

Evolution 231

Chapter 231: Seeking a Truce.

He looked at his first Umbral servant and, without an ounce of mercy, he turned him into ash with a solar pulse fired from his palm.

The servant's darkness coating resisted for a little bit, but still... it got devoured by the intense solar pulse in no time... Then, he turned around and left.

As Ash'Kral said, if overusing Darkness Coating was a serious problem, he wasn't going to waste his limited slots of servants on a nobody.

'Damn, even solar-based abilities burn as hell.'

While he was flying away, he glanced at his crimson soles and some skin burn marks on his legs... his resistance to sunflames was decent, but not decent enough to protect him from genuine sunflames touching his flesh.

His mind returned to the scene of him using a camouflage-based totem to cover his presence while he hid behind a cracked mound... he wanted to ambush them using Sun Jets to see just how fast they would make him go.

However, the moment he activated them, he found himself piercing through the sky akin to a rocket... his soles emitting concentrated jet-like blue/golden flames.

Although the jets were being emitted with great intensity away from his feet, his soles were still the point of release.

Fortunately, Levi had an aetheric grasp as well, which made him incapable of losing balance or such during his flight.

During the fight, he only felt a slight burning tingle, but now, the wounds kept sending painful waves, forcing him to drink a couple of recovery totems.

'Don't worry, as you keep growing, your body will automatically evolve to resist such heat until you build an immunity... while steady enhancement from completing stages helps, the real difference will be felt when you evolve and obtain a decent mutation.' Ash'Kral said.

"With how my relationship with Sun and Void trees is currently, I doubt they will be as kind."

Levi had a feeling that they were going to take revenge on him through mutation... he knew that he couldn't commit to his evolution like this.

Something needed to be done. He thought.

...

While Levi was contemplating a method to seek a temporary truce with the two Ancestral Trees before his evolution, Feng Ling and Hicham were chosen to lobby for Heliodor's Raiders.

At first, it was just Hicham, but Feng Ling requested to tag along, catching all the governors by surprise... the lazy smoker took initiative for the government and its future? It was a first.

"We know it's far-fetched... but, give it your all, for Seraphis, for the team, for the region's future."

High Chancellor wished them good luck with a smile as he stood in front of them inside the Willow Grove... they were next to the dimensional mirror, which was connected to the World Tree in Antarctica.

"We will see what we can do, but no promises... Dominic isn't known to break the rules that easily." Hicham said.

"I know, that's why I am worried." High Chancellor sighed.

"What happens happens."

Feng Ling said calmly as he stepped into the dimensional mirror while lighting up a cigarette on the way... Hicham gave a slight head nod at the High Chancellor and went after him.

'Willow, please help them out.' High Chancellor bowed his head slightly in the direction of the dimensional mirror.

Willow Grove's leaves fluttered on their own silently, seemingly a response to his wish... did it agree, did it reject? No one could tell for sure.

Three days later in the Boundless Expanse...

Levi had just exited the rented Evolutionists' Lab and returned to his studio. Once he locked the door behind him, he went straight to sit on the bed, pulling two glass bottles from his dimensional wallet.

He lifted them up in front of his face and murmured, "Such expensive beauties..."

His description was somewhat accurate, as the two evolutionary formulas were nothing like anything he had seen before.

The Sun's evolutionary formula was filled with a golden gas that was progressively combining to show a glimpse of a miniature sun before collapsing into a gas form.

Meanwhile, the Void's evolutionary formula was spinning a dark vortex... it was spinning while narrowing at the bottom until it touched the glass.

'If these were the appearance of the 1st evolution's formulas, how will they appear at the end?'

Levi couldn't help but let his imagination run wild... shortly, he shook his head and steeled his expression.

'I can't evolve while those two seeds are still pissed at me for favoring the Nine Senses seed... let's hope the speech I prepared works.'

Levi decided to do something he had never tried before... commencing the Resonance on all three trees together!

He wanted to hold a meeting to decide their future once and for all. Knowing the three seeds' egos, once the Nine Senses seed responded to his call, the other two were bound to show up.

As expected... when the connection was established, the Nine Senses Tree was the first to show up in the center of Levi's spiritual vision, swaying back and forth in delight.

Just as Levi was about to greet it, the two Ancestral Trees popped up on its right side and left side... killing its joy instantly.

They started using their branches to squeeze it from the sides while the Crimson tree was forced to defend itself.

Levi watched this scene speechlessly, making him remember the days he was caught with his little brother squabbling by their mother. She forced them to stand straight as she lectured them on why brothers shouldn't fight each other, but they were still elbowing each other each time she looked away.

'What did you expect them to do? Hug each other and work things out?' Ash'Kral sneered, 'Heh, those three divas have been fighting each other for generations... It's in their sap by now.'

'Thanks to you.'

Levi's brow twitched, knowing the bastard was the cause of all this, wanting to force a solution to the Three-Body Problem at all costs... this was bound to create more friction between the three seeds with each failed partner.

Ash'Kral acted deaf to what Levi said and watched him take a deep breath. Then, he narrowed his spiritual gaze at them.

'Honored Ancestors, I gathered you here to ask for a single chance.' Levi spoke, his solemn voice resounding in the spiritual plane.

When the trees heard him, they halted their petty quarrel and gave him some of their attention... Seeing this, Levi continued on, speaking freely from the heart.

'I seek your cooperation. I aim to tackle the Three-Body Problem, and all I ask is that you place a bet on me executing the Soul Split Theory... nothing more, nothing less.'

The Ancestral Trees shook at once, their mixed-up leaves covering the spiritual plane, yet not one of them touched the other... it was like they were telling him, the day their leaves touch, is the day the universe ceases to exist. Yet, he wished for their cooperation. Dream on.

Levi seemed to pick up on their intentions... but he didn't let it break his spirit.

'If you are willing to cooperate, even if only pretending to work with me until I reach Pathfinder rank through this theory, I can promise you something unprecedented: your own personal spiritual space, a place to grow freely, without interference,' he said calmly. 'No other host in history has ever achieved this with three of you... yet I intend to make it real.'

The three Ancestral trees went silent for a moment, seemingly thinking it over... A personal spiritual space was something only in their dreams, since neither Ash'Kral nor his past partners had what it took to create it.

But Levi was different... His spiritual prowess was unmatched. If there was one person capable of pulling it off, it would be him.

'If you give me this chance, I won't let you down... I'll honor your guidance and patience.' Levi's expression turned stern all of a sudden. 'If you refuse, I won't be stopped; I'll pursue the Soul Split Theory anyway and make it work despite any trials or punishments you impose.'

'I am not begging, nor will I ever do... If you want to claim this opportunity to be part of earning your own freedom, you are more than welcome... but if you decide to remain petty with each other, I won't stop you,' Levi concluded calmly. 'Once you force me to fail, I will die and be freed from everything... but for you? Ash'Kral will continue finding newer partners over and over and over again, until he dies or the universe ceases to exist.'

Seeing that the Ancestral trees were still silent, Levi pointed his finger at Ash'Kral, who was watching everything from Levi's spiritual Leywell with the Titan.

'Look at him, at his stupid face... Are you really planning to give up on me to stay by his side for many years to come?'

'Hey... what's with the insults?'

Ash'Kral was left annoyed, but when he saw the three Ancestral trees sharing a similar response of laughing at his expense, he realized that Levi was attempting to villainize him... in turn, creating another common point for the trees to unite against.

'Now, I ask you again, and this will be the last time I do...' Levi gazed at them calmly. 'Will you be part of the sole solution to free you from your imprisonment, or will you decide to remain in it for eternity to not harm your pride... what will it be?'

His voice was filled with so much conviction, even Ash'Kral and the Titan began to believe that maybe the kid was right... He might be the only one capable of solving the elusive Three-Body Problem.

As Ash'Kral said before, Levi was fated to solve it... Everything about him fit the sole solution he believed that was left untested, and had the most potential... It seemed like the three Ancestral trees were starting to realize it, too.

Realize that Levi wasn't like any other past partner... he might be the only jail ticket available throughout their entire lifespan.

'What will it be?'

Levi asked one last time while opening up the two evolutionary bottles together. Then he drank them simultaneously and wiped his mouth with his sleeve.

Chapter 232: The Duo Evolution.

He knew that their decision would be made throughout the two evolutions... if they decided to work together, they wouldn't punish him with pain and shitty mutations, but actually help him get closer to fulfilling the Soul-Split Theory.

No more talking, Levi broke the resonance and focused on his upcoming evolutions... would they torture him again, or did his words get to them by some miracle?

As Levi waited silently, his heartbeats kept increasing steadily... nervousness was slowly gnawing at him with each second that went by without pain.

'Maybe it worked... I actual... Arghhhhhhhh!!'

Before Levi could celebrate his success at uniting the three seeds temporarily, the two seeds' coats split, and tiny golden and black roots pushed downward to anchor into Levi's pelvis as well.

They wanted to attach their roots to the sacrum just like the Crimson seed did... however, there was only one route to it, and the Crimson's root already inhabited it.

This forced the newer roots to try and squeeze in through, uncaring if their roots were touching each other... the one who would pay the price was always Levi.

Right now, he wasn't being tormented by just two seeds, but even the nine-sense seed joined in on the fun!

Cold, heat, and headache... all three flaring periodically each time the roots touched each other on the way down!

'You motherf*c.... arghhhh!!!!'

Thud!

Levi was in so much pain, he rolled down the bed and fell in front of the glass window, his naked torso and twisted face planted all over the glass... fortunately, no one could see or hear him inside his studio.

'That's unfortunate, I genuinely believed he managed to convince them.' The Titan sighed in disappointment.

'Old Bark... look closer, my friend.'

Ash'Kral grinned widely as he gazed at the two-colored spiritual roots starting to knit around the crimson root, making it resemble a three-color braid.

'Hmmm... is that normal?' The Titan frowned in confusion, 'I have never seen three origin roots in one soul, so I don't know what I am looking at.'

Ash'Kral laughed with his tiny wings raised up high.

'This... this is a new beginning, my friend! The three roots are meant to remain separate in the soul and body... but the three trees are actually combining their roots into one!'

'It can't be...' The Titan was taken aback. 'What about the pain?'

'But it can!' Ash'Kral grinned, 'The pain is normal... it has been an automatic response for so many years, each time their roots or branches touched... although they seemed 'cool' with each other for now, it's still going to take a while before they get used to having contact without flaring.'

'Shit... are you telling me the boy has actually convinced them to unite?'

The Titan stood up, his mouth slightly agape as he watched Levi rolling from one side of the studio to the other nonstop... his voice was a mixture of curses and agonizing screeches.

It didn't seem like a victory to him at all.

