

Evolution 211

Chapter 211: The Game Hall.

A short while later...

Levi and the rest of his teammates had grouped up in the Blood Hunters' main training room... Lord Idriss and Madam Naima were there too.

They had just checked on their evolutions, power-ups, mutations, and such... their faces had satisfied smiles throughout the demonstrations.

Even when they noticed that Levi remained unevolved, they didn't seem too displeased... Shia had shown them the clip of him razing down an entire forest using a single spiritual attack, which made them both stunned and excited.

They expected his spiritual prowess to be on a different spectrum, but they still underestimated how deadly it was.

Now... even though Levi remained a Junior rank, none of them said anything about it, letting him grow at his own pace.

Just when Lord Idriss was going to split the team into two squads for some sparring, Levi and the rest received a dimensional message.

-The Game Hall will open in ten seconds... be ready to accept the invitation.-

-Missing the invitation window will be considered a forfeit if no valid reason is provided.-

"Look alive, we are about to meet our opponents," Levi called while gesturing for everyone to group up with him.

Seeing this, Lord Idriss gave him a slight head nod and remained silent, respecting his captain's authority.

"As mentioned earlier... don't let them get into your skins." Levi warned sternly, "Let me do the talking."

Jasmine and the others nodded in understanding... their expression a mix of excitement and anxiety as they stared at the newly emerged dimensional portal... it had Game Hall written on its swirling center.

Levi, already experienced, stepped forward into the portal, his composure unchanged... Arthur and the rest followed him closely, and in no time, no one was around, and the dimensional portal collapsed.

"What do you think?" Madam Naima asked.

"About what?"

"You know... the Raid."

"I believe they will make us proud." Lord Idriss smiled.

"You sound pretty confident." Madam Naima knit her eyebrows, "I know their showcased strength is as good as a decent Warden Daywalker, but the Drowned Court has three Tier 4 mercenaries in their team, in addition to the leader."

The CRS Platform didn't care if members of the team were all staying in the nest or not... All it cared about was that the members wouldn't have teammates who were registered under multiple teams at once.

Such a system had given birth to Mercenary Rifters... Mercenaries from all three factions, who post their services to teams that need an extra member for a price.

Once they fulfill their duties, they could either quit the team, get paid, and move on to another team... or keep their services in one place for a percentage of the Yearly Stability Reward from the nest owner.

In this manner, they could retain their freedom and earn a passive income every year without needing to actually stay in the nest or any fixed place.

The same was being done by the Raiders and Saviors factions since everyone part of a single faction was considered as 'Allies'... If they were Mercenary Raiders, they would get a piece of the treasury.

This meant, if Levi wanted, he could actually hire a mercenary Raider from a totally different dimensional sector in his team if the mercenary fulfilled the game's conditions and Levi could afford his services.

After all, there was never a law that enforced the Raiders to be from the same home planet or anything... a team was a team.

"I know it ain't going to be easy, but you have seen Levi's and Jasmine's full strength... those two," Lord Idriss smirked, "Those two cannot be measured through conventional methods... Tier 3 or Tier 4, experienced mercenaries or not, I have utmost faith in them."

Meanwhile, after Levi and the others stepped into the portal, they found themselves inside a massive, ancient artistic hall... the walls were turned into canvas with prehistoric art of many scenes in the first Death Games upheld in the CRS Platform.

The floor had smooth, reflective amber tiles, while the roof was a glass dome with a giant chandelier hanging a couple of meters in the center with golden chains.

The Chandelier was crafted from gleaming gold, featuring layered tiers of sparkling crystals... Its graceful arms twist elegantly, each holding a warm light that bathes the surroundings in a soft, amber radiance.

A lavish table of polished wood was placed underneath it... the table was supported by intricately carved legs adorned with delicate patterns, matching the six chairs on each side of it.

Yet, Levi and the others weren't given the time to appreciate such a grandiose hall... their vision was pulled to six nightcrawlers stepping out of a dimensional portal on the other side of the table.

Three nightcrawlers were of similar species, while the other three were of different species... However, all six were Aquatic nightcrawlers.

The moment both teams made eye contact, the atmosphere turned tense instantly.

"They are indeed children... I will be damned." Syc'closs showed a cold smile as he walked to the table.

He was a lanky, seahorse-like humanoid nightcrawler with skin the color of drowned coral... rough and barnacle-crusted like an old ship hull. His limbs were long and webbed like a deep-sea frogfish. He had faint strands of wet kelp-like hair drifting from his scalp.

As for his eyes? They gleamed faintly like those of a lanternfish in the abyss... horrifying and soulless.

The other two Tier 3 nightcrawlers shared a similar appearance to him, though one was female and had her kelp-like hair much more glamorous.

"Told you, there is nothing to worry about," Orr'Vekth said, unbothered that Levi and the others could hear them.

He was a humanoid crab with arms as red pincers... both looked brand new, their luster glistening under the soft light.

Based on what Levi gathered from their supervisors, Orr'Vekth was one of the mercenaries who had been hired by Syc'closs for more than three years now... he was also a key figure in their first successful defense.

The other two were hired later on, and he didn't have much information about them... Though from their aquatic appearance, it was clear that all of them commanded Water Aspect primarily.

"Take a seat."

Levi ignored them and sat at the table first, followed by the rest of his teammates. Once seated, Arthur and Shia kept gazing coldly at the fishermen's nightcrawlers, their words ringing in their minds.

"Whatchu looking at?"

Kraev'Morr narrowed his eyes murderously, leaning slightly closer... but the moment his face was about to cross the center of the table, an invisible wall manifested briefly.

"Easy there... You will get your chance to torture them like the first vermin daring to raid us."

Syc'closs eased up the savage-looking Kraev'Morr, who resembled a humanoid Hammer-shark... his skin was gray and rough, filled with scars all over.

When he spoke earlier, his mouth exposed a set of shark-like teeth spread out, each tooth resembling a sharpened sword.

With the six of them sitting together like this, they truly resembled the cursed crew members of Davy Jones in the Pirates of the Caribbean series.

"Look at their confused expressions... Druv'Shaar, be a good lad and show them a preview of their fate." Syc'closs requested, his voice gentle, but his expression wasn't.

Druv'Shaar smiled sinisterly and manifested a dimensional screen in front of Levi and the others.

Blblblblb...

At once, Arthur and the others' expressions betrayed their composure as they watched four humans, wearing Heliodor's emblem, being drowned at the bottom of the sea.

Their bodies were chained up to the seabed by thick black coral, leaving them to resemble cocoon prey with their heads exposed.

Shia covered her mouth, feeling sick to the stomach at the sight of Syc'closs and his team drowning them, and then putting their heads in oxygen bubbles the moment they noticed their looming death.

They kept doing this over and over again under the millions of watchers in the sky... their eyes showing mixed emotions: some weren't uncomfortable by the sight, but the majority didn't seem to mind.

In fact, they were cheering for the Raiders while making bets on how long they would survive before committing suicide by forfeiting the game.

In both the CRS Platform and Nocturnal Ring, the Rifters could forfeit anytime they wanted... however, if they didn't possess a resignation token, their lives would be snuffed off instantly by the system.

They weren't called Death Games for the giggles. This was a genuine, systematic, merciless Warzone... not a video game.

All was allowed in the Death Games as long as the rules weren't broken... even if it led to such dehumanizing scenes.

"Why..."

Arthur murmured under his breath, his fists tightening until they turned white under the table... This wasn't the first time they viewed this video, as it was the first thing that came up in the dimensional network when they searched for the Drowned Court team.

But, to see the proprietors play it again shamelessly in front of them had set up a different kind of rage than watching it on their own.

"Why?" Syc'closs smiled kindly, "Why not? They have challenged us to death... isn't it our right to deal with them as we would like?"

His response was sick... but he did have a point.

Raiders had the right to challenge both Saviors and Conquerors Factions to Death Games for their treasures... because of this, neither side showed an ounce of mercy when dealing with them, treating them as vermin of the platform.

Although Levi and the others were fighting for the sake of their planet and to reclaim their territories due to their Saviors' slowly giving up on them, the nightcrawlers didn't care... as long as they were part of the Raiders faction, this was the normal treatment.

Using torture on any given chance to make sure that anyone considering becoming a Raider would think twice.

"Clearly... such deterrence didn't work so well against the lot of you." Syc'closs smiled, resting his chin on his wrist, "I can't wait to find out what game we will be playing... It's been a while since we had some fun."

"You got that right."

"I was just considering ditching your team for another active one... I was getting too bored."

"Kraev'Morr, you always say this, but you never leave... haha, when will you admit that you like hanging out with us?"

Seeing the Drowned Court team laughing and teasing each other like their team didn't exist... like the next game was nothing but a fun activity for them... Levi couldn't help but chuckle a little.

"What are you laughing at?" Kraev'Morr's expression instantly turned murderous again, his aggression button easily accessible.

"Aren't we supposed to laugh when clowns are trying to entertain us?" Levi said, smiling serenely.

Chapter 212: Blood Isles.

"..."

"..."

"..."

Hearing this, the nightcrawlers' laughter and chatter died out immediately... even Jasmine and his friends were left speechless, not anticipating Levi taunting them back.

Shia, Arthur, and especially Jojo were barely holding themselves from cursing the nightcrawlers and their ancestors... but Levi ordered them to stay quiet and let him do the talking, and they had to listen.

"Clowns... us, me? ME?! YOU ARE A DEAD MAN!!"

Kraev'Morr immediately banged the table and lunged at Levi with his shark-like mouth wide open, his eyes already seeing red.

Yet, Levi didn't even flinch... instead, he chuckled even harder after seeing Kraev'Morr smash his head on the spiritual barrier separating them.

'Jojo... get him.'

The moment Jojo heard Levi's dimensional message, the mantra she kept repeating in her mind to calm herself stopped... her sealed lips opened at once, and a flood of insults burst forth akin to a sacred dao.

"What a disgrace... Tier 4, yet you think with less sense than a Tier 1 hatchling. Clowns at least know they're clowns when they put on a show... you? You're just the joke nobody asked for. I bet your teammates choke back their disgust every time you open your mouth, feeling like they're talking to a brick wall with a pulse... Namaste."

"Shut up! Shut up!! SHUUT UPP!!"

"What's wrong... losing it already?"

Jojo kept going, unfazed by him smashing his hands nonstop against the spiritual barrier, his saliva pouring down his wide-open mouth.

"Ah... my bad, I forgot, you have no mind to lose in the first place... You clump of stray cells... I wonder how you even managed to evolve? I am almost certain you are a failed experiment that ran away, or worse... cast away for being too useless... Namaste."

"ARGHHHH!! I AM GONNA KILL YOU!! I AM GOING TO EAT YOU!!!"

"Heh... figures. Everything about you is driven by your gut, isn't it? Namaste."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Levi, Arthur, and their friends could only watch speechlessly as Jojo tore Kraev'Morr a new one, clasping her hands each time she finished.

The moment she located his weakness, she did nothing but keep jamming a screwbar in it over and over again.

