

Evolution 281

Chapter 281: Twisting Lies with Truth.

Nurah responded with a dry mouth... the spiritual aura didn't just smash them on the ground; its heat was strong enough that it almost boiled them alive.

"87th Millennium? Chained Era?" Azhukar frowned. "Are you telling me I have been imprisoned until a new Era emerged?"

"We don't know the details exactly, but we know that your empire fell during the Erased Era..." Nurah paused. "Emperor... you have been imprisoned for more than a hundred thousand years, if not more."

"..."

Azhukar was silenced, his expression unreadable... but it was clear to all, he didn't seem to take the news well.

Being imprisoned for such a long time was one thing, but to wake up and find out that your entire empire, lineage, race... all had perished and been corrupted? Who would accept such news with a warm smile?

"I assume you arrived at my empire after it became an Ancient Distorted Site," he spoke at last.

"Yes... we entered the site for the sake of riches, but then... we found a letter in a temple left behind by one of your High Priests... he beseeched us to save you from the traitorous clutches of the Dawn Phoenix... he wrote what happened to your empire, and how the Dawn Phoenix decided to embark on the Glorious Evolution despite your warnings... and how it went on a rampage, releasing the Ashfall plague that killed the majority of your citizens. After reading the letter, we couldn't leave you trapped here, not after everything you have done for your people... the Ashori Bloodline must not go extinct." Nurah nodded, not allowing anyone else to partake in the lie to avoid ruining everything for them.

As a Blackthorn Assassin, lying, deceit, interrogation, and such skills were implanted in her since her childhood... she became so good at it, lying became second nature to her. No signs, no tells. Her eyes, tone, body language, everything was in control.

Of course, great liars always weave the truth with the lies to make them harder to spot... just like what she had just done.

When Azhukar heard the letter's details, his memory was refreshed to the last gathering he had with his loyal High Priests.

'They succeeded in releasing me... but it's too late, it's too damn late... the Shadow Dimension has won, and it's all because of her... HER! If only she listened!'

His expression turned cruel as he gazed behind him at the pile of ash belonging to the Dawn Phoenix... he extended his hand in its direction and released a beam of concentrated red plasma, burning the ash even more, stopping only when the throne melted into a pool of liquid gold.

Seeing this, Arthur and the rest gulped a mouthful in dread... if the spiritual prowess gave them an inkling of his overwhelming strength, the red plasma beam made them understand that even his powers were highly attuned... Plasma Aspect wasn't something anyone could wield.

'Shit... is he at the final growth stage? Is he as strong as Eternal Daywalkers(Tier 9)? We are so f*cked.'

Tyrese thought inwardly, keeping his head lowered.

The same thought kept resounding in everyone's minds... they ought to feel terrified. They were in the presence of a powerful emperor who had lost everything, and clearly... he wasn't in the right state of mind.

They could tell the only reason they were still alive was because of Nurah's lie and the Emperor's confusion.

Once the confusion cleared out, they had no clue what he would do to them... especially when he had no empire to rule, no people to call his own, and an appearance scarier than a nightmare.

These thoughts made most of them sweat heavily, their hearts beating out of their chests nervously... unfortunately, this kind of reaction would never escape Azhukar's senses.

He turned back to them and saw through heat vision how their hearts were too agitated... not from excitement, but fear.

Why would they be scared of him if they truly came here to save him? That was the first question that popped into Azhukar's mind as his expression slowly turned cold.

It didn't matter if Nurah was a master in the arts of deceit and control of her body; the rest, while silent, their bodies were like a wide-open book.

"So, you came to rescue me, right?" Azhukar asked.

Just as Nurah opened her mouth, wanting to answer, he silenced her with a raised hand. Then, Azhukar extended his finger in their direction and pointed it at no one else but... Arthur.

"You, answer the question," he ordered.

When everyone noticed that Arthur was the one picked, their eyes reflected a tint of despair.

"M-me?"

Arthur pointed his finger at himself while staring at Azhukar... seeing him nod his head indifferently, Arthur glanced at his friends and then spoke in modern Ilthorien with a somewhat decent accent.

"I'm sorry... I haven't finished my modern Ilthorien lessons to learn the ancient version... I don't understand anything you're saying...Cough."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Jojo, Shia, Nurah, Tyrese, and the rest of the Daywalkers felt their souls escape from their mouths as they gazed at Azhukar's deep, confused frown.

"What kind of lowly language are you speaking with? Fool, are you that daring to disrespect the sacred Ilthorien language in my presence?" He uttered, not fond of the way Arthur spoke.

"Benevolent Emperor... times have changed since the Erased Era. There is now modern simplified Ilthorien and ancient Ilthorien." Nurah swiftly interjected to save Arthur before Azhukar vented his buried wrath on him. "No one here but me can speak fluent ancient Ilthorien... please excuse them."

"I see..."

When he heard this, his rage was quenched a little... he nodded, understanding that it made sense for the language to change across eras.

Arthur sighed in relief and kept his head lowered, thanking Nurah over and over in his mind. But Nurah knew that it wasn't enough. As expected, he asked her straight out why they were so afraid of him.

"Emperor... with all due respect, your current appearance isn't what we expected to see."

Nurah bit the bullet and told him straight out... she knew the only way to kill his suspicion was to be extreme and change his attention to something else unrelated to them.

"My appearance?"

Azhukar frowned as he glanced at his arms, seeing nothing but beautiful, smooth orange feathers tucked inside lustrous armor... but when he tried to look at his face, he stared at the reflection of himself in Nurah's eyes.

That's where he saw it... the creature staring back wasn't an emperor. It wasn't even a phoenix. It was an absolute abomination.

What was once his crown of authority and dignity had turned into broken feathers fused into his scalp... and this wasn't even the worst part.

"No..." he whispered, shaking his head slowly. "No... this isn't me."

He took a step closer, trying to see again, hoping the reflection would change. It didn't. Nurah's eyes trembled, and he could see it... every rotted piece of him, every burned feather, every ruined part that used to be glory.

"This... this is a lie," he muttered, his voice shaking. "A curse of your kind! What have you done to me!!"

But the more he denied it, the more his body betrayed him... his vision blurred, and flashes started to hit him... his hands twisted like claws, his legs fused with ash, his wings torn and half gone, the smell of burned flesh following him everywhere.

Nurah and the rest were left stunned, not expecting such a reaction... they thought he knew about his new appearance. But they had no idea that beauty for their race was something sacred.

From an emperor to the lowest of citizens, any Ashori took pride in their regal phoenix-like appearance and took great care of themselves, to the point that it turned into an obsession and could be used as a social weapon for those uncaring enough about their presentation.

If only they knew that it was even worse for Emperor Azhukar... so much worse, he lived in a delusion that his appearance remained the same after he had been imprisoned for so long, with only himself to talk to.

But now... the illusion shattered, and reality came rushing back at him.

The reality of what he did to himself and his people.

The reality of his failed Glorious Evolution.

"No... no... no!" He screamed. His hands clawed at his chest, his skin, his face, as if trying to tear the truth off himself.

"I screwed up! Protect yourselves!" Nurah swiftly shouted while sinking into her shadow.

Arthur and the rest instantly activated whatever defensive ability they had... but alas, some of them were still a tad too late.

Whoosh!

An orange, inflamed shockwave of spiritual energy exploded from his body, shaking the chamber!

Thud! Thud! Thud!...

Everyone was thrown backward like rag dolls, slamming into the walls and pillars... This was the best scenario for the survivors.

Anyone who hesitated to do as Nurah said ended up getting incinerated... set ablaze in raging flames, devoured in less than a few seconds under the eyes of their teammates.

Arthur, Shia, Jojo, and Nurah all survived... but the same couldn't be said for two members of Tyrese's team and three members of Evangeline's team.

As those two gazed in horror at what remained of their teammates, Arthur and the girls kept their eyes fixed on Azhukar in pure dread.

They watched as the ground cracked under his knees as he fell, his hands trembling while his single eye was wide with madness and grief.

"I was light... I was fire... I was an emperor... I was a god!" He roared to the heavens. "How did it come to this? What have I become? Was it not enough to take my empire, my people, my grand plan of ascension? You had to turn me into a hideous beast!"

When everyone saw that his mind had finally cracked after so many hits, they knew that no rewards awaited them if they stuck behind.

They glanced at each other, deciding to run away... they knew the chances of success were abysmal, but it was the best moment possible while the Emperor wasn't paying them any attention.

However, the moment they stood up, Azhukar's head snapped at them. His eye reflecting nothing but pure hatred... It wasn't directed at them, but at himself.

"Where do you think you're going after seeing me in this disgusting state?"

Chapter 282: The Shattering.

Nurah and the rest found themselves frozen in their places with a single glare from Pharaoh Azhukar... they glanced at each other with a tint of fear in their eyes, realizing that nothing else was going to save them. No amount of lies or praise was going to work anymore.

How could he let them live after seeing his hideous appearance?

However, just as the Emperor was about to finish them off, a loud crack rang out from a distance... It was loud, weird, and echoed like it resounded from across dimensions. Then, earthquakes followed, shaking the entire pyramid nonstop.

"What's going on?" Pharaoh Azhukar frowned.

Nurah took the chance to shout at him that the planet's dimensional membrane was fractured, and if he kept letting his spiritual aura run wild, it would shatter completely, dooming his planet and empire once and for all.

When he heard this, Pharaoh Azhukar didn't seem fazed or bothered... it was like the moment he found out the truth about his appearance and his failed ascension, he stopped caring about anything else.

"Isn't this your birthplace?! Your planet? Why are you forsaking it!" Evangeline shouted at him as well.

Pharaoh Azhukar scoffed and allowed his spiritual energy to run unchecked. The moment he did this, the dimensional membrane continued cracking nonstop, each one resounding louder than the last until... RUMBLE!

The dimensional membrane had shattered at last... the energy disturbances finally took it out.

Immediately after, the earthquakes grew in intensity, shaking the most stable structure in the universe like it were built out of bamboo sticks.

Yet, this was only the start of the apocalypse.

Boom! Boom!...

Stones, pillars, and the entire structure of the pyramid started flying apart, collapsing from the bottom up like something was pulling them upward! Yet Azhukar and the Daywalkers stayed firmly on the ground thanks to his spiritual energy.

When the ceiling flew away, exposing the sky, everyone glanced upward with great difficulty, incapable of moving their heads.

Oh... how they wish they didn't look.

The beautiful starry sky and the yellow ring were gone, nowhere to be found... in their place, a deep, dark void remained... It was like someone erased the sky from existence.

