

Evolution 311

Chapter 311: The Supervising Radian.

Dominic took a deep breath and stepped inside the mirror with a professional, stern expression.

The instant his face emerged on the other side, he couldn't help but close his eyes tightly, feeling like they were being blinded point-blank with the strongest flashlight in the universe.

He couldn't see anything but pure whiteness. Dominic knew the moment he opened his eyes, he would lose his sight... But this wasn't his first time being here.

He switched to his spiritual vision, and that's when he saw the same dreadful scene of when he was first chosen to supervise the SAS Headquarters.

Dominic dropped to one knee on a small triangle-like white marbled platform hovering in the Boundless Expanse's colorful void.

His instincts screamed for him to look up, but his body refused... even his spiritual eyes burned as if the brilliance itself were carving through his lids and soul.

His reaction was understandable...

High above, hovering in the multicolored sky, the Radian appeared like a living sun no larger than a man, yet its presence illuminated the entire void around them.

If one possessed powerful spiritual vision and was able to focus, really focus... only then would they be able to spot a humanoid figure with four arms and a massive sun symbol on his chest.

Nothing else... the golden light was simply too potent.

"Keeper of the Light..." Dominic bowed his head even lower, his voice barely a whisper beneath the divinity before him. "Your radiance... burns brighter than stars... as always, it's an honor to be in your presence."

Only when the Radian felt his sincere reverence did he lessen his blinding light... though Dominic was still incapable of opening his eyes. How could he? Staring at the sun directly was merciful to his eyes than this.

"Human... have you brought what was ordered?"

The Radian asked... his voice holy and authoritative, echoing across the void like nothing dared to stop before it.

"Yes... But, some complications have arisen, and the Sun Amulet broke."

Dominic presented the broken Sun Amulet with both hands into the sky like a worshiper giving an offering.

In an instant, the Sun Amulet disappeared from his hands, leaving behind a scalding red mark. Yet, Dominic didn't wince or complain... He closed his hands and kept them low.

After a moment or less, the Radian's voice resounded again.

"Speak."

Dominic went on and narrated everything that Levi told him to the letter... in the end, he added that the explorers had signed a standard contract that forbade them from lying. He summoned all the signed, shadowy contracts as proof.

The Radian went silent for a few moments... he didn't share his thoughts about the matter or lash out. Once he saw the signed contracts and the terms, Dominic's story was validated by 99%... However, the Radian did ask about the last 1%.

"Azhukar has been announced dead... his registered name has been erased." He asked, "Mind explaining this?"

"... I can't." Dominic was startled for a moment about the news and then spoke honestly, "Everything I have shared is the truth... the last thing our explorers saw was a flaming phoenix heading towards the Primordial Tree of Death's root. What happens on the other side, our Daywalkers are too weak to explore... we were lucky just to have them return and bring this broken Sun Amulet."

The Radian crossed two arms behind his back... this was the sole reaction shown. His thoughts were utterly unreadable.

In the end, he said, "I can see you're telling the truth... and Nocturn's contracts aren't to be questioned. Since you have fulfilled your end of the bargain, you shall receive one small favor... Make it count."

Dominic's mood elevated instantly... he could tell that if he were to bring the completed Sun Amulet, he would have been bestowed with a full favor. But since it was broken, the Radian settled with a small one. Yet, Dominic wasn't complaining... the fact they had gotten anything from this was a win.

"Keeper of the Light... my sole wish is to move up my home planet in the list... we need help, and we need it badly."

Dominic didn't hesitate to kowtow before the Radian as he made his request, his tone filled with nothing but hope... Hope that the Radian before him could save his planet.

Dominic didn't care about his integrity or pride when it came to such matters... all he dreamed of since he was a child was to save Earth. He worked so hard to reach this place, to earn this opportunity, all for his home planet.

He knew that he could have asked anything... even for evolutionary formulas or materials to help him reach Radian rank. But, he didn't... he understood that the strength of one Daywalker would never be enough.

Hearing his request, the Radian waved his hand gently and then... a massive spiritual list manifested before Dominic.

It was set in golden flames, and yet... the details were as clear as daylight.

//Dimensional Sector Planetary Supervision Index... Radian Oversight Records:

1- Soltheris: Life force Potential: 9.8 ... Major Holy Regions: 29 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 0%

2- V'Lathor: Life force Potential: 9.7 ... Major Holy Regions: 27 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 0.0001%

3- Eshvarra: Life force Potential: 9.4 ... Major Holy Regions: 19 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 0.003%

345- Theros: Life force Potential: 8.5 ... Major Holy Regions: 12 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 5%

789- Ulvion: Life force Potential: 7.4 ... Major Holy Regions: 6 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 12%

1340- Phorix: Life force Potential: 5.3 ... Major Holy Regions: 3 ... Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 45%

2399- Terra (Earth): Life force Potential: 4.0 ... Major Holy Regions: 0 ... Minor Holy Regions: 942.
Chances of Wide-Scale Corruption: 100%.

"As you can see... your little planet is already doomed. It's no longer a matter of if, but of when." The Radian said emotionlessly, "Moving it up the list won't change anything with such a low Life force Potential... it means I will have to remove crucial resources on planets with higher potential to sustain yours, which might lead to corruption getting to them... That, I can not do."

"It can't be..."

Dominic felt his heart shatter into pieces. To be standing before the sole entity capable of saving their planet and hearing this response was soul-crushing.

To claim their planet as doomed was the last thing he expected to hear from the mouth of Radian... one of the strongest races in the universe.

It was a Death Sentence.

"Still... I can move your planet a bit higher on the list... You won't be getting the Savors' mobilization, but your minor Holy Regions will have an increased range of their Holy Pillars... All of them will be blessed with a 20% increase."

"We will be honored to receive your blessings." Dominic bowed his head again in appreciation, accepting the offer in a heartbeat.

He understood that Radians weren't to be negotiated with... not when they were bestowing a favor. Sure, he wanted more... but beggars can't be choosers.

In this scenario, their planet was worse than a beggar... it was ranked so low, he spent a minute searching for its name.

How could a Radian shower it with attention when he had two thousand planets higher than it in Life Force Potential?

Since the Radians' job was to keep the Primordial Tree of Death from growing stronger, it was only natural that they focus their resources on richer planets.