They could see... Kraev'Morr truly had some intelligence or aggression problems... either way, it was his insecurity, and Jojo didn't stop picking at it until Kraev'Morr was left panting with his arms resting against the barrier.

Levi noticed his heart pounding furiously, racing at nearly triple its usual pace, as though it might rip free from his chest in pure rage.

Syc'closs and his teammates' expressions also turned slightly nasty, realizing that their attempts to crack Levi's team's mental had backfired.

Kraev'Morr was too much of a weak link when it came to mental warfare, and Levi had done his research and figured it out before they sat down.

'I guess I found my experiment target...'

Right now, he kept the same unprovocative smile as he watched Syc'closs and the others trying to calm down their partner... alas, Jojo's acidic mouth was too much.

Seeing her like this, Arthur didn't know why, but he suddenly felt his heart skip a beat... he was too used to being on the receiving end of Jojo's insults. To see her use that unholy mouth of hers on their enemies, he couldn't help but think to himself... was she always this cool?

Before the fiesta could prolong, a portal opened up near the table, and the chosen Gamemaster stepped out... Jojo's radioactive weapon sealed itself again, and she closed her eyes, murmuring a soft prayer under her breath, resembling a peaceful, harmless monk.

"Alright, enough noise... name's Sparks, your one and only Gamemaster."

Gamemaster Sparks waved his hand lazily, and Kraev'Morr was forced into his chair, his mouth sealed shut and limbs glued... his bloodshot, murderous eyes were the only things moving.

Peace returned to the Game Hall at last.

Gamemaster Sparks ignored him and sat down in the head chair, leaning back with his feet resting on the table.

He was also a squirrel, but his fur was pink, matching well with his white, glamorous tuxedo and black shoes.

His tuxedo was dotted with sparkling diamonds, stealing anyone's attention the moment he sat on the chair.

There was a hint of swagger around him as he was using a black cane to walk while his lips kept sucking on a lit cigar... exposing a golden frontal tooth with each deep puff.

If there were only one word to capture him... it would undeniably be Pimp.

"It's a pleasure to have you as our Gamemaster, Sir." Levi greeted politely.

"Wish I could say the same," Gamemaster Sparks muttered with a sharp harshness and a slick voice. "Gettin' knocked back down to this sorry excuse of a rank... damn Rats, always pushin' me, testin' my game."

"..."

Levi and the others didn't understand a word he was saying, nor could they place what was off about his accent... but they wisely stayed silent, sensing that he was in a foul mood.

Even Syc'closs and his teammates went silent, their cockiness fading away under the presence of Nocturn's Authority.

"Here's your Death Game... take a look at the details, and holler if you've got any questions."

Gamemaster Sparks manifested a dimensional screen with the game details and the map's appearance materializing as such:

// Game Format: Resource Domination

Game Name: Blood Isles

Participants Number: 12 (6 vs 6)

The Combined Average Power Level: 32N... Range (30N_45N)

Ranks Allowed: Invader, Marauder, Sentinel.

Battle Map: The Tri-Isles Crucible.

The Treasury's Value: 170K Nocrix Credit/110K Solar Aegis Coins.

OmniGenie's Condition: The Last Ritekeeper.

Rules of the game:

1-Abilities Allowed.

2-One artifact allowed on each Rifter...(Grade A and below)

3-Each team starts on their designated base island (Redfang Isle & Bluefang Isle).

4-Blood Rites spawn only on the Central Isle at intervals of 1–4 minutes randomly.

5-Blood Rites must be collected and transported safely to the base islands' Altars.

6-Blood Rites carriers are slowed by 15% and emit a faint blood trail.

7- A team may invade the enemy's base, but invading players are afflicted by:

Blood Scent (Reveals them to enemies within 15m) Weakness Curse (-20% damage dealt and resistance)

8- Game Duration: 30 minutes.

9-Victory Condition: The team with the highest number of Blood Rites stored in their Altar when the timer ends wins.

For more information, please open your CRS profile Interface.

Good luck to all CRS Rifters//

Both teams read the game's details in silence while Gamemaster Sparks kept blowing smoke into the air lazily.

After a few moments, Levi and his teammates didn't seem to have a good expression after seeing the three islands' sizes and how the water was easily accessible to their enemies.

'Shit... I knew the map would favor their powers, but still... to fight on islands while surrounded by an ocean is a bit too much.' Shia frowned, sending a dimensional message to others from the network.

'It is what it is.' Nurah shrugged, 'They are the defending side, and the platform gives an advantage to any defending faction.'

'Any faction but us.' Arthur said.

'Raiders can only launch challenges, they have nothing to defend or protect... so, we are always at a disadvantage... map-wise.' Levi said calmly.

Meanwhile, Syc'closs and his teammates showed cruel smiles and said nothing... yet, Levi and the others knew that they would definitely seek to drown them like the first team.

"Sir, what's the condition of obtaining the Last Ritekeeper Title?" Levi inquired, ignoring them for now.

"Easy... grab all the Blood Rites that pop up during the game, drop 'em on your Altar, and the title's yours. And yeah, you know the drill... with that title comes one wish, so don't screw it up."

Gamemaster Sparks shared with one leg above the table and hands resting behind his head... but because he was too short, he was hovering above the chair to make such an illusion happen.

Levi and the others noticed his floating buttocks, but they kept their comments to themselves... knowing better not to laugh at a Gamemaster.

"What's the type of the Omnigenie in this game? Is it Aquagenie or Sanguigenie?" Syc'closs inquired expressionlessly.

"The game's called Blood Isles... what else did you expect?" Gamemaster Sparks' lips curled in irritation, not a fan of having to explain every little detail again.

His tail once glowed with a blue hue, a mark of the upper ranks in his clan... back when he commentated on Death Games featuring real monsters, beings capable of leveling mountains with a single word.

Now, he was here... at the very bottom of the ladder again, his authority and dignity stripped from him, forced to commentate weaklings.

"So, Sanguigenie... that's not too bad." Syc'closs' eyelids twitched, but he acted deaf to Gamemaster's tone.

"No more questions? Good. I'll catch you in a month."

Before anyone could open their mouths, Levi and his friends found themselves pushed out of a portal, returning to the Blood Hunters' training room.

"Damn... what's his problem?" Arthur cursed under his breath.

Chapter 213: The World's Regional Alliance Conference.

"It says here that Gamemaster Sparks has been demoted from Blue Tail to White Tail for getting caught running a massive brothel franchise across the Nine Sky Provinces... He was exposed by a Rattoki, who found out that he wasn't paying his taxes. He snitched on him to the Cricetii Clan (Hamster Clan). They found him guilty of tax evasion and revoked his Blue Tail privileges."

Shia read from an article on a dimensional screen... the moment she typed his name, it was the first thing that popped out.

Levi and the others were left speechless for a moment at the ludicrousness of the situation... however, they knew that the four Murinori Clans weren't just silent puppets under Nocturn's Authority.

They were people with their own free will and an omnipotent authority only lower than Nocturn himself... As long as they didn't betray Nocturn or ruin his realm, he didn't seem to give a shit about what they did on the side.

That's why the Cricetii Clan's job was to act as Judges & Ethics Wardens across the Boundless Expanse; their authority was the highest of the four clans, keeping even their race members in check.

While the Ratokki and Sciurani clans were at odds with each other, the other two clans remained outside of such conflicts.

"Is this good luck or not?" Nurah wondered with a finger on her lips, "I am sure many viewers will tune in to watch our game because of him, but he doesn't seem that interested in it."

A Blue Tail Gamemaster was of a high caliber when it came to presentation and commentary... many viewers paid insane amounts of money to watch their games... It was like they were a fan of the Gamemaster, not the Rifters themselves.

It wasn't that bizarre when considering that such Gamemasters could turn the most boring slop into a finale if they wanted.

'Knowing my luck in the games... I doubt it.'

Levi's brow twitched, realizing his cursed misfortune seemed to follow him in every game he took part in.

"Back so soon? How did it go?"

Lord Idriss and Madam Naima came back to the training room after they were singled out for their return.

"Well, our Gamemaster is having an internal crisis after getting demoted from Blue Tail, and our enemies are a bunch of assholes who want to torture us more than winning the game." Shia said while opening up another lollipop, "What do you think?"

Shia's parents' expressions turned solemn after hearing the first part... the second one? It wasn't any news.

"A demoted Gamemaster... this changes everything."

"Hmmm?"

"Changes what?"

Arthur and the others raised an eyebrow in surprise, not expecting such an extreme reaction.

-Our team's exposure...-

Jasmine sent a holographic message, pushing herself to be more proactive in their conversations... as an introvert since childhood, this was actually harder for her than slaying nightcrawlers.

So, once in a while, she threw a message in to let them know she was alive and then returned to the corner.

"Team exposure?" Jojo questioned.

"Yes, we were planning to apply for your team to join The World's Regional Alliance Conference after you won a couple of raids and increased your team's exposure." Lord Idriss' eyes gleamed, "But now... this raid might be more than enough to propel your team's name across the globe if you ace it."

"We may not even need to apply for it like beggars... You will be invited to the Conference just like the rest of the best Raiding teams registered in the Campaign."

Hearing this, Jojo and the rest seemed to remember reading about such a Conference when they were collecting information about the Raid Campaign.

At the time, they didn't think much of it after they found out that the Conference was highly exclusive, and only Raiding Teams from the top twenty Holy Regions had a chance to get invited.

But now? Everything changed...

"Gamemaster Sparks will most definitely promote this game to the best of his ability, even if he hates commentating in such a low rank." Madam Naima smiled, "He needs all the ammo for his appeal to restore his privileges."

"This means your first Raid might actually cross the hundred-million viewership mark, which is an insane number of viewers for two unknown teams." Lord Idriss narrowed his eyes, "This is an amazing opportunity, and I want you to make the best of it... The WRA Conference; you have to join it if you want to evolve beyond your current battle skills... I dare say, the mentorship and opportunities you will receive there will be nothing like what we can give you."

"He is right... They have Blazewarden Daywalkers as the supervisors, and teams made out of the greatest talents in the world, competing against each other to better themselves and secure the qualification to the final eight." Levi nodded in agreement, "They also run side missions to Distorted Ancient Sites, Rescue Missions, and such."

Levi had read that the purpose of this conference was to prepare the teams with the highest chances of qualifying to increase their odds of winning the campaign... since Solar Aegis Sanctuary was sponsoring them and the reputation of their planet was also at stake, of course, the World's Regional Alliance would take it most seriously.

It didn't matter which region won it as long as it was them... thus, they were willing to invest extensive resources and talents to make it happen.

Of course, this offer was for only teams that showed amazing qualification potential in their raids, which meant a heated competition involving hundreds of Raiding teams across the globe.

"So, they will train us while simultaneously using our services for such missions?" Arthur wondered.

"Don't worry, it won't be for free..." Lord Idriss said, "Everything you do in the conference earns you credits that you can use to trade for much higher quality artifacts, totems, materials, and such resources that our region has no access to."