'He convinced them to accept a truce until he commits to the Soul-Split Theory... whether he fails or succeeds, they have everything to gain as long as they swallow their ego for a couple of months and hold hands until he grants them their personal space.' Ash'Kral laughed.

It might not seem like much, but Ash'Kral knew just how massive this was towards finding the Three Body Problem's final solution of uniting the three origin seeds into one.

This truce was a step in the right direction, a step none of his previous partners could get out of the three trees... none of them had a way to convince them, but Levi's solution ensured they got personal space.

It seemed like it was the only thing that could get those three divas to hold hands temporarily.

'Look, our mutations are coming along!'

Ash'Kral laughed, the pain doing literally nothing to break his spirit... his own body was going through the same process as Levi's, evolution and all, yet the same grin never left his face.

He watched his body grow larger while his fur turned from black to milky white... and then, the central eye became smaller while the rest of his body got enlarged, giving birth to actual limbs.

His appearance slowly started to resemble a foxlike creature, but holding undeniable traits of a bat... his soft white fur was now banded with sharp lines of gold, crimson, and black that patterned his body with mystical beauty.

Large ears rose tall from his new head, their inner folds marked in deep crimson and edged in black. Across his face, golden markings stretched in elegant, angular designs, drawing attention to his piercing crimson eyes... one had a golden pupil and the other a black pupil.

What was Ash'Kral without his wings?

The old, tiny wings, which wouldn't be used as wings for a toy, were gone... in their place, a large pair of elegant and leathery wings were born.

They were decorated with flowing patterns of gold, black, and red, appearing somewhat hypnotic... yet, their beauty added to Ash'Kral's new otherworldly appearance.

Last but not least... the tails. Ash'Kral had no tails before, but now, three tails had emerged from his tailbone!

The three tails were white as well, but each one was striped with a different color: crimson, gold, and black. Even the stripe designs were different, resembling the three trees' appearance. The crimson tail had a nanoflower design. The black tail was circling Ash'Kral's tail with a thick line from the base that kept narrowing until the tip.

The final golden one was patterned by a chain of triangles.

A closer look revealed faint Ilithian runic inscriptions etched into each tail, lending them an aura of ancient power.

Every detail of his appearance transformed him from a joke to an actual nightcrawler with an aura of absolute majesty.

Meanwhile, Levi wasn't having it any easier... his chosen organ for the newest mutations was Skin... for which seed you ask? Both!

The Sun and Void seeds had chosen to mutate Levi's skin, each one desiring to make his skin much more receptive and protected from their harmful energies.

But with them having the same idea, this led to neither side wanting to give up on their choice and pick another organ.

Accepting a truce didn't mean they stopped hating or competing with each other.

Thus, they brute-forced Levi's skin together... starting with golden light rippling underneath Levi's skin, but showing on the surface as stripes of liquid gold spread across his arms and chest, forming chained triangular patterns.

After covering his limbs and torso, they linked up in the center of his chest in an illuminating triangle.

They almost resembled the Radian stripes that showed when Levi awakened his half-radian bloodline... but there was no presence of a sun symbol on his stomach or forehead.

The new tattoo seemed of much higher quality and represented the Sun Origin Tree more than just any Radian bloodline.

At the same time, black lines showed up in circular designs, weaving endless rings and loops over his body... the start of a circle was the end of another, making them connected across his entire body in the center of his chest again in an infinity circle inside the golden triangle.

Although Levi's skin turned into a canvas for the two trees' art class, the two colors never touched somehow... gold and black ran apart yet in harmony, as if bound by an unspoken law to never cross each other's paths.

'Dear lord... Ash'Kral is right.' The Titan remarked in astonishment at the sight, knowing that if the two trees still wanted to piss each other off with no care for consequences, they would have ruined their designs.

Instead, the last two-colored stripes climbed over Levi's neck and face until the final mark settled on his forehead: a glowing golden triangle framing a single black circle at its center.

The circle had no beginning and no end... an infinity sealed within the light.

Only then did the pain subside steadily until Levi's fingers let go of the carpet... before, he was lying flat on the ground with his toes curled up, throwing gangbang signs while his fingers held the carpet for dear life. His screams had already gone hoarse, but they were the only thing that could help him vent a little.

Levi's breath slowly steadied, his body alive, but his consciousness was already done for... he remained passed out for over fifteen minutes before his consciousness pressed the reboot button, waking him up.

The moment he woke up, the first thing that came to his mind was to curse the shit out of the ancestral trees... but he kept his cool, barely, and started to touch his skin to see if something was added or had gone missing.

'What the?'

However, he found that nothing had changed, leaving him confused... he felt his skin being ripped apart nonstop for nothing? He refused to accept it. Just as he was about to ask Ash'Kral about what happened, he told him to join them in his Spiritual Leywell.

Once Levi got inside, he was met with the sight of Ash'Kral's latest appearance, leaving him stunned.

"The hell happened to you?"

"Evolution, my little friend," Ash'Kral smirked while sitting at the table on all of his clawed paws, resembling a winged mixture of a bat, a fox, and a cat.

Chapter 233: The Sun Form.

"Isn't this a bit too much of an evolution?" Levi was left speechless as he sized up his partner, "How can you go from a floating eye to this... I can't even name you right."

"I already told you before, my appearance is defined by your evolutionary choices, and I need more than a single evolution for my transformation to be complete." Ash'Kral explained calmly, "My original appearance is based on the Nine Senses seed primarily... hence the demonic bat-like appearance. But, once you evolve the other two seeds, the bat-like appearance no longer remains primary."

Upon hearing this, Levi did recall that Ash'Kral told him that his final appearance wasn't fixed when the other two seeds were involved... it made sense, the evolutions occur for both hosts, and since they were part of the Three-Body Problem, they got everything in relation to it.

The Ash'Kral that was groom...cough, watching him during his childhood had both Void and Sun seeds dormant... he said it himself. Unless he had a partner who could wield both seeds, they would remain dormant.

Hence, the demonic Ash'Kral in the Harrowing Forest was at the peak of his Nine Senses Seed... not all three seeds combined!

"Does this mean that as we keep evolving, your appearance will drastically shift?" Levi wondered while reaching out to touch Ash'Kral's snowy white fur, just to have his hand slapped away.

"It depends on the ranks... now that your three seeds are all at the sapling stage, my form has changed to its true main appearance for your evolutionary path." Ash'Kral shared, "I will start getting bigger and having mutations too, but this form will be considered the main for a long time."

"Understandable." Levi nodded.

He knew that nightcrawlers had only one Shadowlife seed that dictated their evolution and appearance; however, it would never change a nightcrawler's species from a dolphin to a bird, since the seed was extracted from the genetic codes primarily.

Still, not all the time, like the nightcrawlers getting the ability to humanify their bestial appearance once they evolved to Tier 3.

In the case of the three Origin seeds, they didn't care about species or such... only about what was the best form to embody their powers, will, and identity.

Ash'Kral's newest appearance was the final product... a unique mystical creature that seemed to have embraced bits of their traits, powers, and personas.

"I have to say, while your current appearance is not bad, I kinda will miss the single floating eye." Levi chuckled, "It was easier to bully you."

"Try me now, f*cker." Ash'Kral grinned while displaying his sharp black claws.

"Enough of this egotistic prick..." The Titan asked with a faint smile, "What about you, Levi? How do you feel about your new mutations?"

"I don't even know what they are." Levi smiled wryly as he glanced at his clean skin.

"Brat... rejoice, you have done it."

Instead of answering him, Ash'Kral smiled widely as he extended his claw in the direction of the Three Origin Seeds orbiting his soul.

When Levi looked over, confusion flickered across his face... until his lips parted slightly at the sight of his soul, twice the size of the norm, with three radical roots intertwined at its lower half.

"This... it worked? I convinced them to hold a truce... but, the pain?" Levi asked, glancing in disbelief at his tenants.

After going through that hellish agony, Levi had already accepted his failure to convince the three trees... that's why he was pissed, believing that no words could ever change the Ancestral Trees' mind.

Yet, look and behold... the three divas were holding hands, albeit with a tint of disgust, but still... a win is a win.

"The pain was given, the radical roots were bound to touch before you split your soul to accommodate the three trees... but, since they decided on a truce, they won't fire any more flares at you even if the roots are touching."

Before Levi could celebrate, Ash'Kral continued solemnly.

"However... this current state is based on the condition that you deliver what you have promised... a personal space for each tree. The moment you fail to keep your word, the intertwined roots will bring your damnation."

"Damnation?"

"Yes, the three trees will forsake you at once as their host," Ash'Kral said, "They will punish you with the worst imaginable pain... this time, it won't be just one tree or two trees being mad, but all trees summoning their united rage on you."

"And I assure you... You won't survive it."

Hearing this, Levi felt chills course down his spine straight to the three intertwined roots. He understood that the Three Ancestral Trees didn't accept a truce because his words moved them, and they decided to give him a break... not in a million years. Instead, he pushed for a truce, and they gave him an ultimatum.

As he stared at the three orbiting seeds, Levi seemed to hear them say: You wanted our support to pull off the Soul-Split Theory? You got it, but once you fail, once you disappoint us... You are done for, forever.

No second chance, nothing.

Yet, Levi didn't allow such a dreadful fate to take over his mind... he took a deep breath, and then showed his known serene smile.

"Fair enough." He uttered, unbothered.

He understood that failure in both scenarios meant the same fate awaited him... a horrible, painful death.

The only difference was that instead of becoming a Warden Daywalker, who was constantly tormented, he would be killed off straight away on his evolution to the Pathfinder rank.

Meanwhile, if he were to succeed, his journey from Pathfinder to Warden rank would be a breeze... no pain, no mental torment, no sudden flares at night.

Most importantly, he would have the foundation to tackle the Solarbound rank's evolution, which had never been done before... not a single Three-Body Problem host had succeeded in pulling it off.

"To show you just how serious they are in their support... they have bestowed upon you something no partner of mine had the opportunity to own." Ash'Kral pointed at Levi's skin with a faint grin and said, "Congratulations, you are now the proud owner of Radians' and Oblivars' Sun/Void Divine skins."

"Huh?"

Seeing his confusion, Ash'Kral told him to concentrate on his skin and will the emergence of either of them. Levi glanced at Ash'Kral and then at his skin for a moment, his heartbeats increasing steadily... he knew that bastard was an asshole, finding it hard to believe him.

However, once he channeled his will on his skin, calling under his breath for the Radian skin to emerge... in less than a second, Levi's skin started to shimmer with golden light as the triangle-like full-body tattoo manifested before all... even his black hair turned golden while engulfed in wild divine flames.