Arthur and the others couldn't move... Their legs refused to step back, their arms hung uselessly at their sides. But their minds were screaming for them to run away.

Before they could even question the sight before them, Azhukar's proud voice resounded in their ears.

"Primordial Tree of Death... You can take my empire, my planet, everything... but you will never take me... I shall join the People of the Stars. That is my destiny, always was, always been."

'Is that the Primordial Tree of Death's root?!

'What... the void is actually a mere piece of the Tree of Death's root?!

'How can something so massive exist?'

Arthur, Tyrese, Evangeline, Shia, and the rest felt their hearts hit the bottom of their stomachs in pure horror... the Tree's root loomed above them, enormous enough to blot out the stars and the ring, casting a shadow that felt alive, pressing down on their thoughts like nothing else ever did.

Even Azhukar didn't scare them as much as knowing that the void before them was a mere tiny portion of the Primordial Tree of Death's roots extending across the Chained Universe.

Yet... the real scare arrived a few seconds later.

Out of nowhere, the void started tearing up from the center... a gaping rip along the root, splitting the sky in two.

Rumble! Rumble!

The entire planet trembled intensely as ruins, the Corrupted, deserts, and debris were pulled toward it... Simultaneously, it was releasing a massive cloud of dark, corrupting mist blotting the sky entirely... It started falling in the direction of the ground as a rain of pure corruption!

Every Daywalker's chest tightened... Fear took hold of them and refused to let go.

All of them shared similar thoughts... Is this our end? Is this how our story concludes? Witnessing the Primordial Tree of Death devour a planet right before their eyes?

Who in their right mind would hold a hint of hope in their hearts at this ludicrous apocalyptic scene? Not even the planet could survive the clutch of the Tree of Death; how could they?

Just as they were falling into despair with their partnered nightcrawlers alike, Pharaoh Azhukar raised his hand into the sky and uttered, "I have yet to finish with them... don't interrupt me."

From the tip of his fingers, multiple orange tethers emerged and slithered in everyone's direction, connecting straight to their foreheads... though one tether ignored them and went through the door, leaving Arthur and the girls on their toes.

Jasmine!

They could tell that Azhukar had found out about Jasmine a while ago, and he just didn't bother with her at the time.

As expected... the orange tether passed through the corridors at insane speed, reaching the hidden treasury at the depth of the pyramid in no time.

Having no idea about it, Jasmine was seen using an inked construct of a latch affixed to the ground... she had it wrapped around her legs, helping her avoid getting thrown into the gazing abyss above.

'How did the dimensional membrane collapse so fast... Nurah and the others must be in trouble.'
Jasmine thought to herself, 'I have to save th...'

Before she could carry on with her thought, the tether made contact with her forehead... in an instant, her body blinked out of existence just like the rest of the Daywalkers.

Back to the exposed throne chamber... the Emperor and the rest were nowhere to be found. However, a gigantic tree was left behind.

It was set ablaze in orange flames, appearing like a tree that was caught on fire, but it could never be extinguished... always burning, always there.

Its illumination was strong enough; the entire capital basked underneath it... one last glimpse of life before the planet embraced its eventual demise...

Meanwhile, inside Azhukar's dominion, the sky radiated with a beautiful light orange with some clouds spread here and there... Above the clouds, a sun appeared in the shape of a spinning pyramid, turning slowly in every direction while casting flashes of light over the land.

The ground below was a vast desert of orange sand that stretched endlessly, making the atmosphere as dry as a grain of sand.

Arthur and the others were teleported near the center of the dominion in a straight line. All of them had gloomy expressions as they gazed behind the Emperor, who was standing near the far end of his dominion.

Their pupils reflected a similar massive tree wrapped in flames... The fire burned bright but never consumed the tree. The flames climbed high into the sky, reaching toward the spinning pyramid-like sun, resembling a finger stretching to divinity, but failing short.

"Jasmine!"

Shia, the girls, and Arthur immediately rushed toward Jasmine after noticing that she had also gotten teleported inside... Jasmine met them with a grim expression, using signs to express her concern about the situation and asking about Levi's whereabouts.

However, just as Nurah was about to respond, Azhukar clapped his hands and separated everyone... putting them inside a beam of flames. No one dared to touch it, forced to stay still in the middle, in fear of getting burned alive.

But some of them weren't too fond of this situation.

"If you're going to kill us, just get it over with," Tyrese uttered indifferently. "Why are you doing this? Aren't you too old to be playing with children?"

"Play? Maybe I have been alone for a long time, and I can't get myself to get rid of you." Before Nurah and the others could feel a slight tingle of hope arising, Azhukar chuckled and added, "Ah... the sweet look of innocence on your faces."

Hearing this, everyone realized that the f*cker was just messing with them for the love of the game. But then, their expressions turned desperate after hearing the next part.

"You see... I have some good news and some bad news." He paused, "The good news is that only one of you is going to live."

This time, no one reacted much, understanding that the mad Emperor was never going to let anyone live after seeing his appearance.

As expected...

"The bad news is... the one who lives will serve as my honored slave." Azhukar smiled, his freaky face making his smile appear as sinister as a demon. "I can't roam the world like this... I need to restore my former noble appearance, and I am not comfortable with this new era yet... now, let's see who's the honored one."

Chapter 283: Perfect Vessel.

Before anyone could react, Azhukar pointed his finger at a member of the Justice team under Evangeline... the illuminating beam was turned off, and the armored boy with a steel helmet found himself floating in the direction of Azhukar against his will.

"No, no, no! Save me!"

He cried out loud for help while reaching out to his captain and the others, but alas... all they could do was accompany him with their eyes, incapable of moving an inch without the risk of getting burnt.

"Wait! Take me instead! There is no need for him or anyone else to suffer..." Evangeline suddenly offered, her voice cutting through the solemn silence.

"Captain, don't!"

"Captain, let me volunteer instead!"

The other two surviving teammates swiftly tried to stop her from getting herself enslaved... from their brief experience with Azhukar, they could tell that death would be a much more merciful way to go than serve under him.

"Hahaha... how chivalrous." Azhukar laughed for a moment, and then his tone made a 180-degree switch, "Don't be impatient... all of you will be tested, and only the best shall be chosen."

The moment the chosen Daywalker heard this, his expression twisted in despair as he watched Azhukar getting closer.

Azhukar had his limbs spread once he was in front of him... then, he scanned him thoroughly, sizing him up and down.

A few seconds later, he muttered, "Genetically ungifted... trash."

"What do you mea..."

Before the Daywalker could finish his sentence, Azhukar waved his hand dismissively... in a split second, the armored boy was set in raging flames, burning him into a fading cloud of ash before he could even release a single scream.

"Next."

Azhukar ignored everyone's terrified expressions and started tracing his extended finger from left to right, going back and forth, until... it landed on Arthur.

The beam was turned off, and Arthur was pulled away against his will like livestock getting picked for slaughter... yet, Arthur didn't seem to care.

He had a bitter smile on his face as he floated away, his mind occupied with a single thought... 'At least, Levi will survive...'

Arthur had been wishing for Levi to group up with them... but after their lives were turned upside down when Azhukar awakened, he wished nothing more than for him to use the dimensional gate and return to Earth.

Levi had given Arthur access to the dimensional gate, but Levi could still use it as well... with the planet collapsing into the Shadow dimension, he prayed that his big brother chose to use it and run away.

If he did, he wouldn't judge him... not even for a second.

'Please, please, please don't try to be a hero...' He prayed with his whole heart.

He could see that they had put themselves in a situation way above their pay grade... no, above even their strongest Daywalker, Dominic.

They were inside a dominion of a Tier 8 or Tier 9 entity. Just this alone was enough to let everyone here understand that none of them were making it out alive, but the chosen slave. Even if Dominic himself came to save them.

However... knowing his big brother, he had a feeling that his prayer wasn't going to work.

Meanwhile, as Jojo and the girls saw Arthur pulling further away from them, their expressions were mixed.

Jojo was tearing up while calling for his name, but Arthur couldn't even turn his head to see her.

Nurah and Shia were saddened, but they were realistic... they knew both of them were done for, so what's the point of feeling angry? All of them were on the same Death Wagon.

Only Jasmine had a different expression... a cold one.

'N'ibby... we have to save him. We have to use it...' She said.

'No... it's too risky doing it here.' N'ibby shook her head, 'We are inside his dominion... even if we used it, it won't guarantee your successful escape. I am certain he is going to choose you due to your bloodline... once you get out of the dominion, you can use it then to escape.'

'But he's my friend... they're all my friends. They cared for me, accepted me without expecting anything in return... they looked out for me, stood by me, protected me when no one else did. I don't care if it works or not... I have to try.' She said, her eyes shifting toward Shia, Nurah, and the tearful Jojo.

'No is a no...' N'ibby's tone turned stern, 'Jas... if you used it here, you might end up losing yourself... this time, forever.'

'And I am okay with it...' Jasmine showed a little smile, 'I know I have met them no less than a few months, but these months were the happiest in my entire life... I don't intend to lose them and return to what I used to be before.'

'N'ibby, I don't want to be depressed anymore...'

'...'

N'ibby went silent for a few moments... but then, she sighed helplessly and nodded in agreement at last. However, just as she was about to go for it, she heard Azhukar exclaim in disbelief.

"You... how, how do you have faint bloodline traces of Radians?!"

Everyone's ears perked up in confusion after noticing Azhukar pointing his shaking finger at Arthur, who seemed just as confused as him.

"Radians? What are you talking about?"

He frowned, thinking that Azhukar was pulling a joke on him. The f*cker was too unstable and seemed to like giving them a sense of false hope to mess with them.

However, Azhukar didn't seem to be kidding in the slightest... His inflamed eye was reflecting Arthur's DNA strings lined up, as his eye had the capability to zoom as close as microscopic.

Phoenixes already had insane vision... with him being in the upper ranks, it was only natural that his eye would evolve to have such insane zooming capabilities. Though, Arthur's DNA appeared as dark curvy stripes with faint flickers here and there.

Azhukar recognized those flickers right away, as they were his dream... everything he had worked for in his entire life was to have them, as they represent becoming part of the People of the Stars.

Yet, he failed his Glorious Evolution and turned into an abomination... he went through all of that pain and hardship for nothing while Arthur had them within him, and he didn't seem to know it.

"Ha..ha...haha... ah, you're truly the cruelest of them all."

Azhukar started laughing at the irony of the situation, but soon it turned deranged; his expression showed nothing but pure hatred mixed in with jealous desire.