"After all, the Conference itself is held in Antarctica... where the Headquarters of the Solar Aegis Sanctuaries resides." Madam Naima added while showing them a dimensional picture of the site.

Arthur and the others had seen it before, and yet still... their eyes were left mesmerized by a towering holy pillar over the endless white of Antarctica... it resembled a shard of heaven piercing into the frozen expanse.

In the center of this holy pillar, which stretched for hundreds of kilometers, a gigantic Grove Willow sprouted into the sky... So vast, its uppermost branches vanished into the clouds while its golden leaves brushed the stratosphere... If compared to Helidor's Willow Grove, it would make it seem like a young tree.

This was the World Tree... A higher class of Willow Groves.

A tree, which was believed to have its powerful consciousness connected to every Willow Grove around the world... dimensionally and spiritually.

Each planet under the Saviors' protection had a different species of World Trees, which acted as the headquarters of Solar Aegis Sanctuaries around the world.

Without it, the rest of the Willow Groves would wilt... without it, the world shall collapse as no Radian would dare step foot on a tainted planet.

No Radians meant no holy pillars. No holy pillars meant... extinction.

At the base of the tree, a small city clung to the trunk... to the untrained eye, it seemed almost fragile against the enormity of the tree. But this city was nothing but the appetizer.

The main dish was hidden inside the World Tree's heart... a labyrinth of cities connected through aerial bridges suspended in the hollowed core.

The World Tree was not merely a tree... it was a vertical continent of life and civilization, a sacred axis keeping the balance of the world.

"If you got invited here during the qualification stage... You will experience the real world of Daywalkers in one place." Lord Idriss gazed at them solemnly, "Don't miss this opportunity... it will rarely repeat."

"We understand." Levi nodded, "We will give it our best to grab their attention."

The others nodded in agreement, making up their minds to take this matter seriously... they knew that eight slots weren't enough for the hundreds of Raiding teams that would register in the Campaign.

If they wanted to earn their slot, they had to train with the best to truly understand their competitors' level.

"Good, now... let's see what kind of game you will be dealing with so we can prepare for it thoroughly."

Fifteen days later...

The sun was peeking over the horizon, painting the sky in a mesmerizing lavender light... Yet, only the citizens seemed to enjoy it from their balconies and the streets.

As for the Daywalkers? Most of them had taken half the day off from their farming missions and whatnot for a single purpose... to spectate the first Raid of Helidor's Raiders.

The citizens might still be left in the dark about the outside world, but the Daywalkers knew what was going on... or at least some of it.

The Great Raid Campaign, which had launched its registration a week ago around the Graduation Ceremony, was one of them.

After the Graduation Ceremony made the news for having Levi, Nurah, Arthur, and Jojo all graduating in less than two months as official Raiders, Helidor's Daywalkers were left astonished, but not surprised.

Even a fool would realize that those four monsters had no place in the Training Center after what they did in the Blood Hunters' Expedition.

However, just when they were discussing which Raider Squads they would be joining, already having tens of teams lining up for them, a bombshell exploded.

Those four, in addition to Jasmine and Shia, had been sponsored by the Three Major Agencies and the Government to found a new team... Helidor's Raiders... and represent them in the Great Raid Campaign!

This news had set fire in the Daywalkers' blood, as most of them believed that such a team of prodigies with government support would give the Campaign a legit run.

Since winning the Campaign blessed the region as a whole and Daywalkers on it, the majority decided to tune in and cheer for their regional team on their first Raid.

It wasn't hard to find it, as every Raider had access to the dimensional map of the world and all the raids happening or about to happen... It was like a planetary schedule.

At the moment, Rayan, Sergio, and Jamal were chilling on the restaurant's rooftop alone... Rayan, being the family's cousin, also had a decent sway over the staff.

"It's about to start... two minutes are left." Jamal rubbed his hands, his face expressing both excitement and nervousness somehow.

Chapter 214: A Ragtag Group.

All three had a signed Nocturnal contract in front of them, titled: The Raid of Heliodor's Raiders against the Drowned Court.

They had paid for their tickets with the help of their friends since they didn't have access to the dimensional network as normal Daywalkers... only CRS Rifters had access.

"Shit... they better win it." Sergio was already grumbling, "How come their tickets cost so damn much? One thousand Aegis coins... It's daylight robbery, robbery I tell ya!"

The more he remembered it, the angrier he got... for someone as stingy as him, paying one thousand coins for a ticket was something that even torture wouldn't get him out of.

"Aight, aight, relax... You will gain it back with your bet." Rayan grinned excitedly, "I have already put down all of my savings as well as a debt of twenty thousand SA coins from the family's treasury... I am gonna get rich off them and use it to buy the materials needed for my evolution."

"... you really are following Levi's plan." Jamal smiled wryly.

During Graduation, Rayan was the only one from the C2 Classroom left behind... Levi and his friends had moved on, while the others perished... may their souls rest in peace... all except Demetris.

Even Instructor Seraphis was still in a coma with no signs of waking up any time soon... barely holding on to the last string of life.

Although Rayan was offered to graduate with the others, he decided to remain behind and join a different classroom... he refused to graduate without a Rifter Contract in hand, as he had no plans to be a Seed Farmer for the rest of his life like the majority.

Luckily, Lord Idriss had informed him that a perfect evolutionary path for him had been found, and they were in the process of trial and error to check its validity.

But unlike Levi and the others... he was a low priority in Lord Idriss' eyes, even though he was a family member.

Thus, he was offered the value of the materials needed to concoct the formula, and he was told to pay for them if he wanted the perfect evolutions.

Lord Idriss had already invested a significant part of their family's wealth in Heliodor's Raiders... he had no plans to invest more in Rayan, even if he was family.

This was the Morningstars' way of handling family business... if one wanted unconditional support, they had to earn it.

Although the material's value was high enough to make his legs turn mushy, Rayan didn't let it get in his head... he wanted to catch up to his friends, and he was going to do whatever it took to make it happen.

When Levi heard of his woes in one of their regular rooftop hangouts, he told him to give him his money to bet on the Raid at one of the many gambling dimensional dens.

He told him that he would be doing the same, so as the others... seeing their brimming confidence, Rayan didn't hesitate to go into debt and invest all of his savings in this.

His insane commitment left his friends speechless, but they kinda understood him... for an adrenaline junkie, it must suck to see them moving up rapidly in life while leaving him behind.

While the others couldn't stop or slow down for anyone, he knew that he could only speed up his growth to prove his potential, too.

Jamal and Sergio had also committed some of their money to support their friends, but they weren't as crazy to take on a generational debt for a single bet.

Just as Sergio was about to comment, he swallowed his words at the sight of the Nocturnal contract suddenly transforming into two pairs of shadowy goggles.

The boys glanced at each other, and they swiftly wore them on their eyes.

"Woah... this shit is so gas."

Rayan's eyes widened in astonishment after his senses were instantly connected dimensionally to the Raid's map.

His eyes reflected the three islands surrounded by a scarlet sea, and separated by blood-like rivers... they were arranged like a claw mark across the ocean, their landscape long and shallow.

The islands on the right and left were concealed under red and blue domes, hiding them from the viewers... These were Redfang Isle & Bluefang Isle.

The central island, which was the biggest of its sisters, wasn't hidden... allowing Rayan, Sergio, Jamal, and the tens of millions of eyes across the crimson sky to marvel at its menacing beauty.

It had purple and pink trees mixed up across its surface, with a slightly richer red grass field, stretching from one end to the other... as for the beaches? The sand was dark, but it still sparkled under the crimson light of the massive moon in the background.

"Ayy, ladies an' gents! Y'all ready to get entertained tonight?! Ready to witness the hottest new crew of Planet Tera hittin' the stage? Are ya reaaaddy to feel that blood sizzle?!"

Abruptly, Rayan's ears were blessed by Gamemaster Sparks' unconventional accent... his words as informal as they could get, but his voice... oh, that voice, it carried a slick, streetwise charm... smooth yet rough around the edges.

When he looked at him, he was dazed to see him sitting on a floating platform with a couple of squirrel ladies in his arms... the platform resembled a club's VIP table with its black leather couch and small table packed with alcoholic beverages.

He was using his cane as a microphone while the low-dressed 'ladies' were throwing themselves on him.

It was clear... He was the Big G of his race.

-Wooooaah!!! Gamemaster Sparks, I am a big fan!!-

-Gamemaster Sparks!! I can't believe I had the chance to witness his legendary commentaries live!!-

-Kyaaaa!! He is so sexxy!!!-

His loyal viewers were instantly electrified by his swagger and voice, screaming at the top of their voices... some even seemed to faint on the spot.

"Aw yeah, make some noise, baby! Let it roooaaar! I wanna hear that crowd shake the sky! We ain't here for no quiet night..., we here to set this place on fire!"

Kaboom! Kaboom!

The moment Gamemaster Sparks finished, fireworks exploded in front of the viewers, making Rayan and the others flinch... the realism was on point since those shadowy goggles linked their actual senses dimensionally to the map, making them hear, see, and feel anything going on around them even if they weren't there in flesh.

"What a feeling... my skin is tingling nonstop." Rayan murmured as he gazed at the wall of eyes stretching around him, "No wonder everyone is paying to watch those games..."

"This isn't a normal attendance..." Jamal replied, "Levi and the others were right... This weird Gamemaster does have a massive following, and he brought them down here with him."

Rayan and Sergio nodded... as the boys were waiting for the start of the game, their eyes weren't the only ones from Heliodor's region.

Lord Idriss, Madam Naima, Lord Hicham, Feng Ling, Madam Ysara, High Chancellor, the rest of the Governors, Velmira, and the majority of the region's Raiders tuned in live... as for the rest of the Daywalkers with no access to the dimensional network or had the money to pay for the tickets, their agencies had them covered.

Everyone was requested to gather in their agencies' open lobbies and had the dimensional livestream played for them... unlike live spectatorship, one only needed to pay for a monthly subscription, and they would have access to thousands of channels.

It was more or less a dimensional TV with channels playing live-streamed games or replays from both the CRS Platform and Nocturnal Ring.

Of course, there were news channels and even freaky alien corn channels... if one thing was certain to persist across the ages, it would most definitely be prostitution and corn.

Kaboom!!

Following one last firework, Gamemaster Sparks brought the cane close to his mouth... then, he extended his left arm to Redfang Isle and shouted, half puffing a cigar.

"Give it up, give it all the way up for Heliodor's Raiders, baby! First time steppin' in the ring and they goin' straight for a Shadow Castle Nest?! Hah! That's that big boss energy right there!"

The moment the red dome collapsed, Rayan and the rest of Heliodor's viewers cheered at the top of their lungs at the sight of Levi and the others chilling around an altar in the center of the island.

The island was largely similar in appearance to the central one, except for the addition of the Altar... a gray boulder shaped into a platform, etched with crimson Ilthorien inscriptions.

Arthur was leaning against the altar with arms crossed... Nurah was chilling above a tree branch near them, hiding in the shadows like always.