Before Levi could react, the Radian skin started reaching out for solar energy from the giant Sun Origin seed, manifesting a beam of sunlight spotted on him.

Levi extended his arm forward and watched in a daze as the golden stripes and triangle tattoos had turned him into a holy, radiant entity... an appearance he was too familiar with, as this was the same look most Radians had during daylight!

Their bodies were constantly absorbing and emitting sunlight, making them resemble walking mini-suns... This made it extremely difficult to see their features, blinding anyone daring to stare into their divinity.

In the case of Levi? He was illuminating brightly, but not in a blinding way... he couldn't explain it, but it felt much more natural and in tune with the sun than Radian's appearance?

'I never thought a day would come when I would see a Radian so nearby, and not strike them down...' The Titan muttered in his mind, gazing at Levi's divine-like appearance.

But he wiped such thoughts from his mind and showed a kind smile. "How does it feel to have one of the best skin mutations in the universe?"

"I don't know... It's too hard to tell in the Spiritual Leywell."

Levi responded while turning off the transformation by mere will... the tattoos dimmed out and returned to their dormant, invisible state, hiding under his human skin's layer... the tattoos were inked on two separate skin layers underneath the surface one. Unless he awakened them, no one could tell or see them.

"Go back to your body to get accurate readings on both mutations." Ash'Kral said, "I will help you discover their current available powers."

Still in a daze, Levi did as he was told... the moment he returned to his studio, he found the entire place in a mess after rolling his ass from one part to another. His body also smelled nasty, forcing him to squinch his nose.

"A moment please..."

Levi ignored his mutations and everything else, taking a quick shower first... only then did he return and sit back on the ground with his knees crossed.

Then, he summoned the Solar tattoos through his will and watched as his skin started to shimmer somewhat dimly.

Levi immediately guessed that it was due to the lack of sunlight in the Boundless Expanse... the realm was illuminated, but not through pure sunlight... which was the reason nightcrawlers could exist here fearlessly.

The same went for dark energy or any other type of energy in that matter... Nocturn kept such energies locked in specific places, while the public territories gave no advantage to any race... environment-wise, making a true neutral ground for everyone.

"This ain't gonna work here."

Levi shook his head and stood up, planning to return to the chained universe... but first, he cleared his studio.

Sometime later...

Levi was seen hovering tens of kilometers above the desert and clouds, his arms outstretched and a faint smile painted on his face. Two concentrated jets of blue and golden flames streamed steadily from his soles, yet he didn't feel a thing.

The sun above was ruthless, scorching everything with unbearable intensity, but Levi accepted it as though it were an old friend.

His golden solar tattoo was ignited, making him shine as though the sun itself had descended to embrace him.

This wasn't all... Levi could feel his physical strength surging to insane levels, the extreme sunlight fueling him with raw, untapped power that coursed through his veins.

"How do you feel now?" The Titan repeated the same question, smiling.

Levi clenched his fist, overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of energy flowing through him. He didn't know why, but he felt as though he was no longer a man, but a living embodiment of the Sun itself.

"How do I feel?" he said calmly, his voice engulfing over the oppressive heat encasing him. "I could burn the entire world if I wanted."

The Titan and Ash'Kral's smiles faded slightly, noticing the emerging tint of arrogance taking over his presence.

They knew this wasn't Levi revealing his true nature after tasting such power... it was the corruptive essence of the Sun Seed, slowly seeping into him through so much exposure to sunlight.

It sought to twist him into a beacon of Order and Justice. But to carry such heavenly duties, two emotions were required:

Pride and Arrogance of the Sun.

They knew that the Radians and the Sun Ancestral Tree didn't carry the will of Order and Justice with an objective righteousness... not in a million years.

Their Justice was subjective, their view of true Order was crooked... Yet, to carry it at all costs implied having the Pride and Arrogance to reinforce it regardless of others' opinions of it.

In other words... the Radians see themselves as righteous, but it was a different story from the outsiders' perspective.

"Levi, that's enough... fly too close to the sun, and it won't just burn you... It will consume you." Ash'Kral warned sternly.

Levi heard him, but he remained silent... staring with his Harmonic spine at his illuminating divine form that was slowly turning him into a mini-sun.

Then, he lifted his head to face the sun even though he couldn't see it.

"Ash... how can the Sun get burned?" He uttered, his voice rich with solar authority... radiant, commanding, and dripping with pride.

Yet, in his own ears, it sounded perfectly natural... like he was talking about the weather or what's for breakfast. But to others? Each word dripped with unfiltered arrogance.

It was the same as the delusions of the mad, who believed themselves normal while everyone else was wrong or strange... living in a reality shaped only by their thoughts and behaviors.

Levi was in this very state, seeing himself as a supreme entity destined to restore order to the universe... his natural calling.

When his gaze shifted to the side, he noticed the same massive thunderstorm stretching across the horizon of the Great Sahara Desert.

Tilting his head slightly, he whispered:

"Eternal Empire... your reign of chaos ends here. Order shall be restored..."

Before Levi could finish his declaration and act on it, Ash'Kral transformed into a staff and bonked him on the head.

Boink!

"Supreme Idiot. Get a grip," he scolded in vexation.

Chapter 234: The Void Form.

"Huh?" Levi knitted his eyebrows in confusion, and then, slowly, the realization of what he was about to do took hold of him.

Almost immediately, Levi resealed the Radian skin and watched his body grow dimmer while simultaneously, all that immense power faded with it.

Yet, Levi didn't care about it... he swiftly turned off the Sun Jets after the heat started getting to him. Then, he descended to the ground using aetheric grasp.

The moment he landed on the scorching sand, he started taking deep, harsh breaths while wiping the sweat from his dripping forehead.

He felt like his body was turned into a furnace... everything burning, everything hot.

'Ash... what is going on?! I thought heat was no longer a pain in my ass?!' Levi sent a telepathic message, his mouth and throat too dry to utter a single word.

'If you hadn't gotten too excited and flown to the sun to limit test the power enhancement, I would have warned you of the consequences.' Ash'Kral chided him again.

Earlier, when Levi had arrived at the desert... he activated the Sun tattoos and started experimenting with them under Ash'Kral's guidance.

He showed him that in this form, his wounds would rapidly rejuvenate, minor or major, depending on the sunlight's concentration on him.

Levi tested it out by making a long cut on his forearm and lifting it in the air... almost immediately, the cut was restored without leaving a scar!

This wasn't all, he also taught him other innate skin passives, such as:

Heat Immunity that helped him resist burns and extreme heat like it was nothing.

Regenerative Glow, which helped him restore stamina infinitely as long as he was under an active sun.

Solar Shielding, which generated a thin protective barrier that burned invasive energies... like dark energy and such.

Once Ash'Kral told him that his power could be enhanced to unfathomable levels, surpassing Tier 5, 6, or even Tier 7 nightcrawlers, depending on the level of exposure to the sun... that's when he had lost it and took off into the sky, wanting to feel insane power flooding him.

The rest was history.

'I don't know what has gotten into me... I can't see the sun, but it was calling for me? Before I knew it, I was already above the clouds, sensing pure raw power coursing through me...' Levi said, feeling his heart pounding akin to a train on a railway.

'That's the persona corruption I warned you about many times...' Ash'Kral said sternly, 'Radian and Oblivar bloodlines aren't a game... they are Ancient Royal bloodlines existing at the birth of the stars... they were born to fit the nature of those two laws, but not you... Neither your mind nor your body can afford to abuse the powers of a single organ without slowly becoming them.'

'I get it... the Sun form isn't really harming me physically, but the Sun Laws force me to slowly turn into a Radian personality-wise... which is also the same personality as Sun Ancestral Tree, since it is the Primordial representative of those Laws.'

In simpler terms, Levi and Ash'Kral were using the term 'corruption' a lot to describe what was happening, but that's only because they were viewing it from their perspective... in their perspective, the seeds were trying to corrupt their identities to wield the Ancestral Trees Laws, but from the perspective of the Ancestral Tree or the Radians, having such personality was the norm...It was etched in their DNA to act like that.

So, the Sun Form wasn't attempting to harm Levi; he simply refused to accept the call to become what it wanted him to be.

By doing so, he got punished each time he returned to his human form since it couldn't handle all of those power-ups without the form being continuously active.

'I am not yet fit to harness the full potential of those two mutations without risking losing myself.' Levi said while trying to sit up.

He knew that since the mind and the soul were linked, this change would slowly seep into his soul until the new identity became permanent... fortunately, Levi's current soul was strong enough to handle using the Sun form for a dozen seconds at best.

'You aren't fit to harness all three mutations.' Ash'Kral added, 'If you think that was the full extent of the Harmonic Spine, then you are in for a long ride... the Nine Senses Seed simply doesn't enforce any type of identity, respecting one's free will as the Identity... hence, why using the spine never caused any problems to you.'

Levi nodded, recalling that Ash'Kral had told him that his Harmonic Spine's limitations were based on his body's evolutionary state... it was barely 10% functional in his current state.

The same applied to the other two mutations... he could use them, but at a limited capacity, and he had to ensure that his mind was always on the right track.

Otherwise, he might end up doing something beyond suicidal.

"If this is the power of a single mutation... I can't fathom how strong Radians and Oblivars are..." Levi murmured under his breath, imagining their immense power at full strength.

This also drove him to think of his parents and grandparents, knowing that one of them carried the genes of the Radians... this made it more confusing about what they were doing on Earth.

What happened to make a Radian descend on this small blue gemstone and give birth in it?
Unfortunately, such a question had no answer at the moment.

Levi dropped these thoughts and pulled out a bottle of water from his dimensional wallet... he poured it over his head to cool himself off a bit and then stood up again... still weak, but the job wasn't done.

"I wonder what kind of ultimate I was bestowed."

Knowing that some ultimates were related to mutations, it drove Levi to think that he might have awakened an ultimate that could be used only during his Sun Form.

And he was right.

"Corona Tempest? Holy shit..."

The moment he thought about the ultimate, all of its details manifested in his mind, leaving his mouth slightly agape.

If it wasn't for the ultimate being cast only in his Sun Form, Levi would have tested it out right now in a heartbeat.

Alas... he knew if he went for it, a boink on the head might not be enough to awaken him again... he didn't want to lose himself for a test.

For now, he calmed his agitated heart and the burning desire to try it... Then, he summoned Vyra and ordered her to take him somewhere cold and dark. He still had the Divine Oblivar skin to test out and check its ultimate ability.

...

A short while later...

Levi was seen walking inside a pitch-dark cave underneath a brown, dirtied waterfall... he could see that the cave was packed with hiding Tier 1 to Tier 2 nightcrawlers. But, he didn't care about them. A single wave of his hand was enough to send a blitzing, concentrated aetheric blade that was able to go through walls and slice their weak souls instantly.