In their case... they should feel blessed that they bothered to bless them with a thousand minor Holy Regions... whether the Savors did their jobs or not, it didn't matter to the Radian.

That's because Savors didn't have just one territory to protect, but multiple ones from different planets.

While they were in name protecting their 'holy regions', in truth, they were nothing more than crystallized seed farms.

Simple as that.

After Dominic was dismissed, the Radian was left tapping one finger on his elbow... deep in thought as he gazed at the dimensional ripping mirror, leading to Earth.

But soon, he shook his head.

No one knew what went through his mind, but it was clear that 1% of doubt was eating away at his mind.

Azhukar's sudden death was left without an answer, and he didn't like it... considering that what he wanted inside his wallet was also gone.

But, at the same time... he didn't consider for a second that Warden Daywalkers could kill him and then lie about it while they had signed the contract. He saw humans as ants... and ants could never kill someone so close to divinity.

'This must be the doing of an Oblivar... must be.'

In the end, he disintegrated into particles... no one knew if he still planned on continuing with the investigations or not.

Chapter 312: Azhukar's Collection.

Meanwhile, in Nocturn's Heart City Main Hub...

After the hangout concluded with his friends, Levi didn't return to his apartment. He flew a great distance and then teleported to his studio in the Boundless Expanse. Only when he was under Nocturn's safety did he dare check his dimensional wallets.

He knew that too much heat was on them at the moment due to how things ended in the ancient site... although he had no clue if the Supervising Radian had his eyes on him, he preferred being cautious.

"At the moment, I can't sell the Leviathan Phoenix's materials or Azhukar's artifacts... not even to the Black Slime Syndicate," Levi murmured as he strolled inside Azhukar's dimensional wallet through his consciousness.

"Indeed, it's better to hold on to them for a few months or more." The Titan nodded in approval, "It's a known fact that once a planet gets devoured by the Primordial Tree of Death, many Scavengers pick up on the dimensional disturbances through devices or artifacts... they camp the spatial tear to collect anything of value through the rubble."

"But... it was different for the Ashori Planet." Levi held his chin in confusion, "I thought that the Tree of Death's root connects to the celestial rivers of rubble at the far ends, not so close to the Hungering Dark... Won't the Radian find out?"

"There are always exceptions." Ash'Kral replied, "You should feel glad that this happened... although Scavengers aren't usually situated so close to the Hungering Dark, Oblivars are known to use the Hungering Dark as a gateway between the lower realms and the Shadow dimension... so, the Radian will assume that Azhukar must have been killed by an Oblivar. It's the sole logical conclusion. Radians follow Order and rational thinking to the letter."

"That works for me, I guess." Levi sighed in relief, "Still... It's best to hold on to them for now."

Levi left the artifact storage alone for now, not wanting to be tempted to sell them... he had seen the kind of artifacts stored inside, and the least expensive was C Grade.

Although a C Grade was considered low, one shouldn't forget that artifacts were just like natural dimensional treasures... Grade mattered in terms of artifacts or treasures with a common Aspect... The rarer the Aspect, the harsher the conditions for its grade to be rated high.

There was even an artifact graded as a mere C on the glass display, but its details left him speechless.

It was an assassination artifact with a red ribbon appearance... however, the instant it was tightened around someone's limb, neck, or such, it got severed and teleported to another dimension. This meant the artifact might be graded low, but it still possessed spatial powers.

After reading the details of most artifacts, Levi realized why Azhukar didn't bother using any of them against him... his intangible Void Form negated 99% of the artifacts' effects. How could he use them on an entity that became the embodiment of nothingness?

After taking a short stroll, Levi arrived at the storage for Rare Collectables.

This was the first time he entered it. Once he was inside, Levi was slightly stunned to find hundreds of grandiose display stations situated a couple of meters away from each other. Each display platform lifted a transparent glass container.

What surprised Levi was the sight of hundreds of mysterious and peculiar feathers being held by two wooden handles.

Some cases held bright blue feathers from birds long gone, others had dark ones that gleamed like glass, and a few were almost see-through, looking like they could disappear at any instant.

"...was Azhukar an avid feather collector? Was this his hobby?" Levi muttered with a dazed tone.

Levi thought that he was going to find a treasure trove filled with various rare collectables, but instead... the theme was unified to bird feathers.

Beside every case was a small plaque showing where the feather came from, what kind of bird it belonged to, how it was found, how rare he graded it, and even a written poem for each feather signed by Azhukar himself.

"This is something else." The Titan commented, "Most of those feathers might have no other value than their 'rarity', but I can see a few that are considered high-grade natural treasures."

Levi nodded in agreement, going through the details of some feathers as he strolled inside the storage.

He might not have expected this, but he wasn't complaining... he could tell that such a collection was priceless for the right kind of buyers. Its worth might be in the tens of millions of credits if someone truly appreciated its value.

Levi knew that certain entities in the universe had reached a high level of boredom due to their immortality; one of the few things that brought them some joy was owning such a priceless collection. Azhukar collecting rare feathers was the proof.

As Levi got deeper into the storage, he began to find some unique feathers... well, each feather in the collection was unique, as there was no repetition, but the last ones on display were so bizarre, he couldn't even imagine the birds' species.

"What the hell is this thing..."

Levi commented as he leaned closer to a glass container holding a small feather that was changing colors over and over again. Each time a color was picked, its entire appearance and aura changed to match it.

If it was red, the feather's appearance became wild and fierce... if it was blue, it turned limp and watery like it was made out of liquid... When the hue shifted to green, thin veins spread through the feather like plant roots, and it gave off the faint smell of wet leaves and fresh air.

The list goes on.

Not waiting for an answer, Levi read the details written next to it.

"Percepia Chroma Bird... it is a unique, mysterious bird that lives in the Realm of Perceptions. It isn't born like normal creatures; it appears when the realm's balance is disturbed by strong emotions, then vanishes once peace returns, leaving behind a single feather to validate its existence in reality, and not dreams." Levi raised an eyebrow in surprise, "The Realm of Perceptions is truly a mysterious place to have a creature born out of emotions and die off them."