Jojo was sitting in a meditation position in the center of the platform... praying with her eyes closed. Once in a while, Arthur nudged her to annoy her, just to have her elbow him in the back.

Shia was sitting on the grass field like a hooligan with a popsicle in her mouth and an arm resting on her raised knee.

As for Jasmine and Levi?

They were also sitting near a tree, conversing with faint smiles through signs... seemingly going on a picnic date.

If it wasn't for the team wearing a fully black leather uniform with the team's name written in bold letters on the back, no one would believe this ragtag group of children was a team.

Seeing their behavior... High Chancellor, Lord Idriss, and the rest of their chiefs couldn't help but sigh helplessly.

"I told you... Uniforms are useless; you can't curb individualism, and you shouldn't... Individualism is one's main source of strength." Feng Ling shook his head while lighting up a cigarette in the back of the Council, watching the game with the rest of the Governors.

Hearing him say this while dressed in a government officer's uniform left the governors twitching their lips, unsure whether he was also taking a jab at the government.

"We didn't want to curb their individualism... just make them look united as a team."

High Chancellor smiled wryly at the sight of Arthur and Jojo amidst another bickering session, forcing Levi to cancel his quick date to break it off.

As expected, when the viewers saw Heliodor's Raiders' unserious attitude, resembling a bunch of kids hired at the last second to fill the numbers, doubts started flying already.

Chapter 215: Snatched Against Their Will

-God damn it... I don't even know where such a shitty region is placed, but I thought they would at least take the Great Raid Campaign Qualifications seriously.-

-Ahhh... don't tell me my Glorious King is going to commentate on a flop... I swear, if he somehow made it entertaining, he shall be reinstated immediately to Blue Tail privileges!-

-Well, they were daring enough to challenge a Shadow Nest on their first raid... they might be more than they seem... I know I am being delusional, but I ain't having nothing ruin this one-time experience.-

-Wait... why is their captain wearing a black bandana over his eyes? Are his eyes so special that they need to be sealed?-

With over a hundred million viewers... the majority were outsiders, who had no clue about Earth or its regions.

Their source of information was mostly exclusive to the details about the teams, which weren't a lot in the first place. But they did know one thing... Daywalkers weren't supposed to be blind.

Thus, when everyone noticed Levi's black cloth, no one was foolish enough to assume a disability... especially when he didn't show any signs of being blind. Instead, they believed that he was using his black cloth to weaken his eyes' potency... It wasn't a strange occurrence, as many had done it before.

Seeing that Heliodor's Raiders didn't attract as much love as he had anticipated, Gamemaster Sparks swiftly gave up on them being a crowd favorite and hyped up the Drowned Court.

"And in the otha' corner... slidin' in drippin' cold from the Duskbound Order! We got the mean, the lean, the soul-snatchin' fiends, who won't hesitate to drag it down to the deep blue just for a lil' sip! Make some noise for... The Drowned Court Conquerors!"

The blue dome collapsed, showing Syc'closs and his teammates waiting in a line at the beach of the island... their expressions cold and murderous, making everyone pick up on their serious aura.

They meant business, and that's what the viewers loved to see... most of them cheering for them right away, especially the nightcrawlers.

"Alright, alright, listen up, you beautiful bloodthirsty beasts! The stage is set, the stakes are high, and the scent of glory is so thick, I can sniff it like a line!" Gamemaster Sparks lifted his cane into the air and shouted, "Once that firework pops, two slick bridges gonna slide out from those beaches, linkin' the islands to the heart of the stage! You can chill and wait... or hustle your way across with whatever tricks you got... don't matter to me, that's your problem!"

Hearing this, Levi and the others stopped messing around and went to the beach, their expressions steeled... only Jasmine was left behind near the altar.

"Ten!"

Gamemaster Sparks raised his jeweled cane high... The audience rumbled back, their voices harmonizing at once.

"Nine! Eight! Seven!"

Gamemaster Sparks grinned, gold tooth flashing under the lights... With a flick of his wrist, he launched a firework into the sky from his cane!

"Three!"

The rocket screeched under the crimson sky, and as the crowd chanted, "Two! One!"

BOOM!

A torrent of scarlet sparks bloomed across the heavens in the shape of Zero, which simultaneously erupted from millions of throats at once!

"Squabble!"

Syc'closs and his teammates immediately dove into the sea while extending their arms behind their backs, waiting for no bridge!

Whoosh!..

Forceful water jets screamed from their palms, propelling them with insane speed akin to speedboats in the direction of the central island.

At least three kilometers separated the islands, which was quite a decent distance, considering that the Rifters needed to go back and forth between the islands to store the Blood Rites.

'Kraev'Morr, Druv'Shaar, Orr'Vekth ... go terrorize them, but don't commit too hard... we don't have much on their powers.' Syc'closs ordered coldly from under the water.

'With pleasure.'

Druv'Shaar and the other two swiftly split up from the team, planning to go around the central island and catch Heliodor's Raiders around the blood-like waters.

Meanwhile, Levi and the others still hadn't made their move, awaiting the bridge to be completed...

The scene was like two sister islands reaching out to hold hands, as the bridges stretched from their black sandy shores.

While Levi seemed to be staring at the bridge getting closer to the island, in reality, his echolocation was fully active.

It showed him the exact movements of every member of the Drowned Court... the three fast-approaching nightcrawlers and the other three, who had already arrived at the central island and begun their search for the first Blood Rites spawned.

The Blood Rites' locations weren't provided, but if one got too near, they would start hearing ancient mystic whispers... the closer they got, the louder they became.

'The plan stays the same... let's go, they are about to arrive.' Levi communicated dimensionally.

'Say less!'

Arthur, Shia, Nurah, and Jojo summoned their weapons and swiftly sprinted on the bridge that was about to be completed... Arthur was in the lead while the three girls backed him up from the sides.

Levi remained on the beach, standing with his arms crossed on his chest... his echolocation was keeping close track of every member of the Drowned Court and his allies.

'As anticipated... their strategy is to collect the first spawned Blood Rites while sending some members to stop our attempts at setting foot on the island.'

Levi's mind was working through all the possibilities before committing to his plan... so far, everything was going on as predicted.

Over the past fifteen days, Levi had conducted extensive research on the Drowned Court and its members... from their powers, fighting style, their teamwork, and such.

Then, he formed strategies and trained with his teammates on them to ensure that their teamwork went smoothly.

It was finally time to show the world, no, the universe, the fruits of their labor.

Meanwhile, Kraev'Morr and his backers were a mere fifty meters away from the bridge... Arthur, Jojo, Nurah, and Shia were appearing on their radars through their heightened senses to any water source.

Since human bodies were 70% water, those four showed as humanoid liquid rippling forms sprinting on the bridge.

'I am going to murder them all... especially that foul-mouthed bitch!'

Once Kraev'Morr noticed Jojo's form... his PTSD of their last meeting kicked in, recalling every nasty insult and curse thrown at him.

He was preparing, waiting patiently for this very day, and now... it was time to feast!

'Flood them!' Kraev'Morr shouted.

The three nightcrawlers split up on both sides of the bridge and then activated their primary abilities... whatever that could produce a massive tsunami!

One summoned an elemental water Leviathan in the shape of an electric eel, its gigantic body bursting through the sea and smashing its tail on it!

One created a colossal underwater vortex that spun violently, then collapsed upward, throwing displaced water into a towering wave!

As for Kraev'Morr? He manifested a gigantic hammer and jumped into the sky with a furious expression, smashing it on the surface near the bridge!

Rumble!!

With all three abilities combined, two towering crimson tsunamis rushed from both sides of the bridge, threatening to devour it and Heliodor's Raiders on it.

"Heavens Breaker Arts: The Last Bulwark!"

Seeing this sight, Arthur struck his shield on the ground and manifested a sealed fortress around him and the girls.

Kaboom!!

The tsunamis landed on the vermillion fortress and swallowed it whole, leaving the viewers with no sight of it anymore or the bridge... But the sea was an uncontrollable vixen, and although Kraev'Morr was a Tier 4 nightcrawler, he wasn't blessed with the right to command her.

Only Trueborn Aquatic races or high-tiered nightcrawlers had high Solarity Access to manipulate nature externally, like Sandwitch.

The rest of the nightcrawlers were limited to their own mastered abilities, which utilized solar energy as fuel.

The tsunamis retracted as swiftly as they had arrived, leaving the bridge to spill with water akin to bloody waterfalls.

"Will ya look at that! The fortress held strong! Not a single crack on its surface!" Gamemaster Sparks' eyes scanned the fortress.

A split second later, a flicker of astonishment took over after realizing that the vermillion material was actually Orry's Gemheart!

'Will I be damned... that boy is contracted to a nightcrawler with bloodline relation to the extinct Orry'n royal family?' He thought... his accent was exclusive to showmanship.

Before he could bring out such knowledge to the public, the battlezone had a new development.

When Kraev'Morr and his partners saw that their tsunamis did nothing to the fortress, they changed their plan.

'Bring down the entire bridge, and let them choose to suffocate inside or underwater!' Kraev'Morr ordered hatefully; his shark-like eyes were redder than the water he was in.

No hesitation, all three went to the bridge's pillars connecting the central side, where Arthur and the others were staying on... then, they extended their fingers or claws and used an ability that condensed immense hydraulic pressure into a razor-thin, hyper-compressed surge of water.

It was like a knife made out of water, but sharp enough it could slice through stone, steel, or bridge pillars by exploiting micro-fractures and blasting them apart from within!

With the bridges being made out of hardened sand, everyone could tell that Shia and her teammates had a limited time to leave the fortress.

'Levi should warn them, quickly!' Velmira bit her nails, watching the game with her buddies from the Blood Hunters' main squad, 'I know he can see what they are doing with his insane spiritual vision.'

Her idea was good, but Levi had a better one.

'Look alive, here they come...'

'Aethric Grasp...'

Levi extended three fingers and, with a soft flick, Kraev'Morr and the other two nightcrawlers were suddenly yanked from the depths of the sea, snatched against their will just before their razor-sharp water knives could touch the pillars!

Splash! Splash! Splash!...

Their bodies pierced the surface and were thrown into the sky uncontrollably above the bridge, leaving them stunned and a bit mortified, resembling three misbehaving children caught in the act.

-...-

-...-

-...-

Even the viewers found the words suddenly stuck in their throats... most of them were just about to cheer for them to collapse the bridge before those three's asses were in full display on TV.

Chapter 216: First Blood Drawn.

'Aetheric energy?? And able to control it from such a long distance? How good is his spiritual prowess?' Gamemaster Sparks' pupils thinned for the second time in a row, starting to see a pattern. 'Maybe I should have given them a few minutes of research.'

But, he knew this wasn't the time to reflect on his poor misjudgement of Heliodor's Raiders' strength... he swiftly highlighted the Aetheric energy, showing the viewers the three nightcrawlers to be contained in a green aura while it was connected to three lines.

