vyra. Nurah had already sent the new nest's details to his Neuralens device.

Chapter 209: Limit Testing.

Sometime later...

Levi and his team were seen standing on top of a cliff with a waterfall gushing underneath nonstop; its noise covering over the screeches and roars of nightcrawlers roaming the mountainous forest before them.

Dawn was just around the corner, and the hungry nightcrawlers could sense it, making them get anxious.

"It's in front." Nurah pointed at the forest underneath them.

"I can tell."

Levi nodded, his spiritual vision showing him a sea of nightcrawlers infesting the surface of the forest and underneath it mostly... When he focused thoroughly, his spiritual vision showed him the Tier 3 nightcrawlers and every little detail about their appearance... aura-wise.

It was like he was using the Sensebound Pearl to refine his spiritual prowess... but this was all from the enhancement he received after he pushed straight to the Second Stage of his rank!

His freakish potential had proved to be much better than anticipated; his enhancement had increased his spiritual tank, spiritual control, vision, defenses, and anything related to his soul to a new level.

This made Levi recognize that if he decided to give up on his original plan and choose Spiritual Perception as the sole sense, his spiritual prowess might turn him into an actual powerhouse in two evolutions.

But, he never committed to such a thought... his original plan stood strong.

'No hostages... good, this makes it easier.'

After checking for any kidnapped humans and finding none... a standard protocol all Daywalkers must uphold... Levi made his move.

He cast Aethric Grasp on his body and gestured with his fingers to lift up... under everyone's dazed looks, Levi swiftly took off into the sky, appearing above the center of the Midnight Dominion nest in no time.

"Woah... he is floating so casually," Jojo exclaimed, "And without a weapon's amplification... his spiritual control and tank are on another level."

Nurah and the others nodded in agreement, understanding that Psych Specialists almost never used their spiritual prowess to lift themselves directly in lower ranks... It consumed an immense amount of spiritual energy, as their will was used to pull it off.

That's why Jojo always stood on top of her Praying Beads, not daring to waste her spiritual energy wantonly.

As Levi hovered tens of meters above the forest canopy, the faint light of the peeking sun cast over him, he lifted his right palm into the sky and murmured, "Come."

At once, rivers of emerald mist seeped from the trees, the grass, the soil, and even the air itself, drawn to his palm as though it were a magnet.

Only spiritual energy could command aether energy like this. It was the same relationship as oxygen to iron... one starving for electrons, the other having too many to spare. Thus, they were bound by nature to meet, to merge, and to react!

What a reaction it was... The moment Levi let his spiritual energy run wild for the first time, holding nothing back, the dormant aether energy was summoned from everywhere, detaching from whatever it was clinging to, responding to its new ruler!

'This is it... I can feel it pulling like Ash'Kral said.'

Levi exhaled slowly, his mind recalling Ash'Kral's teachings in the past hours... he had told him that his current resonance access allowed him to visualize aether energy into techniques externally, unlike most Aspects.

Most Aspects relied on solar energy within the Daywalker as the fuel to transform it into elemental-mystic-enhancement or whatever kind of specialization the technique he wanted to create.

On the other hand, aether energy couldn't be stored reliably within one's body... but, because it existed in abundance across the entire universe besides some specific realms, he needed to create techniques on the go.

In simpler terms... such techniques couldn't be stored inside his own library, and he needed to create them always on the spot.

Thus, Ash'Kral taught him the way and some interesting techniques... but this was the first time Levi tried one in the real world.

"Good... gather... tighter... denser..."

As he kept murmuring under his breath, his palm felt heavier and denser until it actually started to emit a visible soft dark green light, tracing his fingers!

"Is that... Aether energy..."

Jojo's contracted nightcrawler, Zar'Vhulek, had his eyes widened the moment he spotted the green color... He was summoned as a Praying Bead, hovering beside Jojo.

The others noticed the green light as well, which was continuing to darken and turn brighter, but only Jasmine, Jojo, and their nightcrawlers noticed the immense spiritual disturbance around Levi's palm.

It was like the fabric of the spirit and the physical was being twisted... which wasn't a far-fetched description when considering that the aether energy separated those two realities!

Now, Levi was bending it to his will to a terrifying degree that even non-spiritual specialists started to notice the change in atmosphere.

"What is that... why does my soul feel restless?" Shia commented in confusion.