"It's expected... the Realm of Perception is believed to be a unified dream landscape that feeds off the dreams and emotions of all living forms in the universe... most of its inhabitants are born out of people's strong dreams and emotions, their entire existence relies on them, while they had no clue they even existed in the first place." Ash'Kral nodded, "This bird is quite rare because it's one of the few creatures capable of leaving a tangible feather in reality... If Dream Catchers were to find out you have it, they will die of envy or rob you clean."

"How magical..." Levi showed a faint smile, appreciating its one-of-a-kind beauty.

As much as he hated Azhukar for what he did to his brother and friends, he had to admit that this collection was absolutely amazing... The written poem made the experience even better.

Born from thought, it flies alone, Its colors change with hearts unknown. When peace returns, it fades from sight. A feather left, still holding light...

It was short, and yet it spoke volumes about the bird's entire lifespan.

"Unfortunately, you should also hold off on selling this collection or some of its items." The Titan reminded, "Azhukar might be collecting them for the love of the game, but his ego wouldn't allow him to keep it hidden."

"True."

Levi nodded in agreement and left the storage to go check the Experimental Lab... to be honest, he had yet to decide whether he wanted to sell the collection or not.

The amount of effort, resources, and time spent on it was simply too much to just put a price tag on it. Levi knew that if he was going to sell it, he was going to sell everything to keep the collection's value on the high end... Once he made up his mind, he didn't want to regret it.

But for now, he went to check on the lab.

After pushing the door open, he was greeted with a clean, well-spaced lab... the air smelled of herbs, metal, and something faintly sweet. The room was dim, lit by warm orange crystal lamps. Though it didn't have any machines that he was familiar with.

There were three tables situated in a triangle formation... they were carrying vials, alchemy-based glassware, and open books filled with ancient Ilthorien, left wide open. The unused glass tubes, flasks, and other pieces of equipment were placed on shelves resting on the walls.

A circular rocky platform was situated in the center of the triangle formation... it resembled a summoning altar with its peculiar and mesmerizing Ilthorien inscriptions on it.

A bronze cauldron, sealed shut, was on top of it, still looking clean and pristine, like it wasn't left here to rot with the rest of the items for eons.

"A decent Alchemy Lab... Azhukar must have been a private Alchemist who researched his own evolutionary path to succeed in the Glorious Evolution." Ash'Kral praised with a head nod.

"I can tell..."

Levi agreed, flipping some pages of the open books... although the language was ancient Ilthorien, Levi still had no clue what the hell he was reading.

Nothing made sense... it was like a literature student reading an advanced math problem. His Brain wasn't braining.

Levi scratched his head in confusion as he asked, "Ash'Kral... you understand any of this? I know you're an Array Grandmaster, but what about alchemy? Are you just as good?"

"What do you think?" Ash'Kral smirked faintly, not bothering to hide his prideful smugness.

"Good, teach me."

"..."

Chapter 313: The Third Death Game.

"We have a lab now, books, and resources." Levi's smile widened. "I know that Evolutionists are limited by their machinery... but not the magician Alchemists. They can concoct potions so potent they are banned across the universe... this is the path forward for me if I want to reach the later growth stages."

"You're right... But still, not now," Ash'Kral replied. "The Evolutionist path is still great under Solarbound Rank. No need to waste your time on a whole new field of study that is just as complex as array craft."

"I know, but I want to start early." Levi shook his head. "I would rather start now, so when the time comes, I will be somewhat ready."

"You can start by reading books, then." Ash'Kral waved his hand lazily. "Check Azhukar's library, he must have a decent curriculum on the subject."

"How lazy can you be?"

Levi's brows twitched, knowing that the bastard was just too lazy to teach him such a complex subject. But he didn't complain too much. He also knew that books were a great start to get the basics down, and especially to enrich his knowledge of natural treasures and materials used in Alchemy.

Sometime later...

Levi exited the dimensional wallet and remained seated on his bed in the studio... he had checked the library, and it was even better than he expected. There were thousands of books in it, and each one spoke of an important subject related to a field of study, history, culture, Laws, Aspects, and such. If Levi hadn't stopped himself, he would have been trapped there, reading nonstop.

When he left the library, he went to the natural treasures storage and picked the treasures he was planning to put for sale or trade. Right now, he had them placed in front of him on the bed.

"Azhukar's treasury isn't lacking in Sun Law-based treasures... but the Void, not so much." Levi held his chin thoughtfully. "I am still in need of three materials for the Void evolutionary formula... hopefully, I can trade up to the Black Slime Syndicate for them."

Levi had already checked the network markets for what he needed, but to no avail... he needed C-grade Void materials, and these weren't sold online unless in the Infinity Shop. However, the CRS Platform store showed treasures based on one's rank.

Levi knew that they had the treasures he required, as he had searched for them, and they appeared darkened and inaccessible. The only thing written on them was: Required rank to unlock... Baron.

"The Infinity Shop even has S-grade treasures on sale, but the conditions to just unlock access to join their auction... sheesh, talk about motivation."

Levi smiled wryly as he closed the dimensional screen of the shop and opened the page for the Black Slime Syndicate.

"Why do you think powerhouses at the last tiers are still fighting on the platform?" Ash'Kral said calmly. "Honor? Attention? Boredom? Maybe, but the real reason is to keep evolving their access to the CRS Platform and Nocturnal Ring. The rarest of treasures are in their hands, and they have a firm grip on them, making it impossible to find them anywhere else but by participating in their Games... if your evolutionary path required that precise treasure, you're destined to keep climbing whether you like it or not."

"Hmm... I don't think it's allowed to buy the treasure and resell it, or buy it for another, right?"

"Not a chance."

"Thought so." Levi nodded.

The platform might allow such transactions to occur at lower ranks due to the massive number of Rifters at its disposal, but not at the higher ends... the Rifters were too few, and it was rare enough to get them in a game. They would never make it easier for them not to partake in the fun.

"You should consider applying for that promotion game right now since you will be given fifteen boundless days to prepare." Ash'Kral advised. "You will be put against powerful Rifters that are as strong as Solarbound Daywalkers without a dominion... but, if you keep delaying it while your soul keeps

strengthening rapidly, the pool of contenders will also keep up with your power levels... until you end up against some races that I genuinely don't want you to fight."

"Seriously?" Levi raised a brow in surprise.