Those lines were linked to Levi's fingers, close to a kilometer away.

Seeing this, Feng Ling, Madam Ysara, Lord Idriss, and the rest of the region's upper rankers couldn't help but show a hint of envy... they were Solarbound Daywalkers, yet they envied Levi for his ludicrous spiritual prowess, which still kept surprising them each time they saw it.

To know he was still a Junior Daywalker was the icing on the cake.

'I never thought a day would come when I would envy someone blind...'

As this thought ran through their minds, they watched Arthur retract the fortress into his shield, channeling some of the tsunamis' kinetic energy to amplify his strength using the Rebound Engine's innate ability.

With crystallized, reinforced veins and bones, the absorbed kinetic energy made his muscles gleam like polished vermillion gemstones.

"Heavens Breaker Arts: Orry's Edge!"

He shouted, grinning widely as he tightened his empowered muscles and hurled his shield with everything he had in the direction of Druv'Shaar... the Tier 3 seahorse-like nightcrawler, their weakest link!

Whoosh!!

The shield pierced the atmosphere, spinning at an insane speed, its frightening howl arriving first.

'Shit! Water Barrier!'

Druv'Shaar's instincts came alive, making him cover himself in a barrier of condensed swirling blue water.

Alas... Arthur's shield wasn't just metal and force...

Slice!!

The water barrier was sliced like butter, followed by Druv'Shaar... the shield cutting his body in half under the eyes of his stunned teammates.

As the viewers' astonished eyes tracked the flying shield, it suddenly changed its trajectory, akin to a boomerang, heading for Kraev'Morr's head!

Wheeze!

Kraev'Morr evaded it with great difficulty under Levi's entrapment, moving his head just barely out of the way. Then, Arthur swiftly caught it with his bulky hand, cutting his palm in the process, but he didn't seem to care, knowing that the cut would heal in a few seconds.

'Nice try, big bro!'

Instead, Arthur showed the same grin as he glanced back at Levi, who had used his Aethric Grasp to return him the shield midair!

'Worth the shot.' Levi smiled, giving him a slight head nod.

While Arthur could have summoned his shield back into his hand, the rest of the stored kinetic energy would go to waste.

Unlike the others, Levi's weapons were perfected versions of their counterparts, allowing him to retain anything stored within them even when unsummoned.

"..."

-....-

Meanwhile, Kraev'Morr, Orr'Vekth, and the viewers were left dazed at the sight of Druv'Shaar's sliced body hitting the waters with a loud splash... his eyes as lifeless as they could get.

Then, simultaneously, they switched their focus to Arthur's shield... their hearts chilled at the appearance of bloody vermillion razor-sharp edges added to the shield vertices.

A small addition, yet when combined with Arthur's insane physique, it turned the shield into a flesh-cutting saw... utterly deadly!

"Helidor's Raiders have spilled their first blood!!"

Following Gamemaster Sparks' passionate shout, the viewers were finally given a breather to react to this insane sequence, which took no less than ten seconds.

-Haha!! Gymrat! I knew you had it in you!- Sergio laughed.

-Arthyy!! Show them hell!!- Jamal cheered.

-Terrorize them like you did to us!- Many Blood Hunters' Daywalkers.

-Holy crap... I heard Levi's an Anomaly-class psych, but to see him control that peculiar aether energy so precisely... returning Arthur's shield to his palm while still holding the other two... just wow!-

-I know, right?!

-I am starting to think our region has finally been blessed!-

The crowd exploded in cheers with Rayan and the majority of Helidor's viewers' voices taking the lead, their expressions ecstatic.

With the highlighted Aetheric tethers, they saw how Levi returned Arthur's shield to his hands like nothing... he barely moved his fingers more than an inch!

As Kraev'Morr and Orr'Vekth listened to the viewers' comments and cheers, their expressions couldn't help but turn ugly... they came to provide a show by tormenting those humans and get a boost of long-forgotten attention.

Unfortunately, the show ended up turning against them.

"You... You f*ckers are going to pay!!"

Kraev'Morr didn't let them celebrate for long... he used his entire strength to resist against Levi's spiritual grasp, screaming at the top of his lungs, just to bring his hands together.

Levi tried to fight it out, but he swiftly realized that it was going to take the full power of his Aetheric grasp on him... If he invested it all, the other would be freed easily.

Although Levi's spiritual prowess was monstrous, he was still at a Junior rank, while those two were at the Tier 4 evolution stage... unless he decided to waste all of his spiritual reservoir, he couldn't keep the tether alive on both.

Once Kraev'Morr got his hands together with great difficulty, he shouted, "Impact Jets!!"

Abruptly, twin blasts of pressurized water erupted from his hands, launching him skyward like a spear from the deep.

Spray trailed behind as the jets tore into the atmosphere, putting him further from the bridge until the aethric grasp on his body weakened and got cut... Though rage often boiled through his body, when it came to battle, he was no fool.

He knew that someone was holding him with a spiritual link, and for such situations, the only way to escape from Levi's grasp was to put distance and remain as elusive as possible.

'He isn't that dumb after all.'

Levi murmured, knowing that it was impossible to lock him down again with this much movement without wasting an insane amount of spiritual energy.

However, he wasn't too bothered... he knew Kraev'Morr was never going to leave the bridge. Even if he wanted, he couldn't... he had planted a special surprise for him.

-Druv'Shaar has been slain.-

Meanwhile, Syc'closs and his other teammates suddenly froze after hearing this notification resound in their minds.

'Druv'Shaar, dead? Already? They should have just gotten near the bridge?! How?!"

Syc'closs was stunned, many doubts coursing through his mind as he stared intently at the massive forest of trees, blocking his vision from the other side.

The central island was meant for combat and search, which meant... its size was massive compared to its sisters.

'Captain... what's going on?' Thyss'Rahl frowned, wanting to get more details on the situation.

'I have no plan to ask around.' Syc'closs ordered solemnly, 'Kraev'Morr, Orr'Vekth, retreat now!'

Just as Kraev'Morr was about to return and launch his counter-attack, using the compressed jets to dart around, Syc'closs's command halted his party... yet Kraev'Morr chose not to heed it.

An inner voice whispering to him: Don't leave... what about your promises to kill them? What about the humiliation you went through in the Game Hall? Is this everything you got?

'Me? Running? In their dreams!' Kraev'Morr scoffed coldly.

When he saw Orr'Vekth getting smashed against the surface of the bridge while Jojo, Nurah, and Shia were rushing in his direction, he used it as an excuse to back up his decision.

'No! Orr'Vekth is under attack! I have to support him, and you should too!'

As mercenaries, they were under strict obligations to listen to the team captain's orders unless they were ordered to throw their lives away or such.

Meanwhile, Levi was responsible for bringing Orr'Vekth close to his friends... if he wasn't using a water barrier to soften the blow, Levi might have invested more into beating him up from a distance... But he wasn't alone this time, needing to do everything by himself.

He had teammates, and great ones at that.

That's why he let them go in first, letting them gain real battle experience while he supported from the back... There was no point in going all out from the start; he'd rather see his teammates grow stronger than try to show off by soloing the game.

Shia sliced off both her wrists with the crescent crimson blade while mid-sprint, causing trails of sticky blood to follow her...

With an arm sweep, she drank her own blood, turning her eyes as crimson as the moon.

"Mantra Blood Arts: Blood Frenzy!"

Shia's movement speed, flexibility, reaction speed, and vision were all enhanced and optimized for the hunt!

Whoosh!

She left Nurah and Jojo to eat her dust as she swiftly appeared before Orr'Vekth's condensed water barrier.

Shia's arm burst through the water barrier with a sinister, menacing expression, holding her crescent blade from the short handle for smoother movement.

The water barrier dulled Shia's strikes, making each blow feel like it was sinking into gluey slime... Yet she kept hammering at it from every angle. This gives Orr'Vekth no chance to restore its strength.

In the end.

Slice! Slice!

Shia's crescent blade slipped through, slicing into Orr'Vekth's skin and leaving two deep cuts across his left arm and waist.

"Argh... you b*tch!"

Although Orr'Vekth was already struggling to escape from Levi's aetheric entrapment, he didn't let himself get bullied. He waited until Shia's arm got inside his spherical barrier before he compressed it and then forced it to explode!

Kabooooom!

Shia's reflexes and flexibility were as great as a cat's, and yet, her arm still got blown off while she was sent flying back to her friends... Shia rolled twice on the ground and came to a stop.

-Shia!!-

Rayan and the rest of Heliodor's viewers' expressions soured as they watched what remained of Shia's arm dangling from the bone... the sight was as gruesome as it could get.

Yet, not an ounce of fear or despair was in Shia's face.

Feeling no pain in the Blood Frenzy state, she merely glanced at her blown-off arm and the many wounds across her body.

Then, she smiled sinisterly, her tongue licking her bloody lips.

"Blood Mantra Arts: Blood Curse."

Chapter 217: Whisper of Influence.

Orr'Vekth, who got blown away into the distant, wasn't given even a moment to breathe before finding his two wounds opening wider... blood flowing in thick streams!

With a twist of Shia's fingers, the escaping blood changed course, snaking through the air toward Shia... then, it got mixed with her own floating sticky blood, going through a filtration system before it touched her.

It wrapped around the stump of her severed arm, forcing bone to reconnect, muscle to knit, and skin to close... Each drop it lost fed her instead, leaving his body weaker and paler as her own strength returned!

'What did she do to me! Why can't I close my wounds! Why can't I control my blood!'

When Orr'Vekth tried to stop his blood from gushing out, he found himself making it even worse... it was like every order he gave yielded opposite results.

He thought that he was tripping out, but in reality, it wasn't really his fault... Shia's newest ability, Blood Curse, was unlocked with her perfect evolution.

Just like Arthur... once perfect evolutions were involved, the Shadowlife seed didn't unlock innate abilities from the current nightcrawlers' library... but it dug through its own library of stored abilities and unlocked much better ones.

That's why being a high Tier or rank didn't matter as much when putting entities with perfect evolutions against those without.

In this case... Blood Curse wasn't a simple slash and pull blood ability... It also inflicted a hidden curse that fed on the target's desires to close the wounds.

The more he wanted them closed, the wider they got... creating a vicious circle, broken only once the secret was found.

When combined with another new ability called Total Blood Reformation, which fed on enemies' vitality, it made Shia capable of healing from the worst wounds possible as long as she had access to the blood of others.

'God damn it! I need backup... I am going to die!!'

Realizing that his situation had gotten from worse to hellish... Orr'Vekth immediately called for his teammates to save him while creating a small water wave that picked him up and took him away from his enemies.

When Levi tried to pull him back, he found great resistance... the mini-tide was also mixed in, resembling a gluey slime.

This made it hard for him to separate the two... if he wanted him back, he needed to contain the tide as well with aether energy.

But Levi had no plans to do this... his spiritual vision showing him Kraev'Morr was about to make his move, while the rest of their teammates were fast approaching to offer help.