"You felt it too?" Arthur supported, his hand on his heart for some reason, "I feel like something is trying to strip my soul out of my body."

Levi told him that he had unlocked a spiritual ability, but he didn't bother telling him the details, knowing that his brother was a visual learner... he needed to see it, to feel it, and then understand it.

Aether energy wasn't known to all as its manipulators needed to have an insane level of spiritual talent to even sense it, let alone control it.

'Oh... So much aether energy at his rank... interesting.'

A hint of interest flickered in N'ibby's hollow eyes; her normal vision was that of Jasmine's peculiar eye transformation.

Jasmine was using it as well, watching the white and black canvas of the world get painted with tens of massive dark green rivers getting devoured by Levi's palm.

-He is still not stopping? Just how rich is his spiritual energy reservoir?-

Jasmine was rarely impressed with anything, but as she gazed at this sight, she couldn't help but feel outclassed for the first time.

She had immense pride in her spiritual energy since it was one of the main ingredients to channel her Ink/Erasure Aspects... Yet, here she was, watching as Levi dethroned her while still being at a Junior rank!!

Unbeknownst to his friends' thoughts, Levi concentrated on a single object... Limit-testing his spiritual prowess, not wanting to leave anything stored.

He wanted to know his limits; he needed such information to understand how he could manage it better.

Keeping his spiritual vision active 24/7 was nothing but an indicator... today was the day everyone would see what monstrosity was hidden beneath.

'I am nearing my limit... I can feel my mind going hazy.'

Whoosh!

The moment Levi started to feel somewhat disoriented and assaulted by a light headache, he knew... about 5% of his spiritual energy was left in the tank.

"Jojo!" He called out loud; his raised palm shook nonstop.

Seeing the air around it was compressed, and the dark green light grew thick, viscous, almost liquid, Jojo knew that Levi was about to make his move.

"I got you."

Solemn, Jojo gave him a slight nod, summoning the rest of the praying orbs, keeping them on standby... Then, she cast a spiritual barrier around the team for extra safety. Although Levi was far away and wasn't directing his attack at them, she had a bad feeling.

Meanwhile, Levi's loud voice had pulled the attention of nightcrawlers underneath him... most of them raising their heads to see a green dot flickering nonstop.

At once, their instincts screamed at them to run away, their souls squirming in fear... Low-tier nightcrawlers always respected their instincts.

Rooar!! Kreee!! Kraaa!!...

The forest was suddenly filled with a symphony, conducted by a unified feeling of dread... the ruckus had drawn the attention of the nest's leaders at its depth.

"What's going on up there?"

"Are we under attack?!"

"Let's check the perimeter quickly."

As an unaffiliated Midnight Dominion, the nest's hierarchy wasn't strict, allowing a union of Tier 3 nightcrawlers to lead simultaneously... It was more of a survival tactic, as even nightcrawlers understood the concept of strength in numbers.

Thus, the three Tier 3 nightcrawlers emerged from their hidden caves, each distinct in form... a blue Stork with bladed arms, a furless black humanoid Bear, and a scarred Hyena. Their eyes immediately fell upon the chaos of their nightcrawler armies scattering in every direction

They were kicking up clouds of dust hindering their vision... yet, the green light in the skies was bright enough that it pierced the clouds.

"What is that?"

Just as the three partners were about to diagnose the green light, their hearts suddenly skipped a beat... they felt it, something deadly was coming.

They glanced at each other for less than a split second, then they immediately dipped back into the cave, using whatever ability in their arsenal to shield themselves and increase their speed!

Alas... the moment Levi chose their nest to test his spiritual prowess, their fate was sealed...

With fingers stretched wide as if to grasp the forest itself, Levi swung his palm in a straight line as he wanted to smash the earth itself... uttering simultaneously his first decided Battle Arts...

"Aethermancy Arts: Judgement's Palm."

The words resounded across the silent forest akin to a divine verdict... and then, in the next instant, all the stored, raging aether energy in his hand erupted downward, creating an enormous beam shaped like an ethereal, colossal palm!!

It descended in a blink, smashing into the heart of the forest with indestructible force!

BOOOOOOOOOM!!!

The ground quaked violently as over a hundred meters of terrain was flattened in an instant!

Trees splintered into dust, the soil was overturned, and the rocks were broken into fine sand... The nest's central zone was erased in a single breath with everything above it and underneath it.