After clearing the cave, he went to the depths until he met a Stygian Gate... Levi looked over the Shadow dimension and noticed that no Nightcrawler was nearby.

Instead of going inside, he sat on the gate and took a deep breath. After what happened with the Sun Form, he was more cautious.

He knew that the Void's corrupting nature was much worse as it desired chaos and anarchy... which was the final form of destruction... To destroy for the sake of destruction.

'If you feel like you are about to lose control, cancel it.' Ash'Kral warned.

With a nod in understanding, Levi willed the emergence of Oblivar's Divine Skin... in an instant, his body surrendered to darkness.

His skin vanished beneath an abyssal black, an endless void where no feature remained... no face, no scorched mark, no mouth... only the infinity circle on his forehead and in his chest, illuminating in a deep amethyst hue.

This faint illumination traced along the Void's tattoo... or more precisely, the small Ilthorien runes.

They weren't just sparkling softly; they moved in slow, hypnotic circles, weaving around one another like chained galaxies drifting through a boundless cosmos.

Every curve, every symbol, seemed to carry weight beyond anyone's understanding... like fragments of a mini-universe imprisoned in ink...

"What is this feeling... what is this emptiness..." Levi murmured, his voice devoured instantly by the eerie silence of the void.

During the Sun Form, he felt alive, energized, warm, proud, like he possessed infinite fuel and the energy to carry on with his goals.

But in the Void Form? It was the polar opposite... he felt cold, empty, and slowly getting emotionally detached from everything.

It was like he was hearing constant whispers to spread his void and consume everything, returning the universe into its natural state... a state of Nothingness.

Knowing that he had a limited time before his mind would be consumed by the whispers, Levi swiftly stood up, just to find himself hovering weightlessly above the ground.

He felt akin to a spark of dust floating in a void with no gravity... a weird sensation. He floated forward away from the pitch-black darkness, and yet, he found the darkness following him everywhere he went.

As he exited the cave and got touched by the brown waterfall, instead of water splashing everywhere, it was absorbed, disappearing within him.

Before Levi could react, he was stunned to see the brown waterfall slowly getting engulfed in living darkness, making it spill pitch-black water, if it was still called water.

Yet, the freakiest part wasn't even this... it was the living darkness slowly consuming everything it touched, flowing across the river above and below, tainting the flora, the ground, anything... leaving the area to resemble a giant ink drop being spilled.

'What am I watching...'

'The limited powers of The Anchor of Nothingness in motion.' The Titan said solemnly, recalling some horrific memories.

'Why do you think the Ancestral Void Tree has been called that name?' Ash'Kral added, his voice slightly traumatized, 'It is the sole reason the universe has life in it... Without it anchoring the nothingness, it shall consume everything until... you know the end.'

Hearing this, Levi's heart skipped a beat in dread, realizing why humans or other mortal races weren't meant to wield Origin Seeds... they could not survive the corrupting nature of their Laws, unlike the Ancestral Trees or pure blooded Ancient Entities.

The Laws of Void and Sun were simply too overwhelming; his spirit and mind could not win over them.

Terrified of losing control and ending up consuming his entire planet like a black hole, Levi swiftly canceled the Void Form... he didn't even want to find out the rest of its powers, too freaked out by the scene before him to risk it.

He had been fighting his entire life against the darkness of his world... now, he was bringing it to reality. Not even his Harmonic Spine could paint what didn't exist.

Fortunately, the moment he canceled it, the expanding, ever-consuming living darkness retracted rapidly inside the dimming tattoos.

Levi took deep, sharp breaths, feeling a strong chill assailing him out of nowhere like he was trapped in a freezer.

This time, he knew that it was the side effect of canceling the Void Form... It was like both forms rewarded him immensely for using them as much as he wanted... limitless.

However, Levi knew that was nothing but a trap... once he committed to a form, his life would no longer be his.

He would be turned into a full Radian or an Oblivar against his will... his human bloodline incapable of surviving their potent, corrupting divinity.

As the color returned to Levi's darkened world, he felt his heart sink to the bottom of his stomach at the aftermath of his little test.

His body returned to its normal form, features restored, flesh and hair no longer swallowed by the void... However, the world around him was no longer the same.

The waterfall was gone, drained into nothingness as if it had never existed. The rocks and soil were ripped apart in irregular patterns like a monster had taken a bite out of them.

Trees had their roots exposed like the skeletons of the earth, while the flowing river was cut in half by the massive, mismatched hole, creating a new waterfall...

Levi's auditory vision scanned the devastation... he felt like he was a walking apocalypse, leaving behind a scarred, weeping land.

In the end, Levi could only murmur, "What am I becoming..."

Chapter 235: The Empire of Ashora.

A short while later, Levi returned to his apartment completely shaken to his core... He went out of the house excited and returned silent.

To possess this kind of power without the ability to wield it properly made Levi wonder if it was a blessing or a curse. If the Ancestral Trees were really helping him or spilling his damnation? He didn't know, but to have an available switch that could either burn the world or consume it had put an immense test on his nature.

It was like the Ancestral Trees were telling him: You want to wield our powers? Go ahead, feel free to use them to your heart's content.

"Don't overthink it," Ash'Kral said calmly, "As long as you use the skins in a mutual or opposite environment, their potency will be under your control. Most importantly, just their presence alone in your body, whether activated or not, will help you immensely in your cultivation and using their abilities."

"He is right, there is no need for you to activate either form... just use them passively until you split your soul," the Titan added, "You can then switch between forms at a limited capacity while still maintaining control as the main soul."

"Will I even be able to maintain control?" Levi doubted.

He didn't even realize it before finding himself losing control while using the Sun Form... it was a natural switch, not something that could be detected and stopped... As for the Void Form? He used it for barely ten seconds before he chickened out, worrying that he might bring an end to his planet.

"What did you expect from Divine Powers? The skins might be related to Oblivar and Radian Bloodlines; however, since the Origin Seeds bestow them, they made sure to give you the highest possible grade... Divine Grade." Ash'Kral smirked, "Just like any other race... there are differences in ranking within those two Ancient races depending on the purity of their bloodlines."

Hearing this, everything made sense to Levi... why the stripes design was different from the one he was awakened with... why such mutations were so freaking overpowered, he was scared of himself.

He asked for the Trees' support right before his evolutions, which made them give the best of the best in terms of skin mutations... no resonance, no familiarity, nothing... just a promise.

That's why, although Levi obtained such powerful mutations, the Trees' resonance access was still at 0%!

They still didn't like him as much as the Nine Senses seed... they made a deal with him, and unless he delivered his end of the bargain, he wouldn't be alive to tell the tale. Why bother wasting time building trust in him?

"Check the Void's ultimate ability..." Ash'Kral changed the subject, not wanting Levi to dwell on the duo forms anymore, "It should be related to soul since neither mutations nor Sun's seed ultimate is related to it."

Hearing this, Levi broke from his daze and raised a brow in surprise while checking its details, "You're right..."

//False Sun: forms a sphere of pure nothingness above the user. Souls drawn in dissolve into the singularity at its center and feed it to the owner's soul. The False Sun can expand, consuming more life and amplifying its metaphysical presence.

<Within the void, all souls merge. All becomes nothing, and I am the sum of nothing>...//

"Of course, I am right, Void Laws have more powers related to the soul and spirituality than the Sun Laws," Ash'Kral said.

"Since the Seeds want to help me succeed in the Soul-Split Theory, one of them is bound to create an ultimate related to soul's enhancement." Levi nodded in understanding.

"False Sun... this is a decent spiritual void-based ability that creates a pulling force based on how powerful your spiritual prowess... the more powerful it is compared to your targeted enemy, the easier you will be able to snatch his soul from his body and allow the singularity to consume it," Ash'Kral shared.

"Sounds brutal." Levi knitted his eyebrows.

"It is..." the Titan said, "To have your soul pulled out intact, it means cracking the enemy's consciousness barrier just enough to allow it to pass through... trust me, you wouldn't wish this pain on anyone."

"Wish it or not, brat, you'd better drop your bullshit merciful persona and commit to reinforcing your soul regardless of what it takes," Ash'Kral warned with a deep frown, "Trust me, you don't want to make the Three Ancestral Trees wait for long."

"Don't worry, when it comes to Nightcrawlers invading my planet... I have no mercy for them," Levi said indifferently.

"You better," Ash'Kral said, "Your soul has been decently enhanced from the evolutions... maybe it is now as strong as a newly evolved Solarbound... but still, it needs more work to allow a decent three-way split... otherwise, the other two Trees won't be satisfied with their weak soul portion, and might rebel against you."

"So, the more, the merrier?"

"Yes... This will also help you split it less painfully during the evolution."

"Say less."

Levi immediately made up his decision to turn into a Soul Harvester when pain was mentioned... he was barely surviving normal evolutions, now, he needed to split his soul during the evolution? Just the thought of it kept making him want to tap out.

Abruptly, their discussion was interrupted by a notification:

-Your attendance is requested in the High Council.-

"Back already?" Levi frowned, "This doesn't sound good."

"I already told you, they will drop the ball," Ash'Kral said calmly, "You should start preparing to sneak inside the Ancient site... with your current Radian skin mutation, you can survive the divine pillar temporarily."

"Let's see first what they have to say."

"What do you think? They will give you some excuse of them trying their best... I am telling you, governments are one of the most unreliable organizations in the universe."

Ten minutes later...

"Rejoice! Thanks to Hicham and Feng Ling's efforts, your team has been approved to join the Exploration Mission."

High Chancellor Valemont announced with a beaming smile as he stood in front of Levi and the rest of his teammates.

'You were saying?' Levi snickered mockingly... although he also believed that the government was going to fail epically, he never said it out loud, just in case.

Lo and behold, a miracle had occurred... Ash'Kral was silenced and proven wrong by Heliodor's government.

"You guys actually pulled it off? How?" Arthur, as straightforward as always, asked what was on everyone's minds with a doubtful tone.

"It's all thanks to Hicham's and Feng Ling's immense efforts." The High Chancellor smiled, "It was hard, but they managed to convince the Conference to make an exception for us."

Levi and the others glanced at Hicham and Feng Ling, who were standing behind the High Chancellor... seeing that none of them had any intention of telling them the details, Levi changed the subject to what truly mattered.

The Ancient Distorted Site.

"Did you get any extra details for us about the site or the mission?" he asked.