They had sent those three to torment and slow Heliodor's Raiders down, but not in their wildest dreams did they expect them to get beaten this badly.

When they realized that the possibility of retreat wasn't an option, they could only give up on their search for Blood Rites and come to salvage the situation.

'Shia, Arthur, Nurah, I will leave you the crab.... Jojo, hold down Kraev'Morr in the sky... we might end this without collecting a single Blood Rite if you stayed focused.'

In the Nocturnal Ring... tens of Rifters participated in a single game, each to their own... this made it impossible to ignore the game mechanics and go for a full wipe-out.

But, it was different in the CRS Platform... with teams consisting of six or ten at most, unless a game included multiple teams at once, games could very much end through brute force in less than five minutes.

After all, the game mechanics were respected only if both teams were even in strength... if one was stronger or had a much better strategy and powers, everything was possible.

'Got it.'

'On it.'

The moment everyone nodded in understanding, Orr'Vekth found himself able to move again... Stunned, he looked behind him and saw that Shia was sprinting so low to the ground, she resembled a thirsty hyena, the blood still staining her face.

When his vision focused behind her, he felt chills course down his spine at the sight of Arthur preparing to throw his bladed shield at him with the same wicked grin... what happened to Druv'Shaar played in his mind.

As for Nurah? She was nowhere to be found... a single blink, and she was gone.

'How come such a shitty region has three monsters not even at Warden rank?! And who the f*ck has such insane spiritual prowess? Is it that baldy?!"

The first question resonated across the minds of many viewers, who were watching a totally different game than the Drowned Court members.

Unlike them, Gamemaster Sparks had the authority to highlight Aether energy, making it visible to his audience.

Because of it, they saw the truth in the replay... how those three nightcrawlers were yanked from the water and manipulated like wooden dummies by Levi.

"What do we have here?! The Maestro has spared his prey from his aetheric chains! Is it mercy? Or..."

Gamemaster Sparks commented at the sight of Levi canceling his Aetheric Grasp, the green tether fading into nothingness... then, he summoned his staff and held it akin to a javelin thrower, aiming it at the sky.

Or more precisely, at Kraev'Morr, who was battling Jojo in mid-air... seeing the battle between these two getting way too heated, Gamemaster Sparks switched the stream to them excitedly.

'This is the good shit I am talking about!'

He didn't expect Levi and his teammates to bring this much heat, which left him wishful that maybe his appeal would work if this game turned out to be a hit.

Meanwhile, Kraev'Morr completely forgot about helping Orr'Vekth the moment Jojo entered his radar... his murderous intent for her trampled everything right now.

"You foul-mouthed abomination!! Die!!"

Kraev'Morr roared, his body twisting mid-air as sharp jets of pressurized water shot from his palms in Jojo's direction.

Jojo evaded the jets easily by falling from one prayer bead and catching the other, leaving her hanging in mid-air.

She spun around and stood back up on it with one foot and the other raised, watching calmly as Kraev'Morr restored his balance with his jets... since he was using them to fly around, he was as uncomfortable as possible.

His battle-habitat was the great ocean, not the sky... and it was clear to all that the best decision for him to make was to regroup with his allies, not fight in the air like this.

But, just when rationality flickered inside his rage-consumed mind, the whispers returned... she is there... she is right in front of you... You have dreamed of erasing her from existence for the humiliation she put you through... You can't? Maybe, she was right... You're nothing but a useless, disregarded exper...

"AAAAAAA!! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!! I WILL KILL YOU! I WILL KILL YOU ALL!"

Kraev'Morr roared into the heavens, the crimson moon bathing under his unfiltered rage... seeing him losing his marbles, Jojo raised an eyebrow in surprise, 'Levi's spiritual abilities sure are demonic.'

Before they met their opponents, Levi had given the team a heads-up that he was going to target the weakest one mentally in their team... in this case, it was Kraev'Morr.

Even cursing him in the Game Hall was part of the long game Levi was playing... he wanted to set enough enmity between Kraev'Morr and his friends... Jojo, being the menace of the team, took the role of breaking his mental.

All of this to make it easier for Levi to plant Whisper of Influence!

Levi had done so the moment he used Aetheric Grasp on him... he just needed a spiritual connection to plant the seed, and Aether energy acted as an amazing medium for spiritual attacks.

However, since the Whisper of Influence didn't force obedience but gently nudged decisions, created hesitation, or shifted focus, it couldn't be used on just anyone... the moment it was detected as a spiritual attack, it was as useless as a wet napkin.

The higher the difference in spiritual prowess, the more likely the influence was to take effect and go unnoticed... weakening one's mental also helped greatly.

Right now, Kraev'Morr was thinking he was the one deciding to stay behind and trade blows with Jojo, but he had no idea that he had fallen into Levi's web fifteen days ago.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Jojo was there to collect the benefits; each movement of her fists or kicks sent her prayer beads whipping outward, colliding and ricocheting all over the place around Kraev'Morr!

One bead slammed into another, bouncing to the left, then downward, creating an unpredictable storm of strikes... This left Kraev'Morr incapable of predicting her attacks, forcing him to eat multiple prayer beads in the face, the back, the stomach, and the limbs!

Ting! Ting! Ting!

Such a peculiar fighting style was only possible due to Jojo's single tiny horn mutation. It was flickering nonstop, which sent spiritual signals constantly, making her see the exact locations of her prayer beads... In addition, it made the prayer beads seek each other without Jojo needing to be manually involved in the process.

So, the moment Jojo kicked or punched one using her martial arts skills, the prayer beads ricocheted off each other, before returning to Jojo once their momentum died out... just to have her kick them back again.

Kraev'Morr was left in the center of this chaotic barrage; his body and soul were groaning so much with each hit... Jojo's prayer beads were embedded with spiritual energy, which would make anyone get crippled from pain at such a barrage.

Yet, Kraev'Morr still held strong, his body twisting mid-air while using the jets of pressurized water to break through the formation.

Two beads were knocked off their path, but Jojo was already moving... her heel catching a third bead, sending it whistling back into orbit to close the gap.

Tiing!! Arghh!!!

"You b*tch!"

Kraev'Morr held his bloody nose after the prayer bead sneaked through his defenses and landed straight on his face, boinking his giant hammer-like nose.

"What? You ain't interested in a facial surgery?" Jojo sneered, "I thought I was doing you a favor."

Chapter 218: A Green Comet.

Hearing this, Kraev'Morr's mind finally snapped... he couldn't leave because of the whispers, and he couldn't fight properly in mid-air. To make it worse, he was under Jojo's constant insults and prayer bead bombardment, making him feel like he was a piñata toy getting beaten up.

With a crazed expression, Kraev'Morr roared while spitting out a spherical dark blue marble above their heads.

"You kept testing my patience, now let's see who survives... Dehydration Rite!"

The moment Kraev'Morr activated one of his ultimate abilities, streams of moisture began to tear away from Jojo's skin and breath, drawn in fine wisps toward the spinning dark blue marble.

Her lips cracked, her skin dried up, and each droplet fed the artifact, making the marble swell larger under the stunned eyes of the viewers.

They weren't taken aback by its results on Jojo, but on Kraev'Morr!

"Dehydration Rite! Such a nasty curse don't care 'bout no foes or allies... just suckin' the moisture outta anything close, not even sparin' the damn atmosphere! And when you throw in that Grade B Drought Pearl Artifact? Its power is boosted three times over!" Gamemaster Sparks shared passionately while taking big puffs of his cigar.

Rayan, Jamal, Sergio, and the others couldn't help but feel their chests tighten at the sight of the clouds getting pulled into the spinning marble!

It was so powerful, more than a fifty-meter radius fell under its Dehydration curse... Jojo, being the closest, was forced to grit her teeth, feeling like her throat was turned into dry sand.

Worse... her limbs grew heavier by the second while her mind was getting foggy...

"So, that's your game... turning me into a water pouch?" She sneered, her twelve beads spinning unsteadily around her.

The dryness spread rapidly within her, but her eyes stayed locked on him... She was given a mission to hold him down, and she wasn't going anywhere unless Levi said so.

The only positive news from this was Kraev'Morr... he was doing slightly better than her, but the effects started to show on his already rough skin.

Fortunately, his water jets were made out of compressed water, making it impossible for the artifact to pull from them effectively, forcing him to fall.

"What? Feeling tired already?"

Kraev'Morr smiled sinisterly, his lips cracked and bleeding, but he didn't care... he opened his mouth wide open and fired a barrage of pressurized water drops!

Ting! Ting!...

Jojo entered a defensive stance, bringing back her prayer beads and using them to create a telekinetic barrier... Alas, the dehydration was taking water, oxygen, and whatever vital source from her brain. In turn, her spiritual prowess took a massive hit since it required intense concentration.

Crack! Crack...

After multiple hits, the spiritual barrier started to give in, cracking all over... the viewers could tell, the moment it broke, Jojo would have so many holes in her body, the Dehydration Rite would instantly leave her as a withered husk.

-Retreat!! Jojo!!-

-What is she doing!! Just retreat to safety!-

Before, it might have been possible... but now? Jojo knew that Kraev'Morr wouldn't leave her side no matter what.

Instead of making him move all over the place, she wanted him to stay put... her trust wasn't placed on her barrier holding out, but on someone else.

"Hahaha!! Why so silent!! Speak!! Curse!! Insult me!!"

Kraev'Morr had so much hate in him, he literally stopped his bullet barrage to speak shit to Jojo, his mocking laughter resounding across the sky.

'Good job, Jojo.'

"No need... your fate has been sealed long ago."

Instead of feeling scared, Jojo clasped her palms and bowed her head slightly in his direction the moment she heard Levi's voice.

Then, she gave him Jojo's special: Ragebait with insults, and then prayed for his soul.

"May your rage sink into the earth... May your hunger find no more prey... May the shadows you've sown return to cradle you, and the silence you feared become your only companion." She finished her prayer with a soft voice and eyes closed shut, "Namaste..."

Before Kraev'Morr and the viewers could react to such a confusing turn of events, the viewers' eyes suddenly picked up on a gleaming dark green streak, tearing through the air apart.

Its speed was so fast, the moment the viewers noticed it, it had already arrived at its destination.

A split second later... Kraev'Morr barely had time to react before his eyes reflected a scene of a black, vibrating staff being a mere ten meters away.

Blink.

The staff was gone... in its place, a resounding sonic boom assaulted his ears, akin to a thunderclap.

Yet, Kraev'Morr didn't even pay it any attention... his stunned eyes glanced below, just to find a giant hole left in the middle of his chest with blood gushing rapidly in the direction of the Drought Pearl Artifact.

His own artifact and ability were assisting in his demise.

Alas... if it were only physical, he might have been able to save himself... odds low, but still, a chance, considering him being a Tier 4 nightcrawler.

But, it wasn't... his soul was the true target, and it didn't survive more than half a second before his subconscious barrier imploded.

'Huh?'

The last thing his dimming, confused eyes saw was Jojo's shriveled bald scalp gleaming slightly under the moon, still bowing... not at him, but at hope that he might find redemption on the other side.