"Yes, seriously," Ash'Kral said sternly. "You think once you evolve to the Pathfinder rank, you will be unmatched under Solarbound rank... think again. There are some Lineages that can put you in a chokehold, and you can do nothing about it. Your Sun or Void Forms won't save you in the Boundless Expanse... don't forget, those forms thrive on the environment fitting them, and in the Boundless Expanse or the Death Games, there is no such thing as Void or Sunlight."

Levi was deep in thought... he already expected his forms wouldn't be much use in the games unless he obtained his own Dominion to support them.

That's why he wanted to kick off the promotion game once his soul was strengthened to ensure his victory.

This meant his spiritual prowess was going to increase beyond the norm... possibly even crossing the Blazewarden rank. If this were to happen, his average N level was going to put him against the monsters Ash'Kral warned him about.

Levi just didn't expect that his insane spiritual prowess could be matched in the promotional game and might be his own downfall.

"That was the best-case scenario," Ash'Kral added. "In reality, the system might not find any accessible contenders that share the same level of strength as you, still below Solarbound rank, and available for a promotional game. You will be left stuck in Queue Mode for months, years, or even decades until you either become a Solarbound Daywalker or they find someone for you to fight."

Levi felt a sudden chill course down his spine... he knew that his power level was unique compared to his Growth Stage due to having three Origin Seeds. But the system didn't recognize the other two Origin Seeds, just the one he registered with.

This meant, even if he succeeded in the promotion game and became a Noble Baron, he would still not have a Dominion to contest against the Rifters.

So, he would always be in this awkward state... of being too strong for his rank, but without a Dominion, he was too weak for the upper ranks.

"Ah... how bothersome." Levi rubbed his temples. "I will think about the rest later... for now, I have to get to the Baron rank before such an option is locked for years..."

Besides gaining access to higher-graded treasures, Levi knew that once a Rifter became a Noble in the Boundless Expanse, their treatment changed as well... they received discounts and extra benefits on nearly everything. This would be especially useful when he purchased a commercial store lease to kickstart his business.

Without further ado, Levi brought out the menu for the Nocturnal Ring and went straight to launching a new Death Game.

The moment he pressed the button, he was met this time with only dozens of cards... not hundreds.

"Must be due to the low numbers of Rifters in the promotion game," Levi murmured as he picked one card randomly.

He waited for a few moments with a held breath as the picked card moved to the center and then flipped to show the Death Game's details:

// Game Format: Restrictive Mind Game.

Game Name: The Joker

Participants Number: 10

The Combined Average Power Level: 55...Range (51N_60N)

Ranks Allowed: Teraowner.

Battle Map: The Arena of Gambits

Map Fragments Pot: 0 (Promotion Game... no fragments required)

Prize Pool: High-grade Artifacts(A), Mask of Mirage, Deck of Fate, Laughing Dagger...

Game Title: The Hand of Madness.

Rules of the game:

1- Each player will be equipped with a personal Deck containing 22 cards:

9 Offensive Cards (numbered 1–9)

9 Defensive Cards (numbered 1–9)

1 Jack Card (forces a 1v1 Duel)

1 Queen Card (grants temporary immunity for one attack and heal the Rifter.)

1 King Card (unlocks Ultimate Ability for one round)

1 Joker Card (cancels any card, then transfers ownership to the challenger... unusable until the next round).

2- The game lasts for a maximum of 10 rounds or until one player remains.

3- Each player will be given a personal massive combat room inside a decagon-shaped building...(there will be a small plaza in the center for players to rest and communicate between each round)

3- Each round, there will be five challengers and five challengees... the five challengers are given a choice to challenge another Rifter or Skip. The option to skip is given only once to each challenger.

4- During each challenge, Rifiers must pick *two cards* from their Deck to use (any combination allowed).

5- Offensive and Defensive cards determine outcome priority, followed by Special cards (Jack, Queen, King, Joker).

6- The number on the defensive or offensive cards decides the number of used abilities or techniques in that round.

7- The challenge is a turn-based... once a Rifter challenges another Rifter, they are given offensive priority(use offensive card). The challengee can use the chosen defensive card to create defensive abilities based on the number.

6- Card selection is permanent... once used, cards cannot be recovered or replaced.

7- The Joker Card is the game's core mechanic. Once used, it immediately transfers to the opponent who was affected, but becomes dormant until the next round.

(A player can hold multiple Joker Cards, but can only use one per round. The player holding the most Joker Cards at the end of the game is declared the Final Victor, regardless of survival count.)

8- Abilities allowed, but external artifacts, totems, or tools are banned.

9- In case of equal Joker Card count by game's end, a final death battle will be held between the Rifiers.

For more information, please open your NR Profile Interface.

Good luck, and remember... only fools laugh last.//

Chapter 314: The Ten Monsters.

"Now this is something new and interesting..." Ash'Kral commented in intrigue. "This is the first time I've seen this game... must be a new creation."

Levi nodded in agreement, finding the game's mechanics to be quite unique... he was used to playing and watching games that gave utmost freedom to one's use of their powers in the games. However, this was a restrictive psychological format.

Their entire fighting style meant nothing in this game unless someone used the Jack card and dueled straight out. But the norm? They had to respect the game's rules and restrictions.

"Let me check the network real quick."

Levi swiftly opened another window and typed the name of the format and the game... unfortunately, he found nothing similar. The format did have some games under it, but none of them were like this.

In simpler terms...

"I am about to play a totally fresh death game... in a promotional setting where nine other monsters will be joining." Levi smiled wryly. "This game... is going to be popular."

Besides Levi's popularity, he knew that the other nine Rifiers would also have a massive following behind them... adding this to the fact the game's design was fresh, many viewers would be interested to tune in.

"The Joker... hmmm, so each round the Rifiers will be required to force their opponents to waste their Joker card and have it transfer over to them... this means, if they want to earn that Joker card, they have to come out swinging in their challenge. But..." Levi rubbed his chin thoughtfully, "If the challengers dared to waste their powerful special cards or high number cards right from the start, they will be left to

slaughter in later rounds. But, if they didn't and tried to be passive in their challenge, nothing ensures that their opponent won't swing back in fear and pick his best cards to protect himself offensively... damn, this design is so complex and sinister."

Levi knew that was nothing but scratching the surface of the mind games him and those nine Rifiers were going to go through... the idea of everyone given an equal number of cards, and the choice to pick two before each round made it impossible to guess 100% right what would await the challenger on the other side... vice versa.