"I thought the heavens had forsaken me... but, it seems I was too harsh." He grinned sinisterly as he floated in Arthur's direction and patted him on the shoulder, "I don't know how you have the Radians Bloodline within you, but thank you... thank you for saving me and handing me the perfect vessel to restart my evolutionary path... this time, I have what it takes to become one of them."

"Radian? What is he talking about?"

"How come Arthur has a Radian bloodline within him? That doesn't make any sense, he is a human like the rest of us."

"Is the emperor finally losing it?"

Nurah, Jojo, and the rest of the Daywalkers were all left baffled with Azhukar's insane claim... incapable of believing his words as they made no sense.

However, when Azhukar heard them speak badly about his mental state, he looked at them with a cold sneer, "You can't even recognize divinity even if it was amidst you... he is a Half-Radian, but because he is using a Common Shadowlife Seed, it can't awaken these genes."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Hearing this, everyone was left stunned... a part of them started to believe him, as they felt like Azhukar had no reason to lie to them in this situation.

Meanwhile, Arthur believed him the moment he recalled what happened to Levi during his first day of cultivation... how could he forget seeing his big brother levitating above the floor while illuminating as bright as a mini-star?

He always knew that something was off about it, but he never pushed Levi to tell him the full truth, understanding that if his big brother hid something from him, it was either for his own good or he couldn't tell him because of other reasons. So, he kept those doubts to himself and waited until the day Levi came clean.

Now? He finally found the truth...

"I am a Half-Radian..."

He murmured under his breath... but then, his mouth curved up into a big delighted grin, realizing that his brother must have awakened them.

"What are you grinning about?" Azhukar frowned.

"You wouldn't understand..." Arthur smiled.

"Fine, keep your secrets to yourself... once I take over your soul, everything that is yours will become mine anyway." Azhukar smiled back, "I will know everything then."

The moment Arthur heard this, his smile froze... 'No... he can't find out about Levi, or he will go after him next.'

Alas, his mind was in the right place, but his body was still as stiff as stone. All he could do was glare at Azhukar while shouting out loud, "Bring it on!! The Larsons don't shy away from pain!"

"Oh, my sweet boy... what you're going to feel is no regular pain." Azhukar smiled as he caressed Arthur's cheek with his scorched black hand.

Before anyone could react, Azhukar pierced Arthur's skull from the middle with his index finger, making his eyes turn upside down instantly. Then, he let out an ear-piercing screech like someone had dug a molten nail straight into the center of his pain sensors.

His body went limp in an instant while his mouth started foaming... his eyes rolled to the back of his head as Azhukar started piercing Arthur's subconscious barrier, desiring to create a hole for his soul to enter without shattering it.

It was much the same situation Levi went through to open up his spiritual Leywell... only this one was much more painful, as an outsider carried it out.

"Arthur!! Let him go, you monster!!"

Jojo screamed with a furious, reddened expression, but Azhukar paid her no attention, putting his entire focus on avoiding shattering Arthur's subconscious barrier.

However... suddenly, the same sentence echoed again across the dominion. But this time... it came from a depressed voice that seemed sick of life.

"Let him go... You filth. You've done enough."

Everyone turned to the source and saw Jasmine stepping out of the beam of flames... her body covered entirely in a mixture of rippling white and black ink. Only her face was exposed, and it resembled N'ibby more than Jasmine!

"Hmm... what do we have here?" Azhukar raised an eyebrow in intrigue at the sight.

Chapter 284: A Pure Blood Heir.

Unconcerned about everyone's stunned eyes, Jasmine stood still as the pools of black ink and white ink kept spinning around her body nonstop until... they started wrapping around her form tightly.

Then, her skin began to change... black lines formed across it, like mesmerizing tribal tattoos that moved slowly back and forth.

Her dress stretched longer, turning into a black gown that brushed the ground... the edges of it dripped with dark ink that vanished as it touched the sand.

Her hair changed next... half of it turned white, the other half black... both sides flowing down her shoulders freely.

When she opened her eyes, they looked like two swirling drops of ink, spinning slowly as if alive... even the inked black mark around her right eye emerged, painting almost an exact image of N'ibby, but in adult form.

"...So, this is what it's come to," she said softly, "I have been trying my very best to keep her away from entering another Reality Limbo... where the real and the illusion are interchangeable concepts... but you just had to push her, you just had to make me work... and I hate working."

As she spoke with her depressed soft voice, black and white ink began to drip from her fingers... but instead of falling into the ground, it spread around her in circles, forming two massive glowing runic sigils above her head.

One black, one white.

The outer rings were covered in looping symbols that continually rewrote themselves every few seconds, never settling into a single shape. However, the only thing constant was the two runic letters.

The black one inside the white sigil was a circle with a tiny dot in the center, and other dots circling it nonstop, seemingly showing the flow of creation, appearing as '◊'.

As for the white runic letter inside the black sigil? It was the opposite... an inverted triangle with a broken ring behind it, flickering in and out of existence while erasing its own outline... a constant loop of vanishing and reforming, appearing as '◊'.

It was like both sigils served an interchangeable concept... two opposites of one end, two faces of one coin.

The moment they manifested, Jasmine lifted her brush into the sky and uttered indifferently, "Primordial Tree of Creation and Erasure, reclaim a third of this dominion as mine."

Her words rang akin to a heavenly decree across the dominion... echoing twice, no more.

Before the stunned mad emperor and the Daywalkers could react, the dominion started shaking nonstop like the Rift of Binding Laws was under great strain from an authority higher than it.

Then, a giant tree began to grow forcefully behind her and the Daywalkers on the far end of the dominion... its roots half black, half white.

The trunk also split into two colors, twisting together until the branches reached high above, giving birth to leaves in the shape of one of the two sigils: the sigil of erasure and the sigil of creation.

Once it was born, a third of the dominion around Jasmine and the Daywalkers started changing from a dried desert to an infinite sea of whiteness.

It was like the sky, the desert, everything was erased, leaving a third of the dominion as one giant blank page... even the fiery pillars locking the Daywalkers were erased, freeing them.

"..."

"..."

Everyone froze... no one said a word.

Even the Mad Emperor stopped his attempt to possess Arthur's body, his burning eye narrowing in dismay at this ludicrous sight.

"Jasmine..." Shia whispered, her eyes reflecting nothing but confusion.

The girls and the rest of the Daywalkers shared the same look, having no idea what had become of Jasmine or what she was anymore. The fact that she was speaking was already a shocker to them, don't even mention the rest.

But Jasmine didn't look at them... her eyes were locked on the Emperor. She raised her brush, which had a glowing white tip, and pointed it at him.

"Erase," she said coldly.

The sigil of erasure behind her flashed.

The moment the Emperor saw the brush pointed at him, his dormant instincts screamed at him... No hesitation, he threw Arthur away and leaped back.

Good thing he moved fast... the entire area he was around had turned into a pool of spreading whiteness... like Jasmine had literally erased everything in that specific location, leaving nothing but pure emptiness, but it wasn't void.

Then, Jasmine snapped her fingers... in an instant, Arthur appeared beside her, already unconscious...

She reached out and brushed her hand across his forehead... the wound that had nearly killed him vanished without a trace... both physical and spiritual.

The moment it was fixed, Arthur regained consciousness and opened his muddled eyes slowly.

"...Jasmine?" Arthur's pupils thinned in bewilderment after seeing her current peculiar appearance.

Jasmine didn't answer... she snapped her finger and all the Daywalkers found themselves standing near each other. Then, she turned her brush towards them.

A single ink dot was fired in their direction... the moment it reached them, the black drop transformed into a giant black sphere, sealing them inside of it.

Only then did her deadpan eyes land on the Emperor.

"What... what are you?" He demanded, his mouth tightened.

When Jasmine ignored him, he narrowed his gaze, focusing his sight... his vision zoomed in until he could see her DNA itself, formed of black and white sigils weaving together in an eternal dance.

His eye went wide in disbelief.

"That... that's impossible," he muttered. "Those are the marks of a pure-blood heir... but how, and to what... wait."

That's when Azhukar recalled Jasmine calling the tree behind her the Primordial Tree of Creation and Erasure... this jerked his memory, recalling one of the oldest myths in the universe.

The Myth of the Ancient Inkrith Race... one of the first races born in the universe, a race that was believed to have been the one painting life into the universe under the fellowship of none other than... The Primordial Tree of Creation and Erasure.

However, the myth didn't say what happened to them... only that the tree and its people had all disappeared once the job was finished, once the universe was painted into life.

Now... here he was, facing off against someone who seemed to wield the same mythical powers. He couldn't believe it, his mind refused to... but the truth was right before him.

However, before he could call her out for it, Jasmine's voice resounded across the dimension.

"I don't need to fight you..." she said, "I just need to save them."

She waved her brush in a circle, drawing a glowing ring of white ink around the giant black sphere, where the Daywalkers were trapped.

Then, she whispered, "Sever..."

The rings suddenly expanded into another white sphere around the Daywalkers... then, she teleported inside of it before it was cut away from the Rift of Binding Laws under the authority of the Tree behind her.

Just like a magic trick, they vanished, leaving behind a wilting tree with its leaves carried away by the wind.

"..."

Azhukar stood frozen, rigid as stone, utterly unable to comprehend what had just happened. The moment Jasmine made her move, everything he thought he controlled slipped through his fingers; her powers were unlike anything he had ever faced, so wild and overwhelming that they caught him completely off guard.

But now... his eye illuminated brighter and brighter with hunger.

"She can rewrite existence itself..." He whispered. "She can unmake the laws of creation..."

A slow grin spread across his face as his heart started beating rapidly in exhilaration.

"Those powers... they're beyond the Radians... no, they are beyond anything I have ever seen... If I were to wield them, to become her... People of the Stars? They will be the ones wishing to join my side!"

Instead of being fearful of Jasmine's powers, Azhukar's greed and ambition for divinity were at it again... he could tell that Jasmine must not have full control of her powers, which was the reason she left instead of fighting him.

As much as she tried painting herself as invincible... he saw through the disguise. Her transformation had a limited timeframe and maybe some grave consequences, as he knew that the universe was a fair place.

If someone like her could tap into a dominion while she wasn't ready to wield it yet, it only meant that she had crossed a line that shouldn't be crossed.

Swiftly, he canceled his dominion, his body and soul receiving an agonizing backlash, but he didn't care. He gritted his teeth and swept his gaze toward the sky... toward the white sphere drifting rapidly in the direction of the massive shadowy tear that was still devouring his planet.

"Inkrith Heir!! You're mine!!"