Under the stunned eyes of the viewers and his teammates, Kraev'Morr's body and artifact fell one after the other into the crimson waters...

Meanwhile, the aether-infused staff was still streaking towards the moon, resembling a comet...

Gamemaster Sparks swiftly split the streaming screen into two and put the replay of what happened on one side, focusing this time on Levi.

That's where everyone saw what happened... Levi was hurling his staff into the sky while it was illuminated with so much intense green light, they couldn't fathom just how much aether energy he had stored around it.

But Gamemaster Sparks spotted the truth.

'It's not stored around it, but inside of it... His weapon is hollow... but, why?'

As this question resounded in his mind, Levi snapped his finger while uttering calmly, "Aether Resonance Javline... ignite."

Boooooom!

The stored condensed aether energy was suddenly ignited through resonance, creating a contained, intense explosion within the staff!

Since the staff was unbreakable, this kind of energy needed a release... and Levi provided it by loosening the bottom crown of the staff.

The staff rocketed through the sky, its velocity surging to supersonic in an instant, shattering the sound barrier before the astonished eyes of the onlookers.

Once all of the aether energy within was released, the detached bottom crown was pulled back into the staff, reconnecting with the rest... its speed remaining constant as it headed with great accuracy towards Kraev'Morr, whose entire focus was affixed on Jojo.

The sharp tip of the Resonance Javline pierced through his chest, while the untouched coating of aether energy delivered the final spiritual blow!

Truly, a One-Shotting Technique!

"I can't believe it took him less than fifteen days to create such a complicated technique... his Solarity Access must already be above 30% to merge multiple powers." Lord Hicham mentioned with an impressed tone, while the rest of his peers kept nodding in fascination.

They understood just how difficult to reach such a high level of access in less than a couple of months... even the most talented Daywalkers took years before hitting 20%.

"It's his spiritualness... Solarity requires a spiritual connection, and that boy is not lacking in that department." Lord Idriss said while watching Gamemaster Sparks switch to the end of the battle on the bridge.

"Oh... look, a falling star, better make a wish..."

Meanwhile, on the bridge, Arthur grinned wickedly as he lifted Orr'Vekth's mashed-up head from his kelp-like hair, making him stare at the faint green comet in the sky against his will.

Shia and Nurah were standing beside him, one was cleaning her dagger, and the other was wiping the blood from her face.

'How did it turn like this... they are supposed to be children from a desolate region...'

As his cloudy eyes reflected the faint green comet, memories of the thrashing he received from those three resurfaced in his mind.

It showed Arthur hurling his shield toward him with a grunt... he didn't enhance his strength this time, which allowed Orr'Vekth to meet it with a swift open palm.

Whoosh!

Pressurized water burst forth, slapping the shield aside and sending it spinning high into the air.

But Arthur remained unfazed... His gaze tracked the shield as it turned, spinning wildly until its gemstone faced down toward Orr'Vekth.

The instant it aligned, his lips parted. "Release."

A beam of stored kinetic energy erupted from the central vermillion gemstone, causing the shield to be launched into the sky even higher... However, the destructive beam cut across the bridge, forcing Orr'Vekth to jump away, moving just in time to evade the beam!

Yet, it did its job thoroughly, casting a pillar of light near Orr'Vekth... Light was almost always accompanied by shadows, setting up the chance Nurah was waiting for in the background.

From the dark outline at Orr'Vekth's back, Nurah erupted, covered in shadowy tendrils and daggers drawn.

She swung for his neck in a single, fluid motion... her eyes displaying not an ounce of hesitation.

Orr'Vekth's instincts activated; he snapped his head aside, the blade whispering past his throat by a hair's breadth!

He was also a Tier 4 experienced nightcrawler, and this wasn't his first rodeo at dealing with assassination attempts.

However, Nurah didn't press the miss, knowing that it was a long shot... she instantly somersaulted away while activating mid-spin her first ultimate ability.

"Blackthorn Shadow Arts: Shadow Puppeteer!"

Once she landed, her shadow was linked to Orr'Vekth's shadow, forming a long, shadowy bridge on the floor... Orr'Vekth stiffened, his limbs locked in place.

"Shadow Spikes!"

Before he could react, dark spikes sprouted from the binding shadow... piercing into his legs, his sides, and his arms!

Argh!!

He roared furiously, thrashing against the pain.

Alas... just as he was about to force himself out of the ensnarement, Shia had already arrived at a dangerous distance.

"Mantra Blood Arts: Bleeding Peaks!"

Her palms hit the ground, causing uneven, sharp towers of crystallized blood to tear upward, reaching him in a blink.

'Water bari...'

He instinctively attempted to protect himself, but still... it wasn't enough.

The bleeding peaks erupted through his torso and shoulders, impaling him three meters into the air for all to see...

Shadow spikes and crystallized peaks... his body had been transformed into a monument, his limbs spread out, and blood dripping down the spires beneath the astounded eyes of the viewers.

Shia clenched her fist... the towers cracked and turned into liquid, which was drawn to her and devoured by Blee'der to recharge their blood supply.

Thud.

Orr'Vekth landed on the ground, his body broken and mind shattered beyond recovery... he couldn't even afford to move a limb, his fingers twitching once in a while.

The moment he collapsed, pain ravaged through his cold body, his clouded vision focused on a distant falling corpse... the corpse appeared hazy, but with that big hammer nose, he knew immediately who it belonged to.

Splash... as the sound of his partner's body smacking the water resounded in his ears, he found Arthur holding his head and showing him the green 'comet'...

"Make your wish... just know, you'll only get to enjoy it in your next life."

BOOOM!!

The moment Arthur's cold words resounded in his mind, Orr'Vekth found his vision and mind go completely silent... Arthur had bashed his head like a watermelon with his shield against the bridge, spraying blood and brain juices all over his shoes.

Yet, Arthur merely rubbed them on the floor and turned his gaze to Syc'closs and his teammates, who had finally arrived on the other side of the bridge.

Their expressions were livid, but this time... it was clear for all to see, a hint of dread was buried within their eyes as they looked at three corpses... one split in half, one had a donut on his chest, and the last was smashed on the ground.

Each death was more gruesome than the last.

Chapter 219: His Own Sanctuary.

A lot of time might seem to have gone by, but it was less than a minute between those three's bodies getting snatched out of the waters and having them wiped out.

By the time Syc'closs and his other two companions realized that they had grossly underestimated Heliodor's Raiders' unique powers, Orr'Vekth and the other two's names were already engraved on tombstones!

Two minutes into the game... The Drowned Court was down three members, with two of them being Tier 4 mercenaries.

As for Heliodor's team? The viewers were left speechless at the sight of Jasmine sitting in a lady-like manner with legs tucked in next to the altar... A yellow scroll was floating in front of her while she was using a small brush, painting the island with black ink.

They thought she was fooling around with her hobby, but she was making sure that anyone daring to step inside the island would never make it out... That's her role in this game: protecting their territory in case their strategies didn't work out, and they had to retreat.

But, as Levi gazed at the spiritual auras of the remaining three nightcrawlers on the other side of the bridge, he could tell... the game was already over.

He switched his vision to the flying Judgement's staff... his arm still shaking from the previous throw.

'I told you combining your powers is the key to powerful techniques with minimized energy loss.'

Ash'Kral smirked.

'I can see that... but, mastering Aether Resonance Javelin was a real pain in the ass.' Levi replied, his mind reflecting the memories of twelve days ago... the day he created Aether Resonance Combustion System.

Twelve days ago...

Levi stood on top of a small mound with green prim grass... the mound was near the edge of a small floating island in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by Kleidoscopic void.

This was his own territory, which he purchased just a couple of minutes ago... Since such territory belonged to Nocturn's Administration, Levi didn't interact with anyone.

The moment he made his decision, he was shown a 2D map of the Boundless Expanse... with most territories split into jigsaw-like puzzle pieces (map fragments).

Then, it was split into four colors, each representing a map fragment type and its location... starting with Citadel rating fragments.

They were colored pitch-black, and there were nine major zones across the entire map, each representing a capital in a Sky Province and its surrounding towns and cities.

Provincial territories were connected to the nine major capitals and stretched around them like countries in different shapes and borders... Some Provinces were small, and some were massive enough; they were bigger than multiple provinces combined.

Though... all provinces were colored silver, differentiating between them were the floating numbers above... One to Nine.

The Nine Provinces didn't have their borders connected... There was a separating river-like territory between each one.

This considerably small, thin-like territory was referred to as the true Borders, and was colored red... although it looked smaller than other territories, many nations were built on this long stripe.

That's because Border-rating fragments were needed, and they were much cheaper and accessible than Province or Citadel types.

Since they were between Provinces, it gave them access to multiple Provinces at once if the borderline was connected to more than two!

In such situations, the price of those locations might be higher than in a random location inside a Province... Though... such territories were already sold and claimed.

Last but not least, the worst possible location to build a nation on... The Desolate Void.

Desolate fragments were colored white and situated at the far outer circle of the map, connecting to the borders.

It was the biggest piece of territory, with at least ten times the size of the other three types of territories combined.

In one of those white spots... if one zoomed really, really, close, they would see a jigsaw grid crafted out of an unknown amount of white fragments.

Amidst this sea of white... a hundred fragments connected were colored dark green... this was Levi's purchased territory, as he had traded one hundred desolate fragments for this piece of Void.

The moment it was registered under his name, Nocturn's Administration manifested a floating island out of nothingness with borders matching the size of the traded hundred fragments.

After all, not all fragments came with similar sizes... which added a Random Number Generator (RNG) into how the map fragments were awarded or purchased on the platforms.

He had chosen an area very close to Ash'Kral's territory, making him able to see it as a tiny gray dot if he pushed his echolocation to its limit.

"You are now a proud Boundless Owner... How do you feel?" Ash'Kral asked, smirking faintly.

"Peace..." Levi smiled, "Now, I have my own personal sanctuary."

Levi understood that such a luxury wasn't available to just anyone... even a Desolate territory was a dream of many, but none had what it took to own it.

After all, only TeraOwner rankers had the right to purchase a territory... the rest of Boundless Citizens could only rent.

To be a TeraOwner meant risking one's life in the Nocturnal Ring... such exclusivity linked to life and death had separated Nocturnal Rifters from the rest.

Nocturn's Administration was really serious about such ownerships falling into the hands of only TeraOwners, regardless of what generation they earned the rank in.

"It might be shitty, but it's a start." Ash'Kral nodded, "If you want to upgrade or whatnot, you can always purchase fragments from the Infinity Shop."

Levi shook his head, "This is enough for now... The Omnipotent Level increases with my rank in the platform... so, space isn't really important unless I want to create a Boundless Nation."

Levi had no plans to commit to this piece of territory... it was a peaceful sanctuary, but it was too far from everything. Investing money in it was the same as throwing it into an ocean.

Just like the real world's real estate... the property's value was based mostly on the location. Thus, Levi could invest all he wanted in it; once he decided to sell or such, he would take a massive loss on it.