The challenge would have no clue if the challenger was going to come for the kill or to survive for another round... This sense of unknown was the worst since if they decided to go turtle mode, and the challenger used weak cards, he would be screwed later on.

"There is also the option to skip a challenge... but it can be used only once." Levi pondered deeply. "Some might use it in the first rounds and some might save it for emergencies when they have no good cards..."

"Don't forget the Joker... if it's used and claimed by another, they will have two Joker cards... which means two weapons or more to shoot down any card." Ash'Kral added. "Sure, if it is used, the Joker card will transfer hands again, but it keeps one's hope in the game."

"The thing is... the winning condition is the collection of Joker cards... it will be extremely difficult to use one, knowing that it will be transferred to the enemy, bringing them closer to victory." The Titan shook his head. "This one is pure mind games... that's why the central free zone plaza was added. So, you can see each other's condition and talk before another round starts... alliances and partnerships will be made, but they will be crafted out of thin glass... one weak blow, and it shatters."

"I know." Levi chuckled in derision. "Trusting another for a partnership means avoiding challenging each other or, challenging each other and sharing the chosen cards to rig the result in their 'favor'."

As much as this looked like an unfair advantage, Levi understood that such partnerships were nothing but a death trap... to trust another Rifier aiming for his head was absolutely suicidal, understanding that he could tell him the chosen cards, but no one truly knew what one would pick until the round started, and they were already in use.

"Difficult... too difficult." Ash'Kral warned. "Levi, I know you seek victory, but I want you to focus on survival in this game... whether you win at the end of the game or not, you need to survive... especially when you haven't lucked out with a resignation token."

"I always play to win." Levi said calmly. "This game is complex and hard... but I am not easily scared... I have to win this to be promoted... I can't afford to wait years or decades for another promotion game when my strength increases."

"This is it... this is my only window to become a noble, and now." Levi finished with a stern tone as he pressed the participating Rifiers' list.

"I like the enthusiasm... but, you aren't going against nobodies, little one."

As Levi heard Ash'Kral's solemn voice, his heart skipped a beat after seeing the details of the nine Rifiers he was going against.

//Drayven: Wins: 2 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 52 Most Highlighted Clip: Burning off the entire battlefield with one breath. (900 million views)

The Dreambreaker: Wins: 3 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 37 Most Highlighted Clip: Making four Rifiers believe they won before collapsing. (5 Billion views)

The Hollow Titan: Wins: 3 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 78 Most Highlighted Clip: Ripping the arena floor open with his bare hands. (9 Billion views)

The Light Eater:

Wins: 4 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 22 Most Highlighted Clip: Creating a minimized black hole clone to devour half of the battlefield. (3 Billion views)

The Dealer: Wins: 3 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 32 Most Highlighted Clip: He made all the Rifiers fight each other for survival... last one lives. (39 Billion views)

Madam Future: Wins: 4 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 26 Most Highlighted Clip: Forcing a Rifter to surrender without speaking a word. (1 Billion views)

The Ruiner: Wins: 2 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 70 Most Highlighted Clip: Blowing the entire battlefield with one ability. (90 Billion views)

The Masked Butcher: Wins: 3 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 97 Most Highlighted Clip: Slicing through twenty Rifters with one blade and no footsteps. (6 Billion views)

Wanderer of The Seas: Wins: 4 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 65 Most Highlighted Clip: Putting all the Rifters inside an illusion and making them walk down a cliff to their demise. (14 Billion views)

The Three Body Problem: Wins: 2 | Defeats: 0 | Kills: 20 Most Highlighted Clip: Slaying a Leviathan Class Sandscale. (65 Billion views)//

"Well... this is going to be fun." Levi showed a forced smile as he read the Rifters' details, noticing that each one was crazier and more powerful than the other.

Just their highlights alone were enough to cause dread to arise in anyone's heart if there was just one in a single game... Levi was going against nine at once.

But...

"Don't forget... they must be saying the same after they see your registered name." Ash'Kral smirked. "Slaying a Leviathan in your second game ever... It's short, yet brutal. You're as much of a force of nature as they are, if not more."

Ash'Kral was right... the moment those nine Rifters saw Levi's nickname and written highlight, it didn't matter if they were on different planets or dimensions... speak the same language or not... A Hollow, Trueborn, Falseborn, or a Nightcrawler.

The moment they pressed on the clip and saw Levi riding a monstrous Leviathan through a desert, before finally slaying it, the first thought that came to their minds was:

'The Celestial is in my game... how troublesome.'

Chapter 315: Exhaustion.

After realizing that his opponents were going to pose an immense challenge to him, Levi understood that he needed to prepare the necessary tools. His current arsenal of abilities and techniques wouldn't cut it... not in a million years.

"I will have to come up with a valid excuse to go offline for a week," Levi murmured thoughtfully.

He knew that after three days, they were going back to the World Tree... he couldn't just leave without an explanation for an entire week.

"What about using Seraphis' situation to my advantage?" Levi came up with an idea. "I can request a week's leave from the High Chancellor on a secret mission, and he will know what it means, approving it without an issue."

The High Chancellor's authority was high enough not to be questioned in their region... as for his brother and friends? He could tell them that the High Chancellor had sent him on a classified mission. Since it was just a week, no one would bother that much.

"It's still suspicious," the Titan chuckled. "Going offline for a week periodically could only mean that you are entering the Boundless Expanse."

"Let them think that... as long as no one has proof, nothing bad will come of it," Levi shrugged.

For now, Levi focused on placing the treasures for a trade in the Black Slime Syndicate Board... fortunately, he didn't need to be there in flesh to do it.

After pulling up their private website, Levi typed his name, and he was granted direct access. When he signed the partnership contract, he was given extra perks. Though he also didn't forget his part and sold off some intel about Leviathans he received from the system.

When he accessed the Trading Board, Levi searched for what he wanted first... he typed in the natural treasures' names one by one. Sadly, no one had them posted.

"Damn... I can only post mine and hope they will attract anyone who has them for a trade," Levi muttered as he registered a couple of high-grade natural treasures.

Ting! Ting!...

The instant they were uploaded, Levi's inbox started ringing... slow at first, but then, the rings increased until Levi muted the notifications.

"As expected... Azhukar's treasures are really popular," Levi commented with a faint grin.