Yet, this was merely the beginning...

Whoosh!

A devastating surge of spiritual invisible aftershock rippled outward, akin to a nuclear aftershock... the only difference was the target.

The three elite nightcrawlers felt the powerful tremor above them, almost causing them to trip out in their underground tunnel.

"Motherf*cker... why us!"

"Damn it!! This is our third nest!"

"Keep running! We can always start over somewhere else..."

Before the Bear-like nightcrawler could finish his sentence, the spiritual aftershock had arrived.

Thud, thud, thud...

In an instant, the three of them... along with every nightcrawler within two kilometers... collapsed one after another, their bodies going limp as though someone had simply switched them off

BOOM!! Crack!!

Meanwhile, Jojo and the others weren't given even the chance to react to this unholy, horrific sight before the spiritual shield got smashed by the spiritual aftershock, cracking at once!

"So intense..." Jojo bit her lips as she reinforced her barrier with her arms outstretched, consuming as much spiritual energy as it took to keep it active!

Seeing her struggle against nothing, Arthur and the others kept switching their dumbfounded gaze between her cracked shield and Levi.

Even their summoned nightcrawlers were left utterly stunned, their eyes widened to the limit from their weapons.

Fortunately, the spiritual aftershock died out as swiftly as it had arrived... leaving behind nothing but an eerie silence across the forest.

"What the actual..." Shia murmured, the lollipop falling to the ground from her parted lips as her aghast eyes were left affixed on Levi.

Chapter 210: Not Normal.

Levi slowly lowered his shaking arm... his breath was ragged, and his head was sending waves of pain nonstop... He had overdone it.

Before he could appreciate this level of destruction, Levi felt faint, like he was going to pass out at any moment... this was a big no-no when he was flying using aether energy.

However, he wasn't alone... the moment Vyra noticed his emotional distress from their spiritual link, she swiftly took off into the sky and positioned herself under him... then she nudged him with her wing to fall on her back.

With a thankful smile, Levi canceled his Aetheric Grasp, and he fell on her back gently... then, she took him back to his friends while growling at them, seemingly ordering them to help him recover.

Arthur swiftly helped his brother get down and pulled a recovery totem that handled the nasty side effects of abusing one's spiritual energy... It didn't restore it, but it alleviated the tiredness and dizziness.

After uttering the incantation with decent fluency, the healing liquid activated, and Levi drank it.

In a moment, Levi felt the throbbing die out and his messed-up spiritual vision turn off gently... then, he stood back up and dusted his clothes, smiling serenely in everyone's direction, "Not bad, right?"

"..."

"..."

Everyone was left speechless at once, their eyes switching between Levi and the massive palm imprint he left behind on the forest... it was deep enough, they could tell anyone would be able to see it from the sky perfectly clear.

When they remembered that it was left behind by a Junior Daywalker, their brains kept short-circuiting... they knew Levi's spiritual prowess was an Anomaly-level talent.

Yet, not in their wildest dreams had they expected it would be this horrifying... that's right, the only term that could describe it was pure horror.

The fact that he didn't just leave a spiritual palm as a physical imprint, but also unleashed an aftershock strong enough to kill anything nearby, made them realize... if Jojo hadn't been there, their souls might not have survived intact.

First was Jasmine, now this... It wasn't normal, none of it was...

In the end, Arthur broke into wild laughter, his palm covering his face.

Before the others could react, he uttered with the widest grin possible, "We are so f*cking qualifying for the tournament."

Sometime later...

Levi and Arthur had returned home from their breakfast and went to sleep, taking an SR Pill each to help them restore most of their mental fatigue in less than two hours.

They couldn't go for regular sleep as they had a meeting in the afternoon with Lord Idriss to check on their progress and attend the Game Hall to see what kind of Death Game had been chosen.

During their breakfast, which was paid for by Jasmine's team, they talked about what happened in the three nests they had obliterated.

Arthur, Nurah, Jojo, and Shia had taken another Midnight Dominion nest after Levi soloed the second one.

Although their powers had increased immensely as well, and they had taken down the nest in less than two minutes... it still didn't come close to touching Levi's twenty-second and Jasmine's thirty-second records.

If outsiders were with them and saw what those four had done, they would have crowned them as having one of the best potentials in the entire continent.

Alas... two slumbering monsters were amidst them, and they had decided to awaken on their big day.