"Yes... your mission will be to find the Sun Amulet of Pharaoh Azhukar... the last Pharaoh of the Ashora Empire." The High Chancellor's tone turned solemn, "The empire was believed to worship a World Ender classified beast called the Dawn Phoenix many eons ago... however, the Dawn Phoenix has caused their damnation... they were believed to have been cursed by a plague called Ashfall under its creation... a sickness that set the blood of its victims on fire, leaving only blackened husks... it spread faster than fire itself, consuming nobles, priests, and peasants alike, until the empire."

"Why did that happen?" Shia frowned, "I know that not everyone can just decide to worship a World Ender beast and be fine... a bloodline connection is a must. This means the Dawn Phoenix might be worshiped, but it also acted as their guardian, not bringing their ruination."

Levi nodded in agreement, having done some research on such beasts and their related bloodlines after what happened with Sandwitch.

That's when he found that it was a widely accepted custom for Highborn Lineages to have a relationship with World Ender beasts sharing their bloodline.

They were believed to have the same Ancestor; however, the beasts inherited a damaged Shadowlife seed while the Trueborns inherited the flawless one.

Beasts remained unintelligent, but turned powerful; meanwhile, the Trueborn awakened their intelligence.

Though this was just a rumor, just like anything happening during their period.

Most of those houses had gone extinct during that period of time, which many referred to as the Erased Era... it was a name given by the network for a piece of history that seemed to be deleted completely.

No books, no historian, nothing spoke about its details... which was extremely difficult considering that the dimensional network might have been available at the time.

Levi, being as curious as ever, asked both Ash'Kral and the Titan about it... Alas, the only answers he received were: figure it out on your own, and I don't recall.

"They didn't tell us, or they also don't know about the empire's true history..." Hicham shared softly, "All we know is that the Sun Amulet is requested personally by the Radian supervising the dimensional sector our planet resides in... so, it is very important to the Solar Aegis Sanctuary Headquarters, and to all mankind."

Chapter 236: Refusing To Accept it.

"The Radian has requested it personally... it must be quite significant." Nurah murmured, "Is it an artifact? Material? Natural Treasure?"

"It's believed to be a Natural Treasure... a Flower in the shape of an illuminating Sun." The High Chancellor said, "You will recognize it once you see it."

"What about the rest of the treasures?" Jojo clasped her hands, "What's our share? Namaste."

"It's 50% for each team... 50% to you and 50% to the Headquarters. Hence, if you were to get in, you would compete on who would gather the most treasures... However, there is one exception to this split." The High Chancellor said, "The team to find the Sun Amulet and hand it over to the SAS Headquarters will be exempt from splitting their treasures."

"Whoa... we get to keep everything? Sweet."

"Seems fair enough."

Although everyone knew that their goal inside was to find a miracle medicine for Seraphis, it changed nothing... they were bound to find many other treasures during their search. If they found the Sun Amulet, it would be even better.

"Wait, if it's so significant to the headquarters, I doubt they will turn it into a mission for Warden-ranked teams, no matter how powerful they are. The safer option is to send Solarbound Daywalkers or even Blazewarden Daywalkers... unless." Levi paused while his brows were tightened, making his expression quite grim. "The Distorted site is in a Fractured State?"

Upon hearing this, everyone's expression changed... even Arthur, after he carried out his own studies on the ancient sites for the past days.

"Fractured state... doesn't that mean the site can get devoured by the Shadow dimension with any major disturbance?" Arthur's pupils thinned.

"Yes." The High Chancellor nodded, sighing, "I was about to mention it... We thought the SAS Headquarters were using it as a training mission, but in truth, they can't send anyone higher than a Warden rank without putting the entire site in danger of collapsing into the Shadow dimension."

"What about us then?" Shia frowned, "Fractured Ancient Sites are known to pose major risks... a single well-timed energy disturbance might cause its collapse."

"Fret not... the Headquarters had done their thorough research on the site. They found that the site is stable enough to handle a decent level of energy disturbance. Also, each team will be given a single-dimensional teleporter that is linked with the World Tree's dimensional mirror in case the gate closes earlier than their assumption." Lord Hicham smiled, "If it were too dangerous, I wouldn't have risked sending my sweet daughter."

Jasmine glanced in his direction, somewhat annoyed... it was like she was telling him not to embarrass her like this before her friends... But Lord Hicham merely chuckled, carrying his fatherly duties well.

"Well, it does sound highly unlikely for the top three strongest teams in the campaign to take a suicidal mission." Levi nodded in approval.

If they dared to take on such a mission, whether the site was fractured or not, they wouldn't have accepted if their odds of returning safely weren't decent.

"Are you in?" Feng Ling asked.

'They'd better be.' Mao narrowed her eyes coldly.

'Enough, Mao... if I didn't think they had it in them, I wouldn't have made the bet... they will win.'

'Even against him? Your demonic little b...'

'We will see in two weeks.' Feng Ling interrupted calmly.

Levi glanced at his teammates, and all of them nodded in approval. Then, he gave him the thumbs up.

"The Exploration mission will start in fifteen days once the gate opens up fully... we will depart in a week from here on our mounts." Feng Ling said indifferently, "I will have you do some clean-ups on the way to check on your improvements... so be prepared."

"Understood." Levi and the others nodded.

They didn't know why Feng Ling was chosen to be their supervisor, but they weren't complaining... his strength was unequal when it came to Solarbound Daywalkers, and he had yet to teach them anything as promised by the government.

"I wish you the best of luck in your journey..." The High Chancellor advised sternly, "And always remember, treasures can be found again, life is forever lost."

Levi and the others bowed their heads slightly in appreciation and walked away, taking his advice to heart.

They knew that many people had ended up killed because of their greed in such Ancient sites... They didn't want to be added to the statistics.

After leaving the Council, Levi told everyone to regroup on the rooftop in the evening since the call had caught them amidst their plans.

Then, he returned to the apartment with his brother, and each went to their rooms... Arthur was a Pathfinder now, which meant he needed to put extra effort into his cultivation to grow his seed naturally.

The government could not afford to keep showering them with growth totems... they had a limited quota from Solar Aegis Sanctuary, and it should be distributed among other Daywalkers, too.

As for buying them from Boundless markets? The prices were nowhere close to what the Sanctuary was selling them for.

When Levi spotted Arthur sitting in front of the window, akin to a plant sunbathing, he couldn't help but hold his chin thoughtfully.

'Arthur is wasting too much daytime on cultivating naturally... and it is only going to get worse.' He pondered, 'Maybe it's time I seek the Titan's help... some of his memory should have returned by now.'

Levi had never forgotten about his brother or the Titan's Crown Artifact... he was just waiting for the right time to make his case for his brother, knowing that as the stepfather of the first Nineborn Golems, he must have some methods to improve his brother's evolutionary path.

Once he returned to his Spiritual Leywell, he didn't hesitate to ask him.

"Elder, I have been meaning to ask... my little brother has been following a similar evolutionary path to the Nineborn Golems... His contracted nightcrawler, Khu'zan, seems to have a strong relation to their bloodlines, as they had already awakened three Gemhearts... Orryn's Gemheart, Brag's Gemheart, and Aurikara's Gemheart... meanwhile, my brother is also a Half-Radian, but he has obtained their physical genetics unlike me, and it doesn't seem like his evolutions are tapping into them." Levi paused, "I was wondering if there is any way he can improve his evolutionary path much better?"

Levi had been supervising his little brother's growth from a distance... although his strength seemed already out of the ordinary, Levi wasn't satisfied.

After all, his brother was also a Half-Radian, and he assumed that after he had a couple of perfect evolutions, he was bound to awaken his ability to absorb divine light, too... Instead, he had been awakening only mutations related to Khu'zan.

This bothered him as it meant that either their assumption of his brother being Half-Radian was false, or the Shadowlife seed was screwing him over.

Levi was sure his little brother was blood-related since they had done a DNA test when he wanted to donate one eye for him during their childhood.

"Little one, Shadowlife seeds aren't the same as Origin seeds in this department... they can awaken Lowborn or Highborn Bloodlines, but Ancient bloodlines are quite too hard for it." The Titan answered, "The only reason you were able to awaken your Radian bloodline was due to the Sun Origin seed... if you didn't have it, you would have struggled just as much as him."

"It can't be..." Levi frowned, "Ash'Kral, is this true?"

"Unfortunately, he is right," Ash'Kral said calmly.

"Why did you say nothing?"

"I didn't want to shatter your hopes." Ash'Kral shrugged.

"..."

Levi remained silent, gazing at his little brother's wide back. He could tell that he was giving it his best to keep up with him and avenge their parents... whatever he was going through, Arthur was always there with him.

But, he realized that if he kept on this path, he was bound to leave him behind... Levi didn't want that... His brother was the only one he truly trusted with his back, and that's something rarer than any treasure in the universe.

"Elder, is there any other way?" Levi asked, his tone resolved, "Just say the word... and I will do it."

The Titan chuckled, "I admire your loyalty and courage to do whatever for your brother's sake... but there is no need for you to do anything but give me your approval."

"Approval for what?"

"Approval to inhabit his Shadowlife seed and transform it."

"Transform it?"

The Titan smiled and said, "Levi... you are a smart one, you should have realized it by now."

Levi fell silent, his heartbeat stuttering... The Titan's presence; his appearance, his voice, his timeless aura... had all pointed to a single conclusion Levi had refused to accept. For to do so would mean acknowledging the harrowing future that awaited him.

But he could no longer run from the truth.

With a faint sigh, Levi asked, "My apologies, elder... It took me a while to accept it."

The Titan laughed, knowing what Levi was having trouble with.

"Don't worry, my child, their consciousness won't be born until you turn them into mature trees... You still have plenty of time to enjoy your peace until then."

That's right! Levi already knew that The Titan wasn't just any random friend of Ash'Kral from the past... he was what remained of an Origin Seed's soul... A surviving wisp of an Ancestral Tree!

Levi refused to accept this reality, because it implied that in the near future... The Three Ancestral Trees weren't going to remain silent forever.

A day would come when their consciousness would awaken, and Levi would have to deal with genuine three Divas in his soul!

"The horror... I can already imagine the abuse." Levi smiled bitterly, feeling like he was about to be a father to three brats who hated each other.

"Haha, all shall pass, little one... worrying about tomorrow only steals strength from today."

The Titan smiled, knowing that nothing good would ever come from worrying about the future.

"You're right."

Levi got rid of such negative emotions and showed his peaceful smile, refusing to allow the Three Trees to control his future, too.

"Elder, if you don't mind me asking... what Origin Seed are you? What Laws do you command?"

The Titan crossed his wooden arms, which were veined with copper, iron, and quartz, then he said with a faint smile.

"I don't remember."

"..."

Seeing Levi's speechless expression, the Titan chuckled, "I am kidding... I am the Ancestral Tree of Stone, Metal, and Minerals... or in short, Terraforge Laws."