"Once I get my business running in a capital, I will start considering investing in a Province or Border Territory to put my warehouses and limit the transportation distance."

Levi had done some research on the business side of the Boundless Expanse... He found that he needed a warehouse for his products since he couldn't store them in the shop.

He would barely have space for his displayed product, let alone having it as a warehouse... thus, a massive warehouse was a must, and it needed to be in the Province or at least the Borders closest to the capital for the sake of being near the transportation gates.

This piece of dirt? It was so far from civilization, Levi would drop dead from old age before crossing a tenth of the distance.

Still, it was his own piece of dirt, and Levi was proud of it.

"Now... let's start the training." Levi cracked his knuckles, "You spoke about a method to combine abilities from different powers... How does that work exactly?"

"Well, for others with shadowlife seeds, they needed a high access above 30% to even consider visualizing a technique from two different aspects... but for you?" Ash'Kral smiled, "All you need is creativity, logic, and a decent resonance of 5%."

"I got the resonance access part handled..." Levi murmured, "So, creativity and logic."

The moment Levi got access to Aether energy, he knew it was time for some combos to emerge... he couldn't do the same with Sunflame and Darkness Aspects since his access was still stuck at 0%, but it was different for the Nine Senses.

They were part of a single seed, which gave him the option.

"Aether, Sound, and Spiritual energy... if we consider physical as mass, spiritual as will, and Aether as the bridge... then, where can I add sound in the equation to give me the best results?"

The first idea that came to Levi was using sound waves to interact with Aether energy... he knew that sound was more than a mere echo. It was energy in motion... a wave that could push, tear, and shape matter depending on his level of control.

The power wasn't just noise and loudness... it was precise calculation, as certain frequencies resonated with specific objects.

For example, if a sound matched the natural frequency of a glass, it could cause the glass to vibrate violently and shatter. This was called Resonance.

"I know every object and energy has a natural frequency at which it naturally likes to vibrate. A guitar string, air, or whatnot... each has its own 'preferred' vibration."

Levi rubbed his chin thoughtfully as he gazed at the concentrated green Aether energy on his fingers.

"Doesn't this mean Aether energy also has its natural frequency, allowing me to interact with it through sound? Just like I did with dark energy?"

Levi knew that if he were to apply sound at the same frequency as Aether energy, it would vibrate more strongly... if he were to amplify it to the point it exploded... he would have achieved Resonance through Aether energy!

"I was using echo forging on the chains and compressed air stored in the rifle's stock to explode the air pockets within... This helped me create a combustion-like system to fire my sound and Sunflame bullets. But, if I were to include Aether energy as the target of resonance... the bullets' speed might hit hypersonic... also, my spiritual bullets will be propelled at a similar insane speed, instead of me using my will to fire them."

Unlike Ignition marks and sound bullets, spiritual bullets weren't affected by air resonance... they needed a medium, and at the time, Levi didn't have decent spiritual control to pull it off with sound alone.

However, when Aether energy was involved, everything changed... Levi realized that if his theory succeeded, he would be using both sound and Aether energy as mediums for spiritual attacks and physical attacks.

"Ash'Kral... what do you think?" Levi asked his mentor.

"Not bad..." Ash'Kral smiled, "Your theory is correct... Aether energy does have a frequency, and by tapping into it, by matching it, you can interact with it at a surface level."

Chapter 220: Aetheric Resonance Combustion.

"Surface level?"

"Yes... You can match the frequency to cause resonance, but don't dream of using it to control aether energy... that's Melody Aspect level of control, since you will need immense technical fine frequency tuning... You aren't at that level yet."

"I see." Levi nodded in understanding.

He already knew that his control over frequencies was at beginner level at best... Violin lessons had humbled him immensely in the past days... Though he was progressing, and that's what mattered.

Levi knew that if he were to combine aether and sound through resonance, it would help him immensely in all of his weapons' styles of fighting.

Soon, Ash'Kral had given Levi the frequency for aether energy to get him started... as the master of the Nine Senses seed, almost anything that Levi could create was already created by him.

Instead of spoon-feeding him everything, he let Levi discover his own way, and he simply helped him from such time-consuming hassles.

With the right frequency in hand (17.3 Hz), Levi manifested a sphere of green aether energy on his palm... then, he modified his voice to match the frequency and started whistling continuously.

17.3 Hz was infrasonic... which meant it was below the threshold of normal human hearing (which started around 20 Hz).

So, although he was whistling, no one would really hear him unless their ears were capable of catching this frequency.

Without Aethermancy or powerful spiritual energy to see and control it, he could whistle all he wanted; nothing much would have happened... Such synchronization required all three gears, which meant only a select few could do it.

'It worked!'

Levi's expression brightened up after noticing the aether sphere start to vibrate, matching his whistle... When he amplified it, the sphere's vibration got too intense; it was barely capable of keeping its form.

Such instability was Levi's goal... his smile widened as he started condensing the aether sphere, shrinking it while also adding more energy.

Of course, he kept the frequency active...

As Ash'Kral watched the sphere's intensity increase while its size decreased, a grin formed on his face.

'Let me guess, you aren't going to warn him.' The Titan said.

'Why? How else will he learn if not by real experience like we did?'

'Why can't you just admit you like being an asshole?' The Titan's eyelids twitched, deciding to warn Levi of the consequences of his experiment.

Alas...

'Levi, you better stay a...'

BOOM! Argh!!! My haand!!!

Ash'Kral's chuckles resounded across the Spiritual Leywell as he watched Levi holding his bloody hand with a twisted expression.

His hand was utterly obliterated to the bone, and his fingers were sent flying everywhere... if it wasn't for his keeping his hand extended and away from his face, he might have lost it too.

Just as Levi was about to start panicking from the pain and the gore, he controlled his emotions and suppressed such useless feelings.

Doing this helped him recall faster that he was inside his own island, and that his Omnipotent authority had access to healing such wounds.

'Recover my hand!'

With a single command, Levi's hand began to restore from the bone, forming muscle layer by layer... veins spread like thin lines beneath the surface, then faded as skin slowly covered the new flesh.

Within moments, his hand was whole again, as if the damage had never happened.

As Levi gazed at such a marvelous omnipotence, he couldn't help but feel amazed... he had read that such omnipotence recovery could be used only on injuries occurring in the territory. If he were injured in the real world, he would need a much higher omnipotence level to heal himself.

"Next time, wear protection before experimenting," Ash'Kral smirked.

"Prick."

Levi's lips twitched, but he said nothing... he knew that he was in the wrong... he was attempting to reach resonance through aether energy, and he didn't account for it being this destructive.

He thought it would wound his hand or something manageable, not blow it entirely. But this made him more excited as he could tell that such a new way of combustion would turn his Starpiercer much deadlier.

"Aether Resonance Combustion... sounds fitting." Levi rubbed his cheek, deciding to name this new power-up.

A fitting name for igniting aether energy through resonant frequency, causing a sudden, explosive release of energy.

It could be said to be a system instead of a technique... a system that could give birth to many techniques depending on how he utilized it with each weapon.

Sure, he could use it alone offensively, but where was the fun in that?

Since the upcoming death game was CRS-related, he decided to create the first technique with his Judgement's staff.

His mind went back to the concept of Aether Resonance Combustion, thinking of the ways he could take advantage of it for his staff.

He summoned the weapon and started fiddling with it... Many thoughts coursed in his mind, but one spoke to him.

"What if I combined Javline Style and Aether Resonance Combustion? If I were to hurl it while adding combustion... is it possible to propel it much faster?" He murmured.

"The theory is decent, but it needs some fine-tuning." Ash'Kral supported.

Levi nodded, understanding that if he used a similar chaotic explosion, the staff would have its trajectory shifted once the energy explosion went through.

"Maybe it will be different if I add a series of mini-combustions, happening one after the other within the staff?"

This idea sounded promising, but Levi soon shook his head... he realized that it still wasn't enough to keep the staff on its course. It needed precise resonance alignment and symmetrical thrust.

Levi went silent for a few moments, his brain working the best of its ability to come up with a better solution.

'What I need is either a sequence of pushes, each one faster than the last, or one single powerful burst...'

Levi's thumb tapped the wood, and then his finger slipped inside one of the segments, touching upon the chains.

His finger froze; an idea struck him.

"What if I filled the first three segments with condensed aether energy, acting as the fuel? Then, instead of exploding multiple condensed spheres, I can loosen the last bottom crown and commit to a single prolonged explosion... which will be expelled from the third segment and push the crown away... since the staff is indestructible, the force of the explosion will have nowhere to go but the remaining segment's opening..."

The more Levi thought about it, the more excited he became.

"This shall create axial thrust, akin to a real rocket, pushing the staff's momentum immensely, allowing it to hit unreal speed in one motion!"

"What about the bottom crown? Won't it create a drag force?" The Titan wondered.

"You're right... But Ash'Kral can reattach the staff immediately after it reaches its peak velocity." Levi swiftly came up with a solution.

"The hell is this..." Ash'Kral's eyelids twitched, "I didn't sign to be turned into a rocket with aether energy exploding out of my ass."

"But, you did." Levi grinned widely, summoning up their contract and tapping on Ash'Kral's name, "So, suck it up and let's do this."

"Little bastard... couldn't you be normal and create aetheric bombs or such," Ash'Kral mumbled under his breath in annoyance.

Although he seemed annoyed, he understood the benefit of such a technique... power-wise, if they succeeded, it would blow a hole inside anyone... if their bodies were too tough to pierce, their soul would be next since Levi planned on adding an aetheric-like tip on top of the Javline tip.

Most importantly... Levi's spiritual energy wouldn't be consumed as heavily as using a standard attack like the palm strike.

In the arts of technique creation, the more energies mixed in, the less they consume in bulk... Levi could afford to waste solar energy, aether energy, but not spiritual energy.

Although his tank was immense, he preferred keeping it that way instead of abusing it at any slight inconvenience.

"I hope this works out as envisioned..." Levi murmured, beginning the process of concentrating aether energy within his staff.

Back to the present...

As Levi gazed at his falling staff, he couldn't help but smile... it felt good to have his ideas turned into a reality.

But his smile was swiftly wiped out after noticing Syc'closs and his allies creating gigantic frosted spears and hurling them at his brother and friends!

Arthur stood in front of the girls, holding his shield in line with his chest... His knees were bent, and his legs spread out a little.

"Orryn's Flower!"

The shield was suddenly coated with vermillion crystal, which spread outward into an octagonal flower... each face three meters long.

Boom! Boom! Booom!...

The giant ice projectiles collided with Arthur's shield, shattering into frosted fragments, yet they barely touched the vermillion octagonal flower, which glowed even more brilliantly.

As for Arthur? Whoosh!

Syc'closs and the viewers were left startled to see two massive jet steam wings emitting from the shield; the absorbed recoil in Arthur's body was released from the shield's vents as hot steam to the sides, melting the frosted particles in the air.

"Is that everything you got?" He smirked coolly.