He read some D-mails, and most of them were indirectly begging him to sell them or trade for other treasures they posted.

Too bad, Levi rejected them all and told them that he was interested only in the natural treasures he wrote about in the post.

"If I did this, I would force them to search for those treasures for me from their networks," Levi smirked. "Azhukar's natural treasures are extremely rare due to some of them going almost extinct in our time..."

If Levi wasn't strapped for options on how to get the materials he needed, he wouldn't bother to trade them. He would put them in an auction, knowing they would get him immense value.

"If I were promoted to Baron and had my access increased, I would purchase what I need and save the others for later."

After closing the dimensional screen, Levi decided to leave the studio and head to Ash'Kral's territory or his own to start the training.

He had about six boundless days to train before the funeral was held, and he had no plans to waste them hanging out with his friends.

Sometime later...

Levi stood in the center of Ash'Kral's little island in the boundless, colorful Void... he had changed the island biome from a desert to a smooth plain of grass. His expression didn't look too good.

"My resonance to the Void Seed is now at 10%, but the Nine Senses Seed has decreased its resonance back to 5%... the Sun Seed is still stuck at 0%," Levi massaged his temples with an annoyed expression. "This won't do... I can't have them keep playing with me like this."

Levi could see that the Nine Senses Seed had reduced its resonance after he cheated on it with the Void Seed... it was upset that he started showing signs of siding with the Void Seed's extreme chaotic persona.

Although the Void Seed had stored most of the persona corruption excess, the fact still stood that Levi was willing to descend and go against his nature.

It was all about making the choice, not the result.

"This ends now... I can't work in peace if they keep pulling this crap."

Levi's expression turned stern as he sat in a meditation position and started the Harmony Breathing Technique to resonate with all Ancestral Trees.

A few moments later, the three Ancestral Trees took their spiritual forms before Levi; their branches and leaves were so close to each other, yet not touching.

Even while they had a truce, the three divas refused to acknowledge each other's existence or superiority.

Usually, whenever Levi called for the Nine Senses Ancestral Tree, it welcomed him with open arms... but not today.

All trees were embracing a united front... silence.

The Ancestral Void Tree was supposed to be opening up to him, but in reality... nothing much changed. It still treated him coldly, and this habit would probably last even if his resonance was higher... that was simply its nature.

Seeing this, Levi knew that a tough battle was ahead... yet, he had no intentions of backing down. He couldn't afford to create and lose his techniques at their whim.

He looked at the Void Seed first and then uttered with a flat tone, "You're not going to flood me with your stored corruption... I know you're enjoying yourself playing with my emotions too much to ruin the fun already."

The Ancestral Void Tree's branches shook a little, like it found his words amusing... but it knew that he was right.

"You have saved my ass back there... but this changes nothing," Levi continued calmly. "I am still me... no, I am me more than ever, even with your little corruption in my soul and heart. And I plan to keep it this way, whether you like it or not."

"I am not descending to your chaos... and if this doesn't suit you, I believe you have the weapon to show me otherwise."

"Go for it," Levi dared it, unfazed.

'How bold,' the Titan frowned. 'Challenging the Origin Seed's pride and ego is never a good thing.'

'That's from your perspective,' Ash'Kral smirked. 'The three Ancestral Trees don't see Levi at their level yet to have their egos bruised with his words.'

As expected, the Ancestral Void Tree's branches merely shook for a moment, seemingly disregarding his dare... if it wanted to ruin him, it would have done nothing and watched him descend to chaos on his own.

Though the way he spoke to the Ancestral Void Tree did please the other two trees... especially the Sun Tree. It quivered, causing its mesmerizing triangle-like golden leaves to fall and have them move in the Void Tree's direction.

Levi's brows twitched, feeling like it was telling it: Just saying... me personally? I wouldn't have him do me like that.

Levi's gaze swiftly switched to the Sun Tree and said solemnly, "You're being left behind, and you don't seem to care... so much for the personification of Order... if you're waiting for me to beg for any of your resonance anymore, you're in for a long, long ride."

Then, Levi finally turned to the Ancestral Nine Senses Tree.

"As I said, I'm still me... more than ever. They can push, whisper, twist... it doesn't matter. I'm done being shaped by anyone else's will." His voice grew firmer. "Not by my parents' teachings... not by you or the tenants... no one. I decide what I become. And if I fall, I'll fall because of my choices."

"Now... are you going to accept my choices and support me so we can get you your own personal space, or are you going to keep screwing around?" Levi summoned his weapon and pointed at Ash'Kral. "This is your owner, not me... You can act all mighty, but deep down, you understand that you're just like me. You try your best to gain some form of control over your fate through controlling me or the past partners, but where did this lead you?"

The three Ancestral Trees didn't make any noise or movement... they just listened.

"Back to the starting line... if you don't accept that you have to start changing your ways, you will never move a step forward from that line."

Levi sneered as he pointed at Ash'Kral, who had a dazed, wronged expression.

"But I guess you won't be alone... You will have each other forever since Ash'Kral has absolutely no intention of letting you free or giving up on his mission."

Levi paused for a moment, his spiritual eyes picking up on the subtle changes in their emotions... sure, they were still silent and unmoving, but he could feel through the Harmony Breathing what they really felt.

Exhaustion.

Chapter 316: Do As You Preach.

Their egos might be immense, and their hatred for each other just as fierce, but that didn't mean they felt nothing after eons of having their growth cycle begin... only for it to be cut short within mere decades, time, and time again.

This left them mentally and emotionally exhausted, whether they liked to admit it or not.

Soon, Levi let out a long, helpless sigh, "Don't you think it's time you prioritize your freedom instead of antagonizing each other? We both know that your chances are higher with me, so why not exploit them fully? Why not show me some equal support so I can return the favor? Why not show the universe that you three still exist? Or, are you already comfortable being forgotten? Ancestral Trees left in the past, while the Primordial Trees of Life, Death, and other entities of equal grounds are living their best lives ruling above all?"

"I keep hearing that the three of you have extreme personalities, making it impossible for the Three-Body Problem to be solved... but, at the same time, I still haven't seen anything extreme about any of you."

The Ancestral Trees showed a slight movement, seemingly asking him what he meant by that... Levi didn't keep it in his heart anymore.