Chapter 237: Nocturn's Testing Facility

"Terraforge Laws..." Levi murmured, sizing up the two-meter Titan, whose body was mixed in almost all types of rocks, metal, and crystal.

A fitting name for such laws... he had already anticipated for him to be the Origin seed for such laws based on his appearance.

He just didn't know the name.

"How exactly are you going to help my little brother? Will your inhabitance of the Shadowlife transform it into an Origin seed? Is that even possible?" Levi asked.

"I will let you know when the time comes." The Titan smiled, "Your little brother needs to access his Spiritual Leywell first... with his spiritual prowess, he can't do it on his own, which means, I can only make my move when he reaches Warden rank."

"Ah... I understand."

Warden Daywalkers, Tier 4 nightcrawler, and anyone helping the tree grow to its Pre-Mature State were rewarded with access to their Spiritual Leywell... unlike Levi, who was brute-forcing his subconsciousness barrier each time.

If it were possible to brute-force Arthur's subconscious barrier for him, he would have done it... But in this matter, each was on his own. Otherwise, Levi might end up shattering Arthur's subconsciousness barrier, killing him instantly.

"What about his Half-Radian bloodline?" Levi wondered, "If you inhabited his Shadowlife seed, would it be possible to help him awaken some of its traits? At least the divine light absorption?"

"If he truly had Radian bloodline in him, I can achieve it... It won't be easy since my Laws aren't directly connected to Sun Laws." The Titan answered.

"As long as there is a chance, I am more than satisfied." Levi smiled.

Although he wasn't told about the method, Levi was optimistic... if the process was painful, he knew his brother could handle it... If it were something else, he would think it over when the time comes.

For now, he refused to let go of the Titan until most of his questions were answered.

"Also, the Titan's Crown... Ash'Kral told me you used to wear it before it became an artifact... Is it possible to fix it up a bit to start using it?" Levi asked.

Knowing that it was a triple-S broken Artifact made him understand that even the Titan could not restore it to its perfect form right away... appropriate materials were needed.

"Well, if you obtained three Gemhearts from your brother, I can reinhabit the Crown to wield their powers at a limited capacity." The Titan said kindly, "It won't be a Triple S artifact... but still, usable."

Just as Levi was about to get excited, he recalled that the Titan's wisp was so faint they barely restored it through countless treasures... he clearly didn't have enough of his soul to be split into another wisp that could remain in his Spiritual Leywell, and at the same time, wield the Crown's Powers.

As much as the Titan agreed, Levi wasn't that heartless to make him operate an artifact while knowing that he was the wisp of an Ancestral Tree... Compared to the three divas in his body and the asshole Ash'kral, the Titan was too kind, and he preferred keeping it that way.

"Ah, it's okay, maybe later, after I collect more treasures to empower your wisp... I don't really need it right now." Levi thanked him for the offer and changed the subject. "I should probably return to the Main Hub and get an accurate reading of my attributes... With major enhancements from two evolutions, I have to know exactly what base power level I am at."

Levi could no longer delay going to the Nocturn's Testing Facility, understanding that his strength had been increased explosively with these two mutations.

He needed clear data to understand what his current Nocturn's Power Level was to avoid getting blindsided by the system that decided his opponents in the Nocturnal Ring.

Three Boundless Days later... (One and a half a day in the real world)

Levi was seen standing before Nocturn's Testing Facility... it was also situated in the main hub and quite close to his studio.

It was one of the many tall buildings surrounding the main hub in a circle, separating it from the rest of the city... a tower with a wide base crafted out of white stone, giving it a sturdy foundation... in the center of the foundation, the tower pierced through the clouds, a mixture of stone interspersed with tall panes of translucent glass... It looked clean and neat, giving it a governmental building vibe.

Many Rifters were entering or exiting the massive, wide-open gate... some were weak, many average, and a few that left Levi feeling a tint of dread.

Levi kept his interest to himself and walked inside, facing straight. Once he was in, one of the many receptionists greeted him.

"Welcome, sir. How can we help you?" He said, smiling... he was a humanoid sheep with fluffy white wool that was tucked inside a dark green professional outfit.

"I want clear data of my attributes... first floor, please," Levi requested politely.

"How long will you be renting the room?"

"About an hour or less."

"Follow me this way."

The receptionist took Levi to a wall with tens of doors... many of them were either closed or had a short queue of Rifters waiting behind them.

The guide took Levi to a room with no queue and handed him a key... then, he showed up a dimensional screen with the payment plan based on the duration of the room's rent.

Levi paid one thousand credits for one hour and fifty credits as a tip to the guide... the guide opened the door with a wide, polite smile and left after wishing Levi good luck on his test.

Levi gazed at the swirling vortex behind the door and stepped inside calmly. Immediately, his feet touched a gentle green grass field.

He was teleported on top of an island in the colorful void that fell under Nocturn's Administration... though, this island had many testing devices spread across the grass field, each one served to test a specific attribute.

This island was one of the thousands spread across the void, which were linked to the doors inside Nocturn's Testing Facility... The first floor was for a small island meant for casual training and testing of one's attributes.

As for the higher floors? They were for customized trainings as the Rifters could request specific environments rich with the chosen type of energy they desired... the rarer the energy, the pricier the room gets.

Levi had read in the network that some of the upper-floor rooms could be rented for a hundred thousand nocrix credits an hour!

'Nocturn's Administration is really printing money...' Levi murmured, somewhat enviously.

Knowing that his time was tight, Levi stopped envying what he couldn't obtain and got to work.

'Let's start with physical testing.'

He walked to the physical testing area and noticed that it had six devices, each designed to test a specific attribute.

He started with the first device that tested his strength... the device was a floating, polished, silver metal orb with one question: Growth Stage?

"Pre-Mature Tree Stage."

-Ready?-

Levi cracked his knuckles and warmed up a bit... once he felt ready, he said it out loud and watched as a wooden white dummy manifested before him.

Levi clenched his fist and smashed it in the chest with everything he had in him... shatter! The dummy exploded into pieces; the force of his punch was powerful enough that it left only its legs still affixed to the ground.

-Strength Level...39N-

"I guess my strength now clears average Wardens."

Levi wasn't too surprised by this... had gone through four evolutions now in total... although the evolutions didn't quantify as simply as 1+1, his physical strength was still enhanced to the point it touched evolution stage Wardens... not Enhancement Specialization, just average Wardens.

He did this without receiving a bodily enhancement aspect or mutation like Arthur's... when it came to Daywalkers, Nightcrawlers, or any other race holding a seed, their strength could never be equal... after all, some had mutations and evolutionary enhancements prioritizing the spirit while others the body exclusively... some even had their elemental prowess empowered, making their abilities hit much harder than the norm.

Hence, the reason for Specializations: Elemental, Enhancement, Psych, Unique, Mystic.

In the case of Levi, his physical strength was now equal to a warden at the third stage or maybe even stronger... if the difference between Solarbound and Wardens wasn't so massive due to the evolution's difficulty, Levi might have also cleared Solarbound Daywalkers by being a Junior Daywalker at all of his evolutionary paths.

Just to be sure, Levi tested it again with another punch and a kick... shatter! The results were still the same, though; his kick force was stronger.

Levi made a mental note of the data and moved on to the Lifting Test...

A silver bar with two black disks materialized before him with a weight adjustment screen... Levi put in kilos as a measuring unit, and then he gripped it in a deadlift form.

He took a deep breath and lifted, steadily increasing the load until the device registered his maximum lifting strength.

-Eight hundred and fifty kilograms lifted... N34-

"Decent enough... if Arthur were here, he would turn this place into a gym." Levi chuckled, knowing his gymrat of a brother wouldn't hesitate to live here for years.

He understood that although the evolutions could increase one's strength, they also increased the limits of their body... this meant training one's body was important to enhance their strength beyond what the seed had offered.

Just like Lord Idriss... he was a Solarbound, yet still, training with his greatsword as a weight... slowly, but gradually growing stronger.

Levi had also decided to take on this path once he reached a wall with his seeds... from the look of it, he was getting closer.

Soon, Levi tested his endurance, running speed, and the rest of his physical attributes... When he finished, he switched to testing his spiritual prowess.

Though this test was just as easy... he was given a spherical spiritual ball and requested to channel everything he got... sparing not an ounce of spiritual energy.

Levi concentrated his will on the sphere and, with a grunt, he released his spiritual wrath on it, causing the sphere to shift colors rapidly while Nocturn's Measurement Level kept increasing just as fast.

10... 20... 30... 40!

Measurements hitting forty implied edging closer to Solarbound's entry level... As Ash'Kral predicted, Levi's spiritual prowess was no joke.

43...45!

Solarbound level achieved! Still, Levi had more spiritual fuel to push inside the sphere after his latest enhancements. However, the increase was slow and deliberate, like each number counted.

47...48...50...56...56.5.

With one final drop in his tank, Levi halted the test, completing it at:

-Spiritual Prowess...N56.5...Solarbound First Stage.-

Chapter 238: Arriving at The Ancient Site Camp.

'Not bad...' Ash'Kral said lazily, expecting such a result.

"Damn, it's really hard to push through Solarbound rank." Levi wiped his forehead while requesting his spiritual energy to be restored from the system.

Anyone renting for an hour was given the right to a free one-time recharge of any type of energy wasted in the training exclusively... the same amount was recharged, so no one would abuse the system.

After feeling his spiritual energy rejuvenated, Levi's dizziness was treated before it could cause any issue.

"It's expected... You have received only evolutionary enhancements from a rookie rank, which are barely enough to help you cover one stage... in your next evolutions, the enhancements will be much higher in quality." Ash'Kral said.

Hearing this, Levi couldn't help but feel rewarded for his pain... although the mutations were awesome, he still couldn't use them properly.

But if he kept improving like this, by the time he reached Solarbound (prayers requested), even with one Ancestral Tree, his strength might rival that of Tier 6 or 7 nightcrawlers!

Just from evolutionary enhancements!

This might not seem that impressive, but one should understand that starting from tier 6, there was a massive chasm between the rest of the ranks.

A single stage skip was considered amazing, but to skip an entire rank or two? It was an impossibility in motion. But for now... it was nothing but a dream.

"Alright, show me my current measurements."

Levi opened up a dimensional screen of his profile in the Facility, showing him his current calculated measurements, appearing as such:

Name: Levi Larson

Current Rank: Junior Daywalker (Evolution Stage)

Physicality Power Level (N): 37.1N

Strength: 39N

Speed: 37N

Endurance: 36N

Lifting/Carrying Capacity: 34N

Agility/Reflexes: 39.5N

Spiritual Prowess: 56.6N

Total Innate Abilities: 6...(6N)

Total Ultimate Abilities: 2...(4N)

Average Power Level (N): 46.85N (Solarbound Daywalker... no stage completed.)