Without hesitation, his body burst into flames as he launched himself upward, chasing it through the thousands of mini spatial tears and planetary rubble.

The world around him crumbled as both he and the white sphere were swallowed by the black void, sent straight inside the Shadow dimension.

It wasn't anywhere random... the moment the dimension changed, Azhukar found himself amidst a celestial river of matter... bigger and longer than a string of galaxies stitched together.

The river of broken matter was falling toward the dark heart of the Shadow dimension... the true depths, where nothing could escape... where everything; light, matter, and time was being devoured alike.

"Shit... the Death Tree is throwing us straight to the Hungering Dark?! Why? Doesn't it start at the back of the celestial rivers across the dimension?!"

Azhukar's expression turned slightly white at the sight of hundreds of celestial-like rivers spanning for eternity as they all headed towards a single destination... The Hungering Dark.

From afar, it looked like a storm made of pure night... a spinning vortex so vast it swallowed entire skies. The center spun endlessly, a chaotic spiral of black ink that seemed to devour light and color alike.

At its core, there was a hole... a bottomless mouth that stretched downward forever, giving the illusion that space itself was being drained into it.

Around it, long rivers of celestial matter flowed like dim streams in reverse. They weren't falling... they were being pulled, stretching broken planets, shattered stars, and cracked moons the instant they neared the vortex.

Everything that had ever been touched by the Tree of Death... every cursed world, every corrupted sun... was fated to end here, stripped of color and swallowed whole, sent to a lower realm no one dared to visit or think about.

The Hungering Dark didn't destroy... it simply took. And Azhukar knew it would keep taking until there was nothing left to take.

He realized he had only a brief window to act and retrieve the Inkrith Heir before reaching the zone of no return... the Hungering Dark's Event Horizon, where not even a single photon of light could escape.

"INKRITH!!"

He screamed into the nothingness as his body was set in blinding flames, speeding rapidly in the white sphere's direction... the orange flames were getting twisted by the pull, but he didn't care, his eyes affixed on the white sphere that was flying toward its damnation.

Unbeknownst to him, his scream faded into the distance, dying fast... and yet, someone had heard it...

'Is that them?'

Chapter 285: His Own Struggle.

A few minutes before Nick grabbed the Sun Amulet and unleashed hell...

Levi was flying across the desert sky, pushing Vyra to her limit... His jaw was tight, and he looked like he was burning with panic.

The capital was still far ahead, but he couldn't shake the dread crawling up his spine... his mind ran wild as he tried to piece everything together.

'The Emperor... it has to be him,' he thought, gripping Vyra's rugged leather tighter. 'He must've been the one who went through the Glorious Evolution... the Dawn Phoenix fought him... it must've defeated him and sealed him inside the Sun Amulet... I knew that something was off about the whole history of this damned empire and had a feeling that it was related to the emperor... It's always them! Always, Levi! How can you be so naive!'

The moment the letter's tone changed in Levi's mind, he finally understood that he was looking at it from the wrong angle.

As Nurah always said and repeated... it could never be the Dawn Phoenix since World Class Ender Beasts treated their own bloodline as royalty.

It didn't matter if it was a mere citizen with the faintest amount of bloodline... as long as they shared its ancestral bloodline, it accepted them as part of their race and protected them from outsiders, regardless of the situation.

How could such a loyal beast to the ancestral bloodline cause such a heinous crime of making its race go extinct? It couldn't, but the clues and information they got villainized the Dawn Phoenix left and right until everyone started questioning themselves.

Maybe they were wrong? Possibly, some beasts were capable of doing this in the right circumstances? And so forth.

Levi was a victim of misinformation too... but he didn't trust it fully, which was the reason his instincts never quietened down the moment he read the letter.

But now? His instincts went silent, confirming that he was on the right track.

'God damn it... There might not even be a plague in the first place... it must be a cover-up released by the High Priests after the Dawn Phoenix fought the emperor to halt his attempt at the Glorious Evolution... I don't know why they fought for it, but I am almost certain the Dawn Phoenix has sealed the emperor inside the Sun Amulet, and the High Priests were tasked to save him. However, the Dawn Phoenix refused to hand over the Amulet, and the High Priests could do nothing against it.'

'Because the Dawn Phoenix was occupied with keeping the seal intact, the Ashora Empire has lost the two strongest entities in their empire at the same time, while the Shadow dimension's invasion was going all out.'

'How could they survive it? The planet became infested, and the Ashori were either corrupted or slaughtered across years until... only some surviving refugees hid in bunkers under the High Priests' leadership.'

The more Levi thought about it, the fuller his mind got... the dots kept connecting nonstop into a story... a story that made more sense than the Dawn Phoenix going berserk and ending its bloodline with a "plague."

'When they knew that nothing but death awaited them, they left letters behind in case outsiders arrived at their empire... building on the previous rumors they spread to villainize the Dawn Phoenix and push them to free their emperor from his seal.'

'Now... if they remove the Sun Amulet from the Phoenix's hands... they'll release him, and it will be their end.'

Levi's expression turned as grim as it could get.

'Seems feasible.' The Titan nodded.

'Damn it...I am not worried about Arthur and the girls, but the others.'

Levi understood that his friends would never take on such a serious task without him being around... they would wait for him, he was sure of it.

However, he couldn't be as certain about the others... especially since each of them had egos shaped by their immense strength and top-tier potential on Earth.

As the wind screeched past his ears while he leaned forward, piercing through the skies like a white comet, a sharp crack suddenly echoed through the air.

Levi's head snapped up... his expression turning ugly. But then came another crack, louder... then a third.

'Oh no, oh no...' His lips tightened as the realization hit him.

The dimensional membrane was breaking apart!

"No... no, no, no..."

Levi kept repeating as he used the Sensebound Pearl to enhance his spiritual prowess, if only by a little. Then, he focused his spiritual vision as hard as he could... his sight pierced through the layers of light and air until it arrived at the Pyramid... and what he saw made his stomach drop in horror.

His worst fears had come through...

A colossal orange spiritual aura was raging out of control in the shape of a massive phoenix crafted out of flames... it was so big, its form exceeded the pyramid's structure, peeking through its edges.

Levi wished that it belonged to the Dawn Phoenix... but alas, the proud noble face of the Emperor was the one gazing into the distance.

Levi's blood ran cold, and before he knew it, he found himself shouting at the top of his lungs, "ARTHUUR!!"

His voice cracking as his heart kept beating rapidly in fear of the worst possibility... Death.

Levi didn't think anymore... He leaped off Vyra mid-flight, igniting the sun jets on his legs and combustion leaps on his palms.

He summoned Vyra back inside a sealing totem and swiftly launched himself forward... the sudden burst burned his skin instantly, but he didn't care.

Whoosh!!

He blasted forward with two long, concentrated blue pillars of sunflames, resembling a fighting jet.

But then... the world broke.

SHATTER!

A thunderous sound like glass shattering snapped through the air, and Levi suddenly felt like someone, or something, was tugging his armor from above.

Stunned, he glanced up and saw nothing but pitch-black darkness... his auditory vision failing to reach such heights.

However, once he noticed the ground, the sand, the ruins, even the atmosphere itself getting pulled upward toward the sky, he knew immediately that the final hour had started for the planet.

"No... this can't be happening! I am going to make it!!"

Levi yelled furiously as he fought to control his flight, pushing his jets even harder until his soles were emitting a burnt flesh smell. Yet, he felt nothing but dread of not making it to the pyramid.

Unfortunately, he was no Azhukar.

The more he tried to resist the pull, the more he felt like he was trying to outswim a collapsing ocean... the force pulling him upward didn't care about his speed or strength. The pyramid and ruins below split apart like sandcastles. Even the sky seemed to bend toward the tear... How could he resist it?

Thud! Bam!

Rubble slammed against him as he dodged what he could, broke through what he couldn't... His chest ached, his body screaming, but he kept pushing.

'Arthur... Nurah...Jasmine... Shia... Jojo... please, hold on.' Levi kept repeating in his mind, not thinking about anything else.

However... Ash'Kral was there.

"Levi!" Ash'Kral's solemn voice echoed in his head. "Even if you reach them, you can't stop him. The Emperor's power is beyond anything you've seen. If he has failed the Glorious Evolution, it means he has been regressed to a Tier 8 powerhouse minimum. Even weakened, he's still a deity compared to you... What you're doing is nothing but walking towards your death."

"Shut up!" Levi roared as he kept unleashing flames out of his soles. "That's my brother down there! I'm not leaving him! If you can't accept that, then f*ck off and find another partner!"

Just as Ash'Kral opened his mouth, the Titan shook his head... it was like he was telling him that nothing he said was going to change Levi's mind... and he was right.

All Levi had left from his family was Arthur... his little brother. He would die gladly first if it meant getting a slight chance of saving him. Why? Because his little brother would do the same for him.

That's the kind of relationship they had... they would die for each other, no questions asked, no hesitation, no doubts.

The Larsons never forsake each other.

Ash'Kral went silent for a long second, many thoughts running through his mind... in the end, he kept his silence, leaving Levi to do as he pleased.

Even if he said anything, Levi would have ignored him as he was too focused on flying, on fighting the rubble, on refusing to give up.

Sadly, the pull just kept getting stronger until his control slipped... The world started spinning for him, his Sun Jets making it near impossible to regain his balance.

BOOOOM!

Before he could react, Levi slammed into a floating ruin... the force was so strong, he felt his guts rearranged and his brain rocked like it was smashed by a sledgehammer.

His body bounced off, blood seeping down his mouth and nose... his internal system was all f*cked up as his aetheric barrier had saved him only from turning into a meshed-up corpse.

To smash against a hard surface while going at supersonic speed... not even Levi could walk out of it with no injury.

As the Sun Jets were turned off after he lost focus, fading between consciousness and unconsciousness, Levi's limp body spiraled upward... straight toward the tear.

'N..o... Arthy... n..o...'

Even when he was disoriented and barely conscious, Levi refused to give in to the peacefulness of letting go...

His limp body kept smashing through debris after debris while going up, and yet... his spiritual vision never left the pyramid that had its ceiling torn up.

When his spiritual vision cleared for a moment, he saw something that he wished with all of his heart to be... a dream.

A celestial spiritual tree burning at the heart of the chaos... A tree of fire so intense it seemed to blur reality around it... Levi tried his best to see his brother and everyone's spiritual auras, but nothing... they all vanished with the Pharaoh.

And then everything went black... his body had crossed the spatial tear, thrown off inside the Shadow dimension, and in the direction of the Hungering Dark.

"NOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

Levi's despairing scream tore through the void as his arm was extended in the direction of the spatial tear... alas, no one was there to catch it.

Chapter 286: Kindness is Death. (Suggested Song: Descend Into The Void - Epic Music)

He fought through the pull and his shattered body, trying to ignite the jets again, trying to push back... but nothing worked.

The Hungering Dark was absolute... Every force he used was swallowed like it never existed.

Desperate, he looked around and spotted a massive meteor tumbling through the chaos... He forced himself toward it, slamming onto its surface hard enough to crack it. He coughed another mouthful of blood, but he toughed through it and summoned his staff.

He held it with his shaking hands and drove it deep into the rock... then he used his aetheric chains to bind himself and the staff tightly to the meteor.

But now... all he could do was watch helplessly as the spatial tear pulled more and more of the world into itself... rubble, cities, even the horizon.

This was a live viewership of a planet getting devoured... only a very few had lived the experience and lived to tell the tale.

But Levi didn't care about any of this... all he wanted was his brother and friends to be safe, but not even delusion was enough to make him believe...

The Titan's soft voice came through to confirm his worst fears...

"...Levi. There's no way out of a Dominion... Once it's opened, no one escapes unless the Emperor allows it or someone stronger than he brute forces it... You should either use the dimensional gate to leave this place quickly, or at least use Umbral Crown to survive the corruption."

Even Ash'Kral sighed, his voice faint. "I'm sorry."

Levi didn't answer. He couldn't. His heart felt hollow... His flames dimmed against his will and were replaced with shadowy tendrils, covering his entire form.

Arthur... Shia... Nurah... Jojo... Jasmine...

His head remained low... incapable of looking in the direction of the spatial tear any more... he knew that nothing he could do was going to save them.

The moment a Dominion was used, only another Dominion could break it apart or force an entry... not even his Divine Forms would make a difference when he couldn't summon his own Dominion.

In simpler terms... they were trapped inside until the mad Emperor was done with them. Levi knew this, too, as much as he hated to accept it.

Now...

The only thing he was left feeling was a heavy sense of guilt in his heart... heavier than the pull around him. It was slow, crushing, suffocating, leaving him breathless.

The only thoughts roaming through his mind at the moment were negative ones.

They wouldn't have touched the Sun Amulet if I were there... they knew better... They always waited for me before acting... They wouldn't risk it without me... they wouldn't...

His breathing turned ragged, each breath taken felt like a dagger stabbing his chest... both physically and metaphorically.

'So it's me... I killed them.' His grip on the staff tightened until his knuckles turned white. 'If I hadn't tried to play the hero, if I had just listened to Shia and Nurah, none of this would've happened... They'd be alive, my little brother... sob, not him too... why, just why...'

He bit his lip until blood ran down his chin, mixing in with the blood from before...

'I wanted to be kind, like how my mom raised me... I wanted to prove I wasn't a monster like them... And now... my kindness killed them.'

If he had eyes... they would be shedding tears while looking as empty as the bottom of the Hungering Dark.

Although Levi wanted to kill the Leviathan for its materials, his decision was still made with the priority of helping the other two teams... if he had simply turned a blind eye and left them to handle their own business, he wouldn't have bothered with the Leviathan and would have stuck with his team.

It was the best decision.

It was the smartest decision.

It was the rational decision.

And yet... he chose to be nice.

Then, Ash'Kral's infamous quote echoed in his mind... words he once dismissed as nothing more than cold cynicism.

"Kindness is Death."

Levi closed his trembling lips.

Now, he finally understood what that meant... experiencing it firsthand.

With each decision made... consequences always followed.

And when those decisions were made with kindness or goodwill leading the way, the consequences always seemed heavier... like the world punished those who tried to do the right thing.

Every time one tried to help, someone suffered... Every time one chose mercy, something precious was lost.

It was as if kindness itself demanded a price... a cruel balance that never failed to collect what was owed.

This was what Ash'Kral and The Titan understood over eons of experience... for kindness to work, everyone needed to be kinder to each other. But this was nothing but a bad dream.

And now, Levi had his first major experience.

"Sorry, Mom... I tried it your way," Levi whispered, his voice shaking as his world of darkness was filled with nothingness. "I tried to believe that kindness could fix things... that being good was enough to change the world. But all it ever did was break me a little more each time..."

He continued as the image of his sweet mother surfaced in his mind... She was standing in front of the window, wearing a beautiful yellow sundress. However, the sunlight blocked her face, leaving only her mesmerizing soft smile showing under the blinding light.

But... this image slowly started to get corrupted... the light was fading slowly as the darkness around Levi devoured it bit by bit.

"You told me to help people, to see the good in them... but no one ever tells you how much it costs to keep doing that. How much does it take to keep forgiving, to keep hoping. I thought if I just kept trying, if I stayed true to what you taught me, everything would make sense one day..."

His voice cracked as the darkness kept consuming the image...

"But it doesn't, Mom... it never did... Kindness doesn't fix monsters. It doesn't stop disasters. It just gets people killed... it got Arthur and my frie... sob... killed."

"Maybe I wasn't strong enough for your way... or maybe your way doesn't work in a world like this... but, I can't, Mom... I can't... I am not you."

As he let out a long exhale... Levi lifted his head at last and gazed at the distant spatial tear, but he was already too far; he could no longer see anything.

The darkness before him represented the state of his heart... shattered, silent, and cold.

The realization that he was the last of his bloodline... that his decision caused this disaster in the first place... and that he was the last survivor... was enough to murder any sense of happiness and kindness in his heart.

However, as he was wallowing in the void... his audible vision showing him nothing but darkness and silence, a sudden echo resounded in his ears.

Inkrith!!!

The instant he heard it, Levi's shattered heart started beating again as he swiftly lifted his head and started looking everywhere like a madman.

'Is that them? Are they alive?!'

Agitated beyond anyone's understanding, Levi channeled everything he had to his ears... using echolocation to its maximum range, and then he shouted at the top of his voice, the lack of oxygen leaving him coughing almost immediately.

Yet, the shout traveled as ripples everywhere, bouncing on anything they touched... this painted Levi's darkened world with gray auras of rubble and destruction.

He didn't give up and kept focusing on the fading ripples until... they painted a humanoid gray aura for a brief millisecond before everything went silent again.

However, the moment Levi and his tenants saw the humanoid phoenix-like figure, they had a mixed reaction.

Ash'Kral and The Titan were stunned, while Levi's shattered heart was bathed in nothing but unfiltered hatred... his echolocation didn't land on his brother and friends, which confirmed his worst nightmare... the mad Emperor had killed them inside the Dominion.

Unbeknownst to him, Jasmine's erasure white sphere erased his soundwaves the instant they touched it, which made it impossible for him to spot them.

The only string of hope he was still clinging to was the uttered word... Inkrith. He didn't know why the Emperor shouted it out loud, and Levi wasn't planning to stay here and think about it.

"Sorry, Mom... moving onward, there is only one way..." Levi whispered as he gave himself and body to the Void.

The moment he willed the emergence of Oblivar's Divine Skin, 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.

They weren't just sparkling softly; they moved in slow, hypnotic circles, weaving around one another, resembling the celestial rivers around him meeting in a single point... the Hungering Dark... But in his case... it was the infinity circle at the center of his chest.

With him being surrounded by the void of the Shadow dimension, Levi glanced at his hand, feeling like he was at home... he felt cold, empty, and slowly getting emotionally detached from everything like the first time he used it.

But these feelings didn't stand out anymore... they were the same feelings he was buried in just a few moments ago... The Void Form only amplified them to the point he believed they were the norm.

Before, Levi would have fought those feelings... but now? He embraced them as his own.

The moment he did, the whispers he heard for the first time were consumed by the void... by his void.

They wanted him to return the universe to its natural state of nothingness... but they didn't need to... if he was given the strength to save his friends and, most importantly, his brother... Levi realized deep down that he didn't care.

As long as his little brother was alive... he genuinely didn't care what happened to the universe or anyone living in it.

This time... his mother's voice wasn't there to set him straight.

Levi picked up his staff, which was covered in darkness, and slowly walked out of the aetheric chains like they were holding onto nothing.

In a sense... this was exactly what Levi had become.

The embodiment of Nothingness.

This meant...

As he floated within the celestial river of devoured celestial bodies, the pull affected him not at all, and even the rubble either passed through him or he passed through the largest fragments.

Levi ignored this bizarre experience and faced the direction of the mad Emperor, as he could see him getting closer and closer... both of them were pulled in a single direction, but the Emperor was accelerating it.

Then, he extended a single finger forward and intoned, continuing from before, "My way..."

When he spoke, his voice didn't sound human anymore... it echoed like it came from inside a deep cave... low, heavy, and layered with a faint cosmic ring. Like the universe itself was afraid to echo him too loudly.

As Ash'Kral and the Titan saw this, they glanced at each other with solemn looks.

'Good luck bringing him back.' The Titan sighed.

'...'

Ash'Kral remained silent, knowing that he couldn't stop Levi from abusing his Void Form... but at the same time, he knew that if he used it extensively, he might never be the same again.

'So be it... descend into the void... this might be exactly what he needs to fulfill my goal. No more foolish talks about mercy, kindness, and such fatal weaknesses. Now, he will become complete.'

In the end, his expression remained indifferent... allowing it to happen.

And so it did...

Chapter 287: The Fall.

No light reflected from him, no shadow followed... He was simply there, and not there at the same time.

Far away, Azhukar was chasing a white sphere with a look of utter zeal... like if he didn't catch it, he would do something bad to himself.

That's how badly he wanted it.

However, the moment his eyes caught the sudden appearance of Levi hovering amidst the moving rubble, he froze.

'This... am I seeing stuff?'

For a long moment, he just stared, seemingly trying to figure out if he was hallucinating or not... he tried to sense him... spiritual aura, soul signature, blood flow, heartbeats... Nothing.

It was like looking at a hole in reality... his mind told him Levi was there, but his senses said otherwise.

'No... don't tell me that's one of them...'

With those points gathered, a memory suddenly flashed in his mind, showing him people with the same kind of traits... people he hated to the bone even when he had never met them, because they were the mortal enemies of the Radians.

For him... that was enough.

'An Oblivar... shit, shit, shit... just my kind of luck.'

His expression hardened, realizing that he wasn't in the right place to fight an Oblivar... an entity on the same level as Radians that he badly wanted to be part of.

The fact he couldn't sense anything from Levi, strength-wise, made him even more cautious in how he handled this. He understood that if he were to be found to have any sort of relation to Radians, he would not leave this place in one piece.