He looked at them straight and shared flatly, "To be frank... I don't see any of you staying true to your 'extreme' personalities that you're trying to shove in me forcefully."

He started with the Sun Tree.

"How can you claim to be the embodiment of Order, Pride, and Arrogance and not show any signs of getting yourself freed from your imprisonment? What? Does Pride enjoy the comfort of being a prisoner?"

Next, he moved to the Void Tree.

"You claim to embody Chaos, Nothingness, and extreme indifference... but in my eyes, anyone with such traits wouldn't accept staying in this routine forever... the routine of having a new partner, abusing them to death, and then restarting again... you want me to descend into chaos on my own to entertain yourself, but if you weren't stuck here, you wouldn't have to stoop so low for entertainment."

'Oh damn... he is frying them one by one. Are you sure about this?'

The Titan's heart skipped a beat, feeling like the three trees were going to flip the table on Levi anytime now.

'Not anymore... but let him do his thing.' Ash'Kral said in intrigue, 'None of my past partners have been daring enough to clash horns with the trees controlling their lives...'

Ash'Kral had advised his past partners to stay in their line and not antagonize the three trees, in hopes of avoiding complications... but when he did this, complications still arose whether he liked it or not.

This time, he had no plans on telling Levi the same... in his eyes, he felt that maybe it was time to put the three Ancestral Trees before their reality.

"Last but not least, you... I thought we were close. I thought we were friends." Levi smiled bitterly as he gazed at the Ancestral Nine Senses Tree, "But to cut my resonance access in half just because I used the

Void Form to save my own brother and friends? Are you really punishing me for not staying true to my nature, or your nature?"

"..."

"..."

Ash'Kral and The Titan shared the Ancestral Trees' silence... they figured out what Levi meant immediately.

The Nine Senses Tree respected anyone staying true to their nature... but what Levi did was exactly that.

It was in his nature to save his brother at any cost, uncaring what happened to him... that's the Larson Brotherhood; they live and die for each other... no questions asked.

The only difference was that Levi used the Void Form to achieve it... and yet, he was still punished, which meant that the Nine Senses Tree didn't really care about him staying true to his nature, but its own nature.

It hated the other two trees equally, leaving it upset that he dared to surrender himself to the Void Tree like that.

"I get it, okay... I really do get it." Levi let out a long sigh as he stood up, "But I just know... if it were me, I would have put my issues aside and done whatever it took to not be in your state... even if it meant working with my worst enemy that I hate to the bone."

Honor, pride, dignity, or such emotions meant nothing to Levi if he knew that he was imprisoned for eternity with his worst nightmare.

He would rather turn off those emotions and do whatever it took to free himself... then, he could turn them on and ruin his nemesis. But what he wouldn't do was accept being stuck with him for eternity just out of spite.

It seemed like the Ancestral Trees were affected by his last points in some way... they started moving and making noise again, leaving Levi somewhat surprised.

'They are talking... to each other?'

He could tell since the trees were making so much movement and noise, but their emotions weren't directed at him.

After some time, the three trees stopped moving and reached out with three branches in Levi's direction.

They stopped only when they were a mere inch away from his forehead... then, they all sent a simultaneous message through their emotions.

It was brief and blunt.

-Prove it.-

Levi was confused, having no idea what any of this meant. But Ash'Kral did.

"Oh, you have gone and done it now." Ash'Kral frowned, "You've been running your mouth for a while, but the Ancestral Trees care more about actions, not words."

"You said you can work together with your most hated enemy if it meant getting what you want... well, they want you to prove it in a spiritual trial of their design." Ash'Kral concluded, "They have access to your memories... so, this isn't going to be fun for you."

"...well, shit." Levi was left speechless.

"You can't say no... they listened to your lecture, and now it's time you stay true to it... Otherwise, they will never respect you again." The Titan added with a deep sigh.

"What if I succeed?" Levi asked.

"I don't know, but if you can do it, I doubt they will remain stubborn in their ways." Ash'Kral said, "They might even bestow a similar resonance access to their powers above 10%."

Hearing this, Levi went silent for a few moments, deep in his thoughts... he could tell that he had reached a crossroad... no, he had put himself in one, and the only way forward was to stay true to what he preached.

Though at the same time, he discerned that the Trees weren't going to take it easy on him.

'They are going to make me relive that night... aren't they?' Levi showed a forced, pained smile.

'Most definitely... after all, you hate no one more at the moment than the Bishop, who murdered your parents and stole your eyes.' Ash'Kral nodded.

'I will be damned...'

Levi lowered his head, flashes of that cursed night returning to the surface again. He knew it wasn't going to be a pleasant experience, but it had to be done. If he wanted the three trees to tolerate each other a little more, he had to show them that he could do so, too.

"Alright, bring it on."

Levi's expression hardened as he took a step forward and allowed his forehead to be touched by the spiritual thin branches.

Chapter 317: The Cursed Night. I

About a decade ago... In Tamara's settlement.

It was a peaceful night... like any other night for the Larson family. Gentle raindrops tapped on the windows while the small apartment smelled like blueberry... sweet and fruity.

Little Levi sat at the table with his father, trying to finish a wooden jigsaw puzzle... his mother folded the clothes on the couch, humming a tune with a gentle smile.

"Ah... dad, this is too hard." Levi pouted, trying his best to find a placement for a new piece he was holding, but to no avail.

"You'll get it, champ... you just have to keep trying." Brian chuckled and then put another piece in its place, bringing the picture closer to life.

"If you finish it before dinner, I will let you eat ice cream." Ruqya offered, smiling.

"Ice cream?!"

Levi lifted his head sharply, exposing the cutest face there was... His face had gentle features: a small nose, round cheeks, and soft red lips. Yet, his eyes were the main stars.

They elevated such naturally average features to a divine state, making him resemble a child forsaken by the heavens, unfit to live amongst men.

His eyes were soft gray like the color of a gloomy cloud... and yet, they were bright and full of life, the kind that made people pause to take a closer look at them.

When he blinked... the color changed on its own to soft blue, resembling a peaceful ocean before the storm. Each time he blinked... his eyes changed colors. Yet, his parents didn't see anything wrong with it.

They knew what it was and still... they embraced him.

Ring Ring...

Suddenly, Brian received a holographic call on his Neuralens device. He smiled at his son and told him to continue without him until he finished the call.