Once they saw what Levi and Jasmine were capable of, nothing they could do would ever top it... Those two were genuine Abnormal entities: Jasmine possessed unique, unheard-of aspects while Levi's spiritual prowess was terrifying enough to erase tier 3 nests with a single attack as a freaking Junior Daywalker... Their perspective on strength and potential changed forever today.

Unfortunately, they asked Levi about his new powers, and all he told them was that he had awakened Aether Aspect and was still in the process of exploring it.

Though he had explained that his nightcrawler's most powerful aspects were still dormant, just to prepare them for what was about to come later on...

Once they heard this, even Jasmine was taken aback, realizing that Ash'Kral wasn't like any other normal nightcrawler... by now, it wasn't really a secret to anyone... Levi's strength spoke volumes about what Ash'Kral brought to the table.

As mentioned months ago when describing Demetris' nightcrawler... Nightcrawler shouldn't be judged by their current tiers before the contract, but by their potential and unique powers.

Just like Arthur and Nurah... those two had nightcrawlers brimming with potential related to their unique powers.

As for Levi and Jasmine? To be honest, those two nightcrawlers shouldn't even be included in such a conversation.

After Levi woke up from his two-hour recharge coma, the first thing he did was enter his Spiritual Leywell and join his tenants over tea.

"Aethermancy... I have to say, I didn't expect it to be this good... I can see the vision of having it as a single Battle Arts." Levi commented with a pleased smile, his palm still tingling from earlier.

"It's only good in the right hands... and you, my boy, have one of the best potentials as a human to wield it," Ash'Kral smirked, sipping from a floating cup, his wings too small to hold even themselves.

"Are you sure about not wanting to invest all of your time and efforts in spiritually based aspects?" The Titan wondered with a smile, "There are still plenty of aspects you can unlock."

"I have to say... I was a bit tempted earlier, but still no." Levi shook his head, "I can always unlock more aspects through hard work, but the moment I miss a single sense, it will be nearly impossible for me to unlock anything related to them in the future."

Levi was told that aspects could be unlocked slowly through effort if one already had a base aspect to work from... Example: Water Aspect would lead to unlocking Blood and Mist aspects, the more he learned.

However, if he skipped a sense and it needed a vital aspect unrelated to anything in his possession, he was done for.

After all, he couldn't learn fire-based techniques from Water Aspect or vice versa.

"What can I say... You are choosing one of the hardest paths possible, but... unless you solve the Three-Body Problem, any choice you make is leading to a dead end." The Titan smiled wryly.

"I know, but today has shown me more than ever that I have a genuine shot at Ash'Kral Soul-Split Theory," Levi uttered solemnly.

"I feel the same." Ash'Kral approved, "Your peak Spiritual prowess is at the base of a Psyche Specialist Solarbound Daywalker... Your soul, on the other hand, still needs some catching up to do... but, once you try to evolve, you can commence the soul split during the evolution process before the Nine Senses' tree turns into a young tree."

"During?" The Titan raised an eyebrow, "Isn't that dangerous... considering he will be evolving one tree at a time?"

"Ash... are you f*cking with me? You never mentioned this before."

Levi felt chills course down his spine after recalling his first evolution... the agony was simply too much to handle.

Now, he was told that he needed to split his soul while he was going through that hellish agony? Shit, he might actually start throwing hands.

"Boy, you chose this path, not me."

"Prick, I chose nothing... You forced me into this crap. I just wanted to get strong enough to put my heart at ease." Levi's brow twitched.

"Tomato, potato." Ash'Kral waved his hand dismissively.

"You aren't even using the phrase correctly."

"Tomato, potato."

"..."

The Titan sighed, "Now, imagine having to deal with this for eons..."

"Heh, don't lie to yourself, Old Bark." Ash'Kral chuckled, "I know you miss me when I am not around."

"I wish my memory were still damaged to forget what you have just said." The Titan said, his voice as genuine as it could get.

"I would have believed you if your first words when you woke up weren't my name." Ash'Kral chuckled at the Titan's temple vein protruding in irritation.

"I genuinely question how you have survived for this long..."

Levi sighed... he could tell that anyone who had spent some time with Ash'Kral must have had a thought of killing him at least twice a month.

"Those with thick skin die last." The Titan answered as he stared at Ash'Kral's annoying grin.