His Ashora Bloodline was among the many that served the Radians with unwavering loyalty. That was one of the main reasons he wanted to ascend... he was an emperor to his people, yet only a follower to the Radians.

That never sat right with him in the slightest... to be a king to others, and a slave to another.

A King was supposed to be King... Period.

"I didn't mean to disturb your peace," He called out cautiously. "I'm only chasing my people... the last of my bloodline... They're trapped inside a white peculiar sphere and heading to the Hungering Dark."

Levi didn't answer... however, the moment he heard that he was chasing his people, he knew he lied.

He spread his senses through the emptiness, searching for any sign of life or sound. But he failed to capture anything with both his spiritual vision and sound.

This made him realize the white sphere wasn't just a shield; it was an Erasure Barrier... Jasmine's work.

'So, it was Jasmine who saved them from within the dominion...' Ash'Kral's pupils thinned, 'I knew it... she must be an heir of the Inkrith bloodline; it's the sole logical reason for her existence...'

Ash'Kral didn't want Levi to get together with Jasmine just because... he had a feeling that her origin was much more mysterious than she claimed... especially when he knew that Inkriths had disappeared a long time ago before even Radians, Oblivar, and other Ancient Lineages were born.

If their bloodline had disappeared before life itself, how could they keep reproducing over and over again until Jasmine was born?

As for N'ibby? Ash'Kral already had a theory about her existence... he just didn't have proof to validate it. And thus, he kept those thoughts to himself for now.

Meanwhile, knowing that he was blind to them, Levi didn't bother with searching the entire celestial river where its size looked infinite... length and width.

"Point where they went," He said, his voice devoid of emotions, "I'll bring them to you."

'Shit... if I don't tell him, I doubt he will put it to rest. But if I told him, he will realize that they have no connection to my bloodline... worse, they will rat me out if he asked them.'

The Emperor's mind was working hard to find the best way for him to get what he wanted and live to tell the tale... unfortunately, no matter which way he saw it, he couldn't have both.

'Screw this... if it's not meant to be, then it's not.'

The Emperor hesitated, then lifted a finger and pointed it behind Levi, letting him know that they had already gone past him.

Levi turned, and in the same instant, his form blurred... gone in a blink.

He had no mass under the eyes of the universe. He was nothingness given form, which meant in a void, his movement was near the speed of light!

By the time the Emperor blinked again, Levi had vanished completely...

Seeing the chance, the Emperor turned and bolted, flying toward his planet as fast as his flames could carry him.

He didn't reach the peak of his evolutionary path due to luck or talent alone... it was because of his survival instinct that kept his greed in control, and helped him choose his battles correctly.

At the moment, he knew that he stood no chance against an Oblivion in his bread and butter environment.

If he dared to fight him off in the Shadow dimension... fire and light were the favorite dishes to the corrupting atmosphere... in here, this close to the Hungering Dark, even the purest form of sun flame burned cold, which nulled a significant portion of his power... probably even reducing him to a mere Tier 6 or Tier 7 powerhouse.

Only dominions could fight that corruption, shaping the environment to the user's favor... which was the reason the dominions were a must-have ability since it could negate those disadvantages and equal the battleground between two opposite entities.

The outside environment didn't matter when they fought inside a pocket dimension with Laws favoring their powers.

But the Emperor had already spent it, and using it again now would eat away his life force as the price... he couldn't afford such a risk.

All in all, Azhukar recognized that only death awaited him if he dared antagonizing an Oblivar in this place. And so, he kept flying back towards his planet, his entire form transformed into a massive inflamed phoenix to resist the insane pull.

Now that he was fighting against it, his speed was drastically lowered, but he kept on pushing through the shadowy mud while glancing behind him once in a while with dread eating away his expression.

'He isn't coming after me... good, good.'

When he saw nothing behind him, he couldn't help but sigh in relief... he was just unsealed after eons and had no plans on dying soon.

'Damn it... I can't believe a pure blood Inkrith is still alive somehow... this is beyond a miracle, this is an impossibility in play... now, the Oblivar will have her all to himself, fck, fck... F****ck!'

The more he thought about it, the harder it got for him to just leave it alone... but he toughened through his sickening greed and kept on running away.

Meanwhile, Levi could see that Azhukar was running away, but he didn't show much of a reaction... instead, he focused on checking on his brother and friends first, and then he could deal with him.

It was like the moment he had accepted the Void, his mind was clear to think about what he wanted to do, truly wanted to do... the corruption on his persona was at bare minimum when he had already forsaken those idealistic thoughts and emotions on his own.

But this wasn't the whole story.

'How marvelous... the Void Seed isn't rejecting or making his life hell by allowing the persona corruption to run amok... it's helping him stay sane.'

The Titan murmured as he watched the Void Seed seemingly absorbing a peculiar dark twisted energy born from within Levi's soul... it was doing it voluntarily.

'There is nothing nice about this, Old Bark...' Ash'Kral knitted his brows coldly, 'The Void Seed is a twisted entity... it craves chaos and anarchy indeed, but it isn't as simple. It seems like once it noticed Levi's persona switch to its favor, it decided to embrace him instead of allowing him to descend into unchecked chaos.'

'Why is that?' The Titan frowned, 'Isn't more fitting to sow chaos everywhere, anywhere, at all times.'

'No... not to it.' Ash'Kral shook his head, 'In its own twisted mind... unchecked chaos is just noise... it needs Levi to see, to understand, to accept what he is becoming... only then, can he truly become what it wants him to be.'

'What is that?'

The Titan asked, knowing that Ash'Kral was the one who had spent countless years interacting with the Void Seed.

'Chaos is only the surface,' Ash'Kral answered. 'What it really wants... is the fall.'

'The fall?'

Ash'Kral nodded slowly... 'It doesn't crave destruction for the sake of it. The Void Seed wants to watch order turn on itself. It feeds on the collapse of meaning. The moment someone like Levi... someone who once stood for reason, hope, and balance... turns his own virtues into weapons of ruin... that's when it smiles.'

The Titan's eyes darkened, realizing that the Void Seed was more sinister than he could ever imagine... he fought against its followers, but they were nothing but a cheap copy of what it truly represented.

Pure Nothingness born after the fall.

'So it doesn't want just madness. It wants... the fall of order at its core.'

'Exactly,'

Ash'Kral nodded as he gazed at Levi, who had finally found the white sphere through using the rubble in his favor... instead of trying to 'see' the white sphere, he followed its aftermath since the erasure barrier kept piercing through the rubble nonstop, leaving circular shapes in its trail.

'As I said... Chaos is just noise... But witnessing the fall of order, either in a person, or across the universe...' Ash'Kral paused, staring at Levi, who planned to enter the white sphere with his own body, 'To the Void, that is its greatest entertainment.'

In a theatrical sense... the curtain falls after watching the greatest play ever produced.

The Titan fell silent for a long moment... then, he uttered grimly, 'Then it doesn't see Levi as an eyesore anymore, he's becoming its masterpiece.'

'Only if he remains broken... falling.'

Ash'Kral answered as he looked at Levi's current resonance with the Void Seed... the confirmation that the Titan sought after was there.

From 0%, it jumped straight to 10%... This happened without Levi resonating with it once when he was still treading on his mother's teachings!

But he knew... the moment Levi turned his back on what he was becoming, on his fall... the Void Seed was going to return all of that absorbed corruption back at him to deal with it on his own.

'How sinister... Ash'Kral... no wonder all of your partners perished... it's not just physical, it's the mental burden of three extreme embodiments, each pulling, each manipulating, each desiring to twist one's identity... but, I don't know how you are still standing, treading on this torturous path despite dozens of failures.'

The Titan sighed bitterly, knowing that whatever Levi or his past partners went through, Ash'Kral went through the same.

'Because the job is not done.' Ash'Kral replied coldly.

Chapter 288: The Larsons Never Forsake Each Other.

Meanwhile, Levi stepped through the white sphere like a ghost passing through mist... he didn't know why, but he felt that in the void, he was untouchable, unbreakable, unkillable. Not even the laws of Erasure could erase the embodiment of Nothingness.

Once Levi stepped inside, the noise of chaotic chatter shaped up his world again... It showed him Jasmine sitting in the corner on top of a piece of hardened ink while Arthur and the girls were taking care of her.

Tyrese and Evangeline were sitting in different corners with whatever was left of their teammates, seemingly mourning quietly.

Although Levi saw his brother alive and friends, he didn't seem to feel any sense of happiness or relief... it was like he was incapable of feeling such emotions while in his Void Form.

He just watched and listened to their discussion, his presence absolutely undetected in the dim lighting within the dark sphere.

"It's time to leave... we can't see what's going on outside the white sphere, and we shouldn't overstay our welcome." Tyrese suddenly said with a deep sigh, "We have lost too much... let's cut our losses short and honor Jasmine's help."

"We don't know if we are still inside the emperor's dominion or not..." Evangeline said solemnly, "We should use only one dimensional gate to test the waters."

Tyrese and Mira nodded in agreement, knowing that dimensional gates were useless inside a Dominion... so, without knowing for sure about their current situation, they couldn't just waste them.

That's one of the reasons they hadn't already used one... the other one?

"What about Levi..." Arthur uttered coldly, "If you think I am leaving him behind, then think again."

"Ponytail... I know you care about your brother and I respect it." Tyrese shook his head, "But, it's time for you to accept your reality... Levi is either dead by now or he has already used the dimensional gate to leave the site. In either case, you can't find out the truth unless you leave."

Arthur went silent... he knew that his brother would never leave the site unless he checked on them first, regardless of what it took. So, he felt like he was still around even when he knew that it was simply impossible, considering that the planet was getting devoured as they spoke.

But, Levi wasn't any ordinary Daywalker, and he understood this... so, what seemed impossible to others, Levi could do it... he just knew it.

However, when he looked at Jasmine's current state, he couldn't help but grit his teeth... Jasmine's entire appearance became an anomaly they had no explanation for, just like what she did inside the Dominion.

Her body pure white... hair, skin, and even her clothes drained of color. Once in a while, she convulsed like she was having a seizure while her skin, clothes, and hair started displaying colors: red, yellow, green, blue... no color left untouched.

She wasn't unconscious... her eyes were wide open, matching each color with a certain emotion shown in them. When they tried to talk to her through signs, she remained silent.

They didn't know what was going on with her, but everyone could tell... she broke apart.

"Jojo, Nurah, Shia... please take Jasmine and leave with them." Arthur suddenly uttered, "I will stay behind and wait for Levi."