"46N... a freshly baked Solarbound." Levi scratched his chin, "Not bad..."

Levi knew that the readings were decently accurate if one took the tests seriously... in his case, since he signed the CRS Rifter contract using only his Nine Senses, Nocturn's strange spiritual system discovered only six and two unlocked abilities... Each innate ability was given one N value, while ultimates were doubled.

In the case of nightcrawlers, their created techniques were considered innate abilities since their shadowlife seed had no inherent abilities.

With a value lower than the average value of those physical and spiritual values, the eight mentioned abilities were excluded from the equation, as their value was considered erroneous and would have negatively affected the average.

But now? $56.6N + 37.1N = 93.7N$.

If we divided by the number of values (2) in this case, we end up with an Average Power Level of 46.85N, which was at the entry level of a Solarbound Daywalker.

However, Levi wasn't foolish enough to believe that he could now fight a Solarbound... his spiritual prowess carried him to this average power level. In reality, if he were to fight a Solarbound, he would get absolutely mauled alive... of course, without adding the Sun and Void forms to the equation.

Solarbound Daywalkers had Dominions, which separated them from the rest of the herd.

Still, if Levi were to fight an entry-level Solarbound right now, at very, very ideal circumstances, such as no Dominions, no mutations, and similar battle experience, he might go toe to toe with him.

Unfortunately, Levi knew that Nocturnal Ring didn't care about such things... the moment he hit the minimum Power Level needed to be named a Solarbound, he would either be put against other Solarbound or, in his case... A Promotional Game.

'At least, I won't straight up be put against other Solarbounds... which are most definitely all Baron-ranked, and powerful enough to remain in it.'

Levi thought to himself as he exited the Testing Facility, having read that for such powerful entities that broke the scale, the Nocturnal Ring put them in a single Promotional Game.

Winning the Game would straight out promote them to the next rank without needing to abuse weaker Rifters in the same rank or get forced into a rank with much more powerful monsters than them... It was like creating a new rank just for them, and the network already gave it a name: The Abnormal Rank.

Levi had no plans to face any of them at the moment, knowing that if he was going to be put against other Scale Breakers like him, he should prepare much more than this.

For now, he had two goals in mind... locate a miracle medicine for his Instructor, who believed and gave him a shot, not many would have done in the assembly; also, to gather as many sun-related treasures from the Ancient Site, knowing that it was a rare opportunity that would not repeat.

About twelve days later...

Heliodor's Raiders, under Feng Ling's supervision, were seen coursing through the sky in a 'V' formation.

Feng Ling was in the lead, standing on top of his saber... as a Wind Specialist, the sky was his home, not needing a nightmount for anything since he could fly without harming his solar energy tank.

In fact, he was so in control of the wind as an element, he was capable of finding the best jet streams on the way, assisting the team's mounts fly at an increased speed than the norm without needing to waste too much of their stamina... In addition, he was flying in front to shield them from the roar of the wind.

While he had surrounded his head with an anti-wind barrier to smoke in peace, the rest of the team were chatting amongst each other about their latest nest destruction.

For the past couple of days, they had been mercilessly destroying any nest that was on their way from Helidor's region to the fallen Sphinx's Region... As long as they weren't signed to the platform, their destruction was guaranteed.

Of course, Ash'Kral's new evolutionary appearance hadn't gone unnoticed... instead of choosing to hide him, Levi decided to mask the two Sun/Void evolutions with his Pathfinder rank Evolution.

He told them that he had broken through the Pathfinder rank and even showed them the Harmonic Spine, which he had always kept hidden behind his hoodie.

As for Ash'Kral's extreme evolutionary appearance? Levi told them that Ash'Kral was a unique nightcrawler species that didn't have a fixed form, and could easily change depending on the genetic traits touched. Since he had used a perfect evolutionary recipe, his mutations were quite extreme.

Knowing that nightcrawlers were an infinite sea of knowledge that no one dared to claim to know it all, who would question him? Everyone took his words at face value and congratulated him on his evolution.

All they cared about was Levi getting stronger since they knew that no easy picnic awaited them near the Ancient Distorted Site.

Right now, they were a mere dozen kilometers away from reaching their destination, leaving them to gaze at the Three Great Pyramids at Giza from above the clouds... Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure.

"Hmmm, they really cleared up the place while keeping the Pyramid of Khufu maintain its level of corruption," Arthur commented in intrigue as he gazed at the largest pyramid being the sole piece of area that was still tainted with black, corruptive miasma.

The rest of the pyramids and the area surrounding them were much clearer, as if they didn't belong to a fallen region.

"Once it concerns them... the Solar Aegis Sanctuaries will do wonders," Shia uttered coldly.

They had seen pictures or videos of the fallen Sphinx's Region... hundreds of kilometers of surface area were corrupted... even the Nile River wasn't spared.

In less than two weeks, the land was healing again... shadow corruption was burnt after being beamed on by the rented Holy Beam.

Their control of it was so precise, they were capable of beaming the entire region while leaving behind only the Pyramid of Khufu.

"Prepare to descend." Feng Ling announced expressionlessly while slowly breaking off from the jet stream.

The rest swiftly followed him, descending at a gradual pace until they arrived at a camp near a hundred meters away from the Pyramid.

The camp was made out of decently sized houses in the shapes of tents in a wide circle... they were somewhat far from each other, while the central plaza connected them.

As Levi glanced down, he noticed dozens of powerful spiritual auras... all contained to one's skin, but he could still tell their rank.

Only one person he failed to recognize his rank... his spiritual aura was blue, but it was extremely thin, to the point Levi started wondering if he was using something to hide it.

'That must be him... Sir Dominic, the appointed supervisor of the SAS Headquarters.' Levi thought inwardly, matching the shape of his spiritual aura to what he saw in the network.

As expected, once the team descended in the center of the plaza, he was the first to greet them with a friendly smile, "Nice of you to join us... what took you so long? Feng Ling? I started to think you got cold feet."

"We decided to take some trash out along the way."

Feng Ling replied casually while his saber transformed into a black tie... he fixed it the moment his foot touched the ground, making no noise.

"How kind of you."

Dominic chuckled for a moment before his eyes landed on Levi and the rest of the team behind him.

"You guys must be the hope of Heliodor's region..." Dominic showed a smile of encouragement, "I have seen some highlights of your work, and I have to say, I have been pleasantly surprised."

Chapter 239: The Strongest Daywalker on The Planet.

"Thank you for the kind words, sir..." Levi replied with a polite head nod, "We are just carrying out our fair share of cleaning our home planet."

Now that Dominic was close, he was able to use his Harmonic Spine to paint his appearance and mark it forever.

As the frequencies started coloring him up, Levi was left to gaze at a man of South American descent... most likely Colombian or Cuban.

He had bronze tan skin and blended short hair mixed with blue and dark... he wore a wide sun page hat, and dark sunglasses that shaded his friendly, somewhat young face.

As for his outfit? Levi was left speechless at the sight of a colorful Hawaiian shirt that was open, exposing a tattoo of a twisted, electrified eel on his chest under a sun necklace.

He paired the shirt with shorts and slippers, giving him a relaxed, laid-back appearance like he was here on vacation.

His appearance would make anyone question whether he was truly the supervisor of the strongest organization on the planet.

"If only our lazy bums of Saviors shared the same mentality." Dominic laughed, "Earth will be ours again."

"I already told you, give up on them, and your life will be peaceful again."

Feng Ling shook his head while pulling out a cigarette from a red box. He put it to his mouth and started searching his pockets for the lighter. However, Dominic stepped up and placed one finger under the cigarette...Then, a sparkle appeared, and the tip of his finger started releasing a soft flame.

"What can I say? My faith has always been much stronger than yours."

Dominic smiled, staring at his old friend's eyes with an inextinguishable flame burning at the depth of his oceanic blue eyes.

Feng Ling used the small flame to light up his cigarette and then took a deep breath... under everyone's speechless looks, he exhaled the smoke on Dominic's face and said, "Faith won't save us... the new generation will."

The moment he said this, Zhang Yanhuan's team, Tyrese's team, and Evangeline's team exited their tents and stood near the door... each one had a different expression as they gazed at newcomers from a region none of them had ever bothered to know its name.

As Levi stood in the center of the camp, his Harmonic Spine reached out to every one of them and painted their appearance with frequencies... this caused an explosion of colors and uniqueness to engulf his world of darkness.

Each Daywalker was at the Warden Evolution stage... Each Daywalker had at least one mutation, making their appearance stand out from the others. It was like a gathering of main characters; each one of them had what it took to reach the top.

Considering that they were part of the top five strongest regions and Agencies in the whole world, it was understandable.

All of them had their weapons out, leaving Levi and his friends to wonder if they did it to intimidate them... most of their weapons were also unique and original:

On the side of Imperial Sun's team... beside Zhang Yanhuan, who carried the giant briar pipe on his shoulder with a cool, relaxed air, stood a cute, short girl in a bee-colored outfit and wide circular sunglasses. Her weapon was a backpack that released swarms of tiny yellowish bee-like creatures, which buzzed around her

Meanwhile, on the Make USA Great Again team's side, their captain, Tyrese, was a bulky, muscular, giant black-skinned man wearing an oversized graphic T-shirt under an open varsity brown-colored jacket.

His jeans were baggy and hanging low, matching well with fresh Jordan-like sneakers...Silver chains resting on the chest, with a chunky stunner diamond watch. He was smoking a blunt while carrying a black gourd with a wine cork on his right waist.

The others behind him held an electric whip and a long wooden bow that was taller than its owner.

As for Justice Sword's team? It was led by Evangeline Falkner, a stunning European blond-haired girl with green eyes, who was wearing shining silver knight armor and holding a sword. It was a gleaming silver blade that made anyone feel like their eyes would be sliced by staring at its blade for long... it was also emitting an aura of unquestionable authority.

Every one of them seemed to have what it took to back their position in this camp... with all of them staring at Levi's team expressionlessly while having their spiritual auras run wild, it made it clear, none of them felt that Levi's team deserved to be here with them.

"Yo... is this how foreigners greet nowadays? I like it!"

Seeing this sight, Arthur immediately summoned his shield... then, he slapped his palm on the gemstone's center.

"Who wanna say hi first?" He asked, grinning widely.

Usually, Levi was the first to stop Arthur's shenanigans... but in this case? He also summoned his staff, and this was the cue for the others to do the same.

"I wanna say hi too." Nurah giggled while holding her shadowy daggers, but the look in her eyes wasn't playful in the slightest.