"Are you dumb?" Nurah narrowed her eyes coldly, "Arthur... whether Levi is dead or alive, staying here is going to achieve nothing but make matters worse."

"She is right... if Levi used the dimensional gate, and you stayed here, you will be doing nothing but getting yourself killed and breaking his heart." Jojo backed her up, "We are just as worried about Levi as you, but get a grip... you are a Daywalker, act like it."

"I know... I know it's stupid, I know it's wrong, believe me... I know." Arthur smiled bitterly, his eyes reddening a little, "But, I can't... I just can't... I can't leave him behind... he is all I have left."

His voice shook at the last word, leaving everyone silenced at the heaviness behind it... He clenched his fists, trying to stop them from shaking.

"You don't understand," he whispered, his throat drying up. "He's the one who kept me going when everything else fell apart. When our parents died... when I thought our lives were over... it was Levi who dragged me back every single time even when he was dealing with his own demons... Everyone thinks that I was his rock when he was being tormented by the nightcrawlers in our childhood, but that's false... he was my rock when our lives fell apart, and I was burdened with the guilt of not being there for either of them."

Arthur took a shaky breath, his chest heaving as if holding the tears back was harder than breathing itself.

"If I leave him now... what kind of brother would that make me?"

The silence deepened, his words left everyone's heart heavy... and yet, it wasn't even close to what Arthur was feeling at the moment.

They could use all the excuses and conviction methods in their disposal to make Arthur understand that leaving was the right call... but, it really wasn't as easy as it seemed to Arthur.

They could tell that Arthur was struggling immensely with the decision to just run away without knowing what happened to Levi.

"He's always been the one to protect me," Arthur said softly, almost to himself now. "This time... it's supposed to be my turn."

"Arthur... I am your big brother, it's always my turn to protect you..."

Suddenly, everyone's instincts tingled in fear after hearing a cosmic detached voice resound in their ears... some of them stood up and others summoned their weapons, their expressions hardened.

That's when Levi stepped into the light... his void form tried to devour the dim light, but Levi stopped it with his will, making the light bend around him akin to a humanoid black hole.

The moment they saw him... everyone froze, their faces gone pale with fear. Levi didn't blame them... to see an entity clouded in darkness head to toe inside such a tight space would scare anyone straight.

Thus, he decided to put their minds at ease by pulling the dark void away from his face, and revealed himself.

"Huh?"

"Levi?"

"It can't be..."

The moment they saw his detached expression... their eyes thinned in disbelief, incapable of believing what their eyes were feeding them.

They could see that it was Levi, but they refused to believe it... his detached expression and current form made it simply impossible.

But, the same wasn't for Arthur... the instant he saw his brother's visage, he covered his face with his hands and started laughing and at the same time weeping.

"I knew you wouldn't leave... I knew it..."

He didn't care about Levi's current form or his appearance... he didn't even ask questions about what happened to him. Just the sight of his brother alive and here was enough for him.

"Leave? The Larsons don't forsake each other." Levi replied, his mouth seemed to desire to smile, but it simply couldn't.

Noticing this, Levi didn't force it anymore... before anyone could rain down on him with questions, Levi looked at them and then said quietly, "Use the dimensional gate... leave. I will catch up to you soon after I deal with the Pharaoh."

Arthur was the first to nod his head in understanding... he wiped his tears and extended a fist in Levi's direction, "Give him hell... for us, for the fallen, for Jasmine."

"And hell he shall receive..." Levi extended his darkened fist, but he didn't tap it with his brother's... just the gesture was enough for them.

No hesitation or care about the others' still stunned expressions, Arthur walked to Tyrese and smacked him lightly on the cheek, waking him from his daze.

"Let's go." He said solemnly.

"Y.. Yes."

Tyrese was still utterly confused and a bit fearful of Levi... so, he was just looking for an excuse to dip. The others shared the same sentiment, but the girls.

They were also somewhat scared of Levi's current appearance, but they could tell... he meant them no harm, and for now... it was enough.

The moment Tyrese manifested the nocturnal contract, he willed for the dimensional gate to appear and so it did. It manifested on the inked spherical wall as an unstable spiral.

"Let's go quickly before it collapses... the spatial disturbances are too heavy on it." Evangeline intoned sternly.

However, before anyone could move, they found themselves frozen in place... everyone immediately gazed in Levi's direction in dread, knowing that it must be him.

And they were right.

"My apologies... but what happened in this ancient site, must stay here, for everyone's sake."

Chapter 289: Cheap Copy.

Before anyone could react, tendrils of darkness shot out from Levi's fingers, touching each of their foreheads and even their summoned weapons... Their eyes went blank for a split second, and then all the memories since the moment they entered the pyramid were erased until this very moment.

In his Void Form... Levi couldn't create abilities or techniques unless he had the necessary resonance... However, his owned abilities based off the Void seed were all amplified to match his current power.

This allowed him to use Veil of the Forgotten ability to erase not just memories of his existence, but also what happened in the Dominion to protect Jasmine's secrets. This was the least he could do for her after she saved his little brother.

The moment the Daywalkers and their contracted nightcrawlers had their memories erased against their will, they remained standing with a blank look on their faces.

Levi then used his aetheric grasp to destroy their NeuraLens to avoid the stored data landing in everyone's hands... Next, he picked them up together and pushed them inside the portal one by one until only Jasmine remained behind.

She was the only one he hadn't erased her memories, and it was for a reason... Levi had no plans to send her with them in her current peculiar state.

The moment the portal closed, Levi walked up to Jasmine who was curled up in the corner... her unblinking eyes were affixed on him, but he could tell... she wasn't looking at him at all, but something else.

"N'ibby... is it safe if I left her alone for a moment?" Levi asked calmly, his vision switching to N'ibby in the spiritual bridge of darkness.

Only when he willed it did he show up in the bridge... in his current form, no one could see him in the spiritual bridge since his own spiritual aura was erased completely.

"Yes, but don't take too long... she is experiencing a Reality Limbo and needs an immense amount of life force to pay the price for abusing her laws without having the strength or authority to back it up." N'ibby said indifferently, seemingly unsurprised by Levi's current form.

Levi also didn't care about her tame reaction... by now, it was clear that both sides knew that something was off about each other, and they just went along with it.

"What will happen if she doesn't get the necessary life force?" Levi asked.

Levi wasn't surprised with life force being the ultimate price for whatever Jasmine did in the Dominion to save them... he knew that life force was considered one of the highest forms of energy, going beyond even solar energy in potency.

Since everyone alive had a life force within them, and it was accepted by all seeds alike, it was considered as an emergency tank by many, using it only when the situation truly called for it.

"She will remain stuck in Reality Limbo until the price is paid or... her reality will shatter forever, leaving her trapped there for eternity."

Hearing this, Levi could tell that Jasmine's situation wasn't the same as the rest... instead of paying with her own life force, she was given the option to use now, pay later. Though, she would be stuck in a Reality Limbo until the price was paid.

Although Levi had no idea what a Reality Limbo was, he wasn't in the mood to ask... seeing Jasmine, pale as a blank page and trembling with a petrified stare, was enough for him to understand that whatever she was going through was pure hell.

He didn't know if she did it to save herself or the others... and to be honest, he didn't care about her true motives... saving his brother was all he cared about.

Levi crouched in front of Jasmine... his shadowed, voidlike form stood in complete contrast to her pale, almost ethereal whiteness. From a distance, they looked like two opposing forces, meeting in a moment of fragility.

Levi didn't know if she could see him or not, but he slowly lifted his hands.

He signed to Jasmine: -I'll be back.-

Then Levi turned and vanished.

Jasmine remained in her corner, watching the last trace of him disappear... but her eyes reflected different scenes in the background, not the black inked sphere.

Flashes of colors, small bits of matter, whole worlds and stars passing by like memories... It was as if she could see and hear everything from the tiniest speck to the biggest star in the universe in changing colors that the mind couldn't even perceive.

This was the only time she seemed to be able to hear... and yet, she wished to god she was deaf in it too as this kind of noise and vision was simply too much to handle and could easily fry anyone's brain off... but Jasmine had already experienced it once and knew what she needed to do to offset the agony, if not by a little.

Focus on a single thought, scene, or a person... and that's what she did, envisioning Levi alone until the scene that showed before her was of him blinking across the celestial river in the direction of the spatial tear... or more precisely, the Mad Emperor.

It was like she had her senses connected to the entire universe all at once... but once she focused on Levi alone, the rest of the noise and seizures lessened for a bit.

This allowed her to lift her hands with great difficulty and sign... smiling softly.

-I know.-

Meanwhile, as the Emperor was flying away, evading the obstacles in his path, getting closer and closer to the spatial tear, his instincts suddenly flared up.

Azhukar frowned, his senses darting everywhere but finding nothing... however, the instant he passed next to a massive yellow building slab, Levi suddenly appeared next to him without warning.

Shit!

Azhukar almost jumped out of his skin at the sight of Levi raising his hand like a gun, his shadowy fingers aiming at the Emperor's temple a mere couple of meters away.

The moment he made the trigger pull gesture, a small dot of darkness shot out in Azhukar's direction.

The Emperor twisted away at the last instant... The black marble shot past him and struck a ruined building behind.

The building didn't explode... It suddenly folded on itself and dragged two kilometers of rubble inwardly into a single dot, vacuuming the entire area in an instant. The void closed a second later... leaving a gigantic empty zone where the rubble once stood.

The Emperor's breath caught in his throat for a moment, realizing that the attack could erase matter in a millisecond.

However, he soon frowned, 'If he wanted me dead, why hasn't he used his spiritual pressure or dominion? Is he playing with me?'

The Emperor stepped back, his sole eye narrowing in Levi's direction, sensing that something was off about him... and thus, he wanted to test him out.

The moment Levi blinked next to him, planning to use Singularity Break point-blank, Azhukar's body ignited instantly.

Ka-boooooom!!

A mini white Nova exploded out of him, expanding fast enough to erase everything nearby... Levi swiftly gave up on his assault and turned his form intangible again, allowing him to blink away.

Before the light could get pulled into the Hungering Dark, Levi summoned his Starpiercer and hid tens of kilometers away from the Emperor. He lay on the roof of a building that was split in half. Then, he pointed his pitch-black shadowy sniper rifle at the Emperor, who was looking all over for him, but to no avail.

Levi's Void Form allowed him to switch between tangible and intangible... when he turned himself into the embodiment of nothingness, he couldn't be sensed, touched, or destroyed, while his speed matched the speed of light due to having no mass. However, at the same time, he couldn't do any harm to others in this state.

Only when he turned into tangible state was he capable of channeling the void, darkness, and such powers to harm others. But this meant he would forsake the invisibility, speed enhancement, and invincibility.

It made sense... nothingness couldn't be touched, but at the same time, the laws applied to it.

Thus, the moment Levi got Azhukar in his sniper's crosshair... he swiftly became tangible and fired another Singularity Break.

'There you are.'

Too bad, when he made his presence public again, the Emperor spotted him instantly and his honed experienced instincts alarmed him.

Azhukar moved slightly to the side and watched as a speeding black marble landed on a meteor a hundred meters away from him.

Knowing about its second destruction, Azhukar didn't remain in his position for long... he set his body in concentrated flames and swiftly got away from the danger zone.

However, when he focused on Levi's location, he found that he was already gone, changing his location to another a couple of kilometers away.

Then, another void-like bullet arrived... and another, and another. Levi kept firing only once before changing his location to another, making it near impossible for the Emperor to be proactive.

However, at the same time... Levi's attacks weren't posing much of a threat to Azhukar.

This left him confused, feeling like he was fighting an amateur with a mere couple of tricks up his sleeve... he had seen how true Oblivars fought in the void.

They were so dreadful, so powerful, they would drive their enemies insane just for the fun of it. That's the only reason he ran away, scared of sharing the same fate as them.

But now? He felt like he was fighting a mortal with the appearance of an Oblivar with limited powers.

"Who are you?"

Azhukar asked out loud with a deep frown... He received no response, and he expected as much... But this was all the confirmation he needed that he wasn't in the presence of a real Oblivar.

His expression turned cold as he uttered while moving his head slightly to the side, evading another void bullet, "I may not defeat an Oblivar in the void, but clearly... you are a cheap knock off... tell me, you are a Half-Oblivar aren't you?"

Chapter 290: The Helio Fusion Cannon.

Now that Azhukar's confidence was restored, he was no longer focused on escaping... He lifted his right hand, and a golden weapon materialized beside him in the shape of a breathtaking Cannon.

Its surface was covered in carvings showing his battles, his empire, and the worship of his people... it was at least two meters in length and had three handles. One on top and the other two to the sides. It looked glorious and deadly at the same time.

The moment Ash'Kral saw the Cannon, he raised his brows in surprise, 'The Helio Fusion Cannon... it still exists?!'

'Is it some sort of powerful Artifact?' Levi asked emotionlessly, keeping his form intangible.

'It's an S+ artifact attuned to Star-based powers... fire, plasma, radiation, sunflames, and such aspects can all be amplified to an insane degree... It's believed to have within it an active, minimized star core in

a pocket dimension.' Ash'Kral shared sternly, 'It's so good, even Radians would fight for it... No wonder the Radian wanted the Sun Amulet; he was after this artifact all along.'

Hearing this, Levi remained silent... he also realized that the supervising Radian never wanted the Sun Amulet itself.

He must have known about the true history of what happened to the Ashora Empire and that Azhukar was sealed inside the Sun Amulet, which owned such a powerful artifact.

'Why didn't he take it from him when he was alive?' Levi questioned, believing that Radians shouldn't have an issue claiming such treasure from Azhukar.

'There is only one explanation...' Ash'Kral replied, 'The artifact was gifted by a higher-ranked Radian to Azhukar... why, I don't know. But, the rest of Radians would never dare steal or force Azhukar to hand over a gift from someone above them in hierarchy.'

'I see...'

Levi frowned behind the void as a shocking theory started forming in his mind about the true cause of the Ashora's collapse... But, instead of wasting his time on speculation, he started thinking of ways to defeat Azhukar.

He knew that the more time he spent in the Void Form, the worse it was going to get for him later on... corruption-wise.

Even when Ash'Kral already told him about the Void Seed's assistance, Levi understood that it was going to be holding onto the corruption akin to a gun right next to his temple. The moment he disappointed it, she would fire it back all at once inside his soul... he didn't want to give it more ammo.

But, knowing that he was strapped for time was one thing, and actually coming up with a plan was another.

Levi didn't have many offensive void-based abilities... In fact, if he hadn't unlocked Singularity Break after reaching the first stage of his Void Seed's junior rank, he would find himself strapped for abilities.

'I have to make the void eat him.'

In the end, Levi realized that even Singularity Break had become useless when used too often against beings like Azhukar.

Levi switched to a solid form while pointing his Starpiercer at Azhukar... however, this time, he didn't fire and disappear again.

He watched as Azhukar swiftly turned in his direction with his cannon raised higher... A split second later, the cannon was engulfed in red light as a single shot of concentrated bright red plasma beam burst in Levi's direction!

Its speed was slower than light, but still... it looked like it had arrived at Levi's location instantly!

However, Levi was awaiting this shot... the moment Azhukar fired his weapon, Levi blinked and appeared behind him while swinging a punch with a Singularity Break forming between his fingers!

Alas... he wasn't fighting an average Joe.

"So predictable..."

The Emperor muttered, expecting Levi's counterattack, using the beam shot as nothing but bait.

Before Levi could react, the cannon opened side vents, and then beams of red plasma exploded outward in every direction, surrounding them both!

They pierced through the rubble and through the void itself, slicing through Levi's form as he swiftly tried to shift back to his ghostly form.

Unfortunately, his thought process wasn't faster than a beam at such a close range.

Szzlzlz!!

One thin beam struck him mid-phase and tore through his right shoulder... the void tried to devour it, but it was too concentrated and intense. It got weakened, but it still reached Levi's flesh underneath the layer of void.

Yet, Levi didn't show any sort of pained grimace... he gave up on his attack and blinked away, his hand touching the exposed hole.

Azhukar turned slowly, his sinister grin stretching wider. "I smell flesh... I knew it."

Levi glanced at his shoulder... the wound had already frozen over. In the void, the chill could freeze his wounds and injuries in an instant... Although it wasn't as good as the Sun Form that could heal his wounds to perfection, each form had its own strengths and limitations.

The Emperor suddenly laughed, the voice echoing through the space.

"So that's it... a half-blood mortal... You must have come with these rats who freed me." His tone switched to a cold one, "I don't know how you got your hands on an Oblivar bloodline, but you should have let me walk away, kid."

The moment he obtained the confirmation he wanted, Azhukar's body began to change... his skin and feathers turned red and started emitting heated smoke. This kept going for a second or two until his entire body caught on fire! It was emitting from his eyes and beak; so intense, so concentrated, Levi could see with his harmonic spine how the superheated plasma was running wild within Azhukar's body.

Even the potent corruption around him seemed to get burnt off, incapable of piercing his new form... This made him understand that not even his void-based abilities could break through his flesh anymore.

After all, he only had an Oblivar Skin... a single organ of an entire being... it might be a Divine Grade, but in no way or form was it enough to give him the strength necessary to actually kill an entity that had achieved the final Growth Stage.

Levi seemed to realize it slowly as well... theory was one thing, and practice was another.

"I might not be as fast as you," Azhukar said, exhaling a long stream of red concentrated flames, "But I don't need to be."

Azhukar threw the cannon above his head and swiftly charged in Levi's direction with long twin plasma swords forming in his hands!

He resembled a burning meteor as he pierced through the rubble in a straight line, leaving molten holes in his trail, nothing capable of stopping his charge!

Even his speed seemed to have exploded, taking him less than a split second to arrive next to Levi.

Levi switched back to his chained staff and covered it in the void, making it a part of him... unlike artifact-based weapons, signature weapons were based on nightcrawlers, which were transformed under the authority of the seeds... This meant they could enjoy the same benefits of any sort of powers.

Slice! Slice!

As Azhukar swung the twin plasma swords at Levi, he swiftly switched to his ghostly form, causing the plasma blades to pass through him and leave deep molten scars on the rubble behind them.

The moment Levi blinked tens of meters away, he found himself under fire from the cannon! It was sending huge blasts of plasma in his direction, making him incapable of switching back to solid form.

He blinked between the shots, dodging each beam before it hit... But every time he appeared, the Emperor was already there waiting, his blades swinging with murderous intent. It was like Azhukar was reading exactly Levi's movement and predicting where he would show next.

Slice! Slice!...

As Levi kept phasing between forms... solid, void, solid... trying to strike back, he found himself literally incapable of pulling off a single decent attack.

Azhukar was simply too oppressive and possessed immense battle experience that was leagues above his own... anything that Levi thought of and considered a viable option, Azhukar had already seen through it and planned five steps to negate it and counterattack properly.

If it wasn't for Levi's ghostly form making him untargetable, he would have been dead in their first confrontation!

As this dance kept on going between them, Levi had a single thought roaming through his mind... how can he touch him without the risk of getting his head sliced up or his body shot by the cannon.

'If he doesn't show an opening, I have to create it...' Levi thought emotionlessly as he watched the Emperor send two burning red arcs in his direction.

He blinked away and started scanning the area for anything that he could use to his advantage... that's where he spotted the cannon left all by itself.

'So far... he kept predicting all of my movements and actions, like he is always a step ahead of me.' Levi murmured inwardly while allowing the cannon shots to pierce through his ghostly form. 'I have to think ahead too... further steps ahead, only then will I have a chance.'

The lack of emotions came in handy as it left Levi's brain to work in peace... no noise, no interruptions. Just pure intellectual brainstorming for a way in, for a way to touch him while surviving to tell the tale.

But after a thorough analysis, Levi reached a single conclusion.

'He is the only one capable of killing himself...'

'Ash'Kral... does someone like Azhukar possess the infamous Nirvana Rebirth of Phoenixes?'

'Considering his level, he should have obtained one as an ultimate from his seed or created one on his own.' Ash'Kral replied.

Hearing this, Levi nodded in understanding... he figured out what needed to be done to win this.

"What? Give up already?"

Azhukar scoffed as he kept hunting down Levi, but none of his attacks worked since he stopped turning to his solid form... As much as Azhukar was confident in defeating Levi due to the massive difference in battle experience between them and his method to overwhelm the void's devouring abilities, there wasn't much he could do to him if he decided to remain as a ghost.

But he knew the universe was a fair place that respected balance above all else.

"How long can you keep this up, boy?" Azhukar sneered. "I know Half-Bloods lack the proper means to resist persona corruption when they abuse Laws that were never truly theirs to begin with."

"Oblivars, Radians, Chronosians... Such Ancient Bloodlines are reserved only for the pure blood. Otherwise, insanity is the outcome for any wannabe daring to use their laws." Azhukar pointed at Levi with his plasma blade and added coldly, "And you are playing with fire by maintaining this form for this long."