"Who do I have to beat to get some respect here?" Shia uttered indifferently with a popsicle in her mouth, skipping all the cutscenes.

When Dominic saw their brimming confidence, he couldn't help but chuckle. "Feng Ling... you really brought out some wild ones... No wonder you bet your future on them."

"Enough chit-chat, are we doing this or not?" Feng Ling exhaled a cloud of smoke, "I want to take a nap."

"Sir... we have been impatiently waiting for your team's arrival," Tyrese smirked, blowing a puff in the air as well, "It's been quite boring in the past days in the camp."

"Bring it on, tough guy, I am right here."

Arthur turned to face Tyrese with the same grin, unfazed by his status as a team captain... the moment he noticed his bulging muscles, his testosterone exploded, wanting nothing more but to crush him, and claim the title as the most swell in the camp.

"Alright, settle down, everyone... You will be having your fun in a couple of hours..." Zhang Yanhuan shared with a faint smile, "Our guests have just arrived, it won't be fair for them."

Hearing this, his teammates were the first to desummon their weapons.

"His majesty has a point... You know where to find me, ponytail." Tyrese flicked what remained of the blunt in the direction of Arthur and walked back inside his tent, followed by the rest of his team.

"Their captain is mine," Evangeline uttered emotionlessly as she gazed at Levi... then, she went back inside as well.

"Looks like no one appreciates the way we got here... understandable." Levi smiled serenely, unbothered.

Feng Ling had already told them about the way he got them here during their travel, which was connected to the reason he was sent with them as their supervisor.

Many days ago...

Hicham and Feng Ling had paid a visit to the SAS Headquarters in Antarctica, teleporting from their Willow Grove's dimensional mirror to the World Tree's mirror.

Once they were in, Sir Dominic was there waiting for them with a wide grin and the same laid-back Hawaiian outfit, like the cold was nothing but a myth for him.

"Feng Ling, you really dared to come here in flesh... I thought you were joking when you called me."

"I don't joke around." Feng Ling said indifferently.

"What makes you think I wouldn't pack you up and ship you home?" Sir Dominic said, "Your father still wants you back, surprisingly."

"Nothing he does will change the truth, and he knows it." Feng Ling added calmly while tapping Dominic on the shoulder, "And I already told you, don't get involved in my personal problems."

Sir Dominic laughed while placing his arm on Feng Ling's shoulder.

"What kind of friend will that make me?"

"A good one."

"Nope... Let's grab some drinks; it's been forever since you bothered to show your face. I am starting to think that you don't miss me."

"I don't..."

"Shhsh... I know you do."

'Friend? Feng Ling seems to have a rich history our government doesn't know about... or they do, hence the extra perks?'

Hicham raised an eyebrow in surprise as he watched the current strongest Daywalker in the world fawning over Feng Ling, who kept pushing him away to no avail.

The only Daywalker to reach Ecliptic Rank(Tier 7), and still maintaining his relationship with his contracted Nightcrawler through a contract renewal... desiring to push for more!

He wasn't appointed as the Supervisor of the SAS Headquarters just because... he had the strength to back his position, making all regions respect his opinions regardless of their rank or strength.

As the strongest Daywalker, his authority was at the very top of the world... yet, Hicham was watching him getting abused by Feng Ling with a dazed expression, and still, he only laughed it off like it was a normal dynamic between them.

After reaching Sir Dominic's office... perched high on one of the World Tree's branches and overlooking the endless, icy expanse of Antarctica... Feng Ling and Hicham took their seats while Dominic moved to the side counter to prepare drinks.

"So, what brings you here?" Dominic inquired with a smile, "As much as I would want it to be that you're coming to visit your old pal, I know your heart died a long time ago."

"What a cruel thing to say." Feng Ling took a sip of his drink and smiled for the first time, "I am proud of you."

Chapter 240: Once in A Lifetime Opportunity.

Hicham and Dominic's eyelids twitched, knowing that nothing could faze Feng Ling's depressive and cold persona.

"I need to ask a favor."

"Anything."

Feng Ling cut to the chase and requested, "My region's team wants to join the exploration of the Ancient Site in Sphinx's region... It's a life or death situation."

"Tell me more."

Hicham took it from here and started explaining what happened in the expedition and why they needed to join the exploration, missing no crucial detail.

When he finished, Sir Dominic crossed his fingers on his chest, tapping one rapidly, seemingly in deep thought.

"If it were anyone else than the Hound, I would have come down there personally and slain him inside the Dominion." Sir Dominic shook his head, "But, he is Bishop Na'thir's dog, and if I were to make a move, he will flip out, and all of the surviving regions in your continent will feel the wrath of his empire as payback."

"We know, that's why we didn't ask you to handle it, just give us a chance to take care of our own business." Feng Ling said indifferently.

Only a select upper echelon knew that the seven Eternal Empires across the world were owned by the Bishops of the Duskbound Order!

The Eternal Empire in the continent of Africa was ruled by Bishop Na'thir... the mastermind behind Levi's cursed night!

Although he was an Empire Nest Ruler, his movements were limited for a reason, just like the rest of the rulers... They had an unspoken, unwritten deal with the SAS Headquarters to remain passive, and at the same time, the Saviors wouldn't come knocking on their doors.

In this manner, the empires grew slowly, but no massive war would break out between the two sides, allowing the Saviors and the Rulers to earn steadily from the platform until the day the corruptive atmosphere would reach them.

The ones harmed by this were the natives, but if even Sir Dominic couldn't find a solution to this under-the-table union, no one could...

Well, the obvious solution was to get strong enough to fight them off, but Sir Dominic knew that it was nothing but a dream... as an Ecliptic Daywalker, he knew just how difficult it was to break through his rank... don't even mention becoming a Radian Daywalker to take on the Bishops and their empires.

Unlike the natives, the Bishops were already powerful for centuries before their planet was invaded... once the planet was devoured whole, they would move on to another planet to repeat the cycle, over and over again... How could humans ever catch up?

Thus, the sole viable solution was to make the Saviors do their job and get rid of the empires, but... none of them would bother with Earth's potential being inadequate... (lifeforce, and its natives.)

"I also can't do that, my friend." Sir Dominic smiled wryly, "You know I can never turn you down if it's related to me alone... but, there are three slots for a reason."

"I know, the Distorted Site is Fractured."

"Yes, and we can't risk putting more teams since they are bound to fight against the Corrupted, which will create a higher energy disturbance." Sir Dominic shook his head, "It might tip the balance and bring the site to its early destruction... I can't afford, no, we can't afford to lose this opportunity to curry favor with the Radian supervising our dimensional sector... we all know, if we please him with the Sun Amulet, he might secure our planet's survival, leaving the Saviors with no choice but to obey his orders."

"..."

"..."

Hicham and Feng Ling went silent, understanding that Sir Dominic had a point... it would be foolish to risk such a fine opportunity to bring attention to their planet to the supervising Radian from the thousands of other planets he managed in his dimensional sector.

It was like an intern skipping management and talking about his woes to the CEO in the company... it might not work, but if they curried favor with him, he might just bless them.

Sir Dominic was betting on this opportunity even if the Radian never said anything about this... these kinds of entities knew only to deliver orders, not make deals.

"Also, while your team's performance is admirable in their first raid, it is still not enough to convince me of giving them a spot, even if I had an actual chance... the ten teams in the Conference have been competing for the right to earn their slot for a while. You might have just received the news of the Ancient Site's emergence, but we knew of it fifteen days ago."

"I can't just in good conscience put your team ahead of them because of one raid, even if it was related to a life or death situation... the other regions also have their own problems and are making sacrifices daily... It's the Daywalkers' life, and we have all signed up for it, knowing what awaits us."

Sir Dominic added calmly, his true supervisor persona was always there, hiding behind those friendly, laid-back attire.

"Ah... our apologies, we didn't know the details, we just thought it might be a good chance to save our friend." Hicham smiled bitterly.

While Hicham seemed to have given up on convincing Dominic, Feng Ling was only getting started.

"Dom, I didn't come to get lectured on being a Daywalker or to beg for an opportunity for my team." He said indifferently, "If you can give them a free slot, then good, if not, then how about they fight for it? You said only three teams can enter... I have no problems with that, but I want my team to be part of them."

"You make the rules... either a team fight, a four-way competition, or even one vs one... if they win, we get in, and you boot another team, if we lose..." Feng Ling paused, "I will join your side in the Headquarters, as you have always been bothering me for years."

Hearing this, Hicham swiftly turned his head in shock, not expecting Feng Ling to use himself as a bargaining chip... he knew that, unlike other governmental officers, Feng Ling hadn't signed an exclusive contract with the government since he wasn't born in their region... this meant he could leave any day he wanted, but he stuck with their region, using his immense strength to help them many, many times.

Although the rules applied to him as any other officer, punishment-wise, he never batted an eye at accepting them... just like getting sent to guard an outpost as a disciplinary sentence.

He made it clear to the government many times over, he would rather accept such punishments than become a governor of a settlement.

His excuse? He refused to sign any contract that would bind his life to a single place forever. Yet, here he was... offering himself to join the SAS Headquarters, which accepted nothing but binding contracts.

"Oh?" Dominic showed a flicker of astonishment, "Feng Ling, I have never seen you fight this hard for anyone since that..."

Feng Ling interrupted him with a cold tone, "Do we have a deal or not?"

"Having you on my side to reclaim Earth? Always, but first... why?" Dominic leaned in, asking with a tint of wonder.

"Because unlike you, I don't place my faith in aloof deities and lazy bums." Feng Ling said, "The survival of this planet is on us... humans, always have, always will."

Back to the present...

Levi and the others settled in their own personal tent while Feng Ling remained with Dominic to discuss what format he had decided on for the fight.

After some time, he returned to the tent and relayed the news to the rest, finding them chilling in the living room with some snacks and soft drinks.

"As you all know, your place here hasn't been earned yet." Feng Ling said.

He was leaning on a wall, peeking from a window at the active camp, which was filled with staff members and security guards belonging to the SAS Headquarters.

"Since we are here, we aren't leaving," Arthur smirked.

"Not so fast, tough guy." Feng Ling crossed his arms and said calmly, "Dominic has decided on the Gauntlet format... It's not going to be a walking experience."

"Gauntlet format..." Levi held his chin, "Is it standard? Are we going to fight only one team or all of them?"

Everyone knew that the Gauntlet format implied a team would send a single fighter to compete against another from a different team.

They would fight... The winner remained, the loser was eliminated, and the next teammate would step in. It continued until one side ran out of fighters.

"Unfortunately, Dominic really wants to win the bet." Feng Ling's upper lip twitched, "You guys will be competing against all eighteen Daywalkers."

"Wait... All of them?"