"Don't worry, dad, I will wait for you to return so we can put the final piece together." Little Levi grinned happily.

"How thoughtful..."

Brian smiled and kissed Levi on the top of his head before walking away to the balcony. Then, he picked up the call, his expression turning cold in an instant.

"Rob... haven't I told you not to contact me ever again until you get admitted to rehab? I am not giving you any more money... you have sunk yourself in debt, and I won't allow you to do the same to me or my family." Brian said, his tone merciless.

He didn't even want to approve the video call... having no interest in seeing his brother's deadbeat, sunken face, looking like a fentanyl addict.

"Brian... I messed up, cough, I messed up bad..."

Rob's voice came from the other side, sounding shattered, frail, and utterly regretful like he had committed the gravest sin of mankind.

"So? The usual?"

Brian's heart didn't move an inch, already used to hearing the same sentence over and over again.

"No, you don't understand! You have to leave, like right now..." Rob's voice cracked, seeming like he was on the verge of breaking into tears.

"Rob... what have you done?"

"Sob... why didn't you just give me the money... why, you know my condition, you know I can't help it, why did you forsake me, brother... why."

As he listened to his brother's tearful voice and rapid scratching movement, Brian's heart skipped a beat this time, having a bad, bad feeling about this... he knew that his brother was a gambling addict of the highest level. He even snorted high doses of crushed SR Pills to achieve the highest form of bliss before falling into a coma that lasted a day or more.

A gambling addict, a drug addict, and even a sex addict.

He was the worst of the worst and as much as Brian tried to help him out... he realized eventually that some people just didn't want to be helped.

No, some people would find peace only when they dragged you down to the bottom of the barrel with them because it was too much hard work to rise back up and live a respected life.

Hence, the moment his brother came to ask for the sixth loan, Brian had enough and cut him off good as much as it pained him... at least, until he got himself into rehab.

"Rob... take a deep breath, and tell me, what have you do..."

Before Brian could finish his sentence, the lights went dark in the entire complex... a wide electrical shutdown in the building, which was something almost unheard of in today's society.

Levi and his mother looked up at the ceiling... Levi was puzzled while Ruqya had a small frown, her eyes darting everywhere.

Fortunately, the Holy Pillar was still showering them with its divine light... leaving the apartment to have beautiful flickering golden ambers floating everywhere.

"Aaah... how warm."

Levi expressed in happiness, liking the warm sensation of the divine light on his skin. But then, his smile froze after he caught from the corner of his eye two men standing menacingly in front of the door. Both were wearing formal suits and had their gloved hands covered behind their backs.

It was like they just appeared out of thin air.

Just as Levi was about to let out a terrified screech, he found himself incapable of moving or talking... he was frozen in place, his mesmerizing eyes were the only source of expression left within him.

And, they looked scared.

Meanwhile, Ruqya and Brian suffered under the same fate, their minds telling them to shout, to run, to save their son from the intruders, but nothing... not even a twitch was allowed in those two intruders' presence.

"I was utterly confounded when I received intel that a family of Radians were living here... in my backyard, playing a game of being mortal... but, I believe you didn't expect that your divine bloodline would still pass along to your child, even when he was born from two mortal bodies." The man in a black suit with a white shirt and a blue tie disclosed with a warm smile, "Why didn't you tell me? We might be serving two opposite ends, but I would have still treated you to a drink."

"..."

"..."

Brian and Ruqya were left gazing at the Bishop with confused looks mixed in with a tint of fear... it was like they had no idea what he was blabbering about. They were completely caught off guard.

The Bishop and Darius noticed this from their looks... they looked in each other's direction and the Bishop asked, "Are you sure about the intel?"

"Definitely... his loser brother has contacted the Duskbound Order to place a hit on his family to claim the inheritance and his start-up company. I accepted the assassination hit since my agency is interested in owning the technology to bury it and keep the Daywalkers weakened. But, when I went to scout, I found their son and his peculiar eyes... I did my own research and found that his eyes share great similarities to those infamous treasures."

Darius paused, his eyes affixed on Levi's breathtaking gems, which had turned red and agitated already... then he continued with the same flat tone.

"I connected the dots and realized that the sole reason for his existence to make sense was if his parents had also been Radians, but descended to the Chained Universe to start a new mortal life, or they are running away from something."

"That's an assumption, not facts." The Bishop frowned, pointing his finger at them, "Go, get me some facts... I will take care of the kid."

Seeing the Bishop heading towards Levi, Brian and Ruqya started screaming inwardly for him to stop, their eyes burning with such fervor.

They didn't even care that Darius was drawing closer to them... their desperate, pleading eyes stayed locked on the Bishop's gloved hand as it reached toward their little boy.

But then, their power of speech was restored... their mouths immediately voicing out the loudest shout for help.

"Help!!! Intruders!!! Stay away from my son!!! Help!!!"

"You can scream and cry all you want, no one can hear you." Darius said calmly, "We have about one minute to get what we want from you before the Anti-Sleepwalkers Bureau sends someone to check the outage. And we hope you will cooperate. Otherwise..."

As he said, he glanced in the Bishop's direction, who was holding Levi from the back of his neck like a dirty street animal.

"Please, don't hurt our son! We really don't know what you're talking about... I am just a businessman with a housewife and a son, how can we be compared to our deities?" Brian swiftly started cooperating, not wanting to see them remove a hair strand off his son's head.

"Please let us go... you got the wrong people." Ruqya begged too, her eyes already covered in tears.

Darius gazed at their hearts and spirit through his advanced spiritual vision... he saw nothing out of the ordinary.

Their bodies and souls were as ordinary as they could get... he didn't even spot a heartbeat skip, or any other involuntary sign of them telling lies.

And yet...

"Not enough..."

Slash! Slash!

Chapter 318: The Cursed Night II. (Suggested Song: Alone- Martin Czerny)

Darius struck their souls with a wave of his hand, leaving them to scream in immense agony... they felt like their souls were being torn apart, and they could do nothing to stop the pain. As mere commoners, their consciousness barrier was already frail. If Darius hadn't controlled his strike, they might have been killed instantly.

"Was this enough to refresh your memory?" Darius asked coldly, leaning closer.

The pain was unbearable, and yet... they didn't say a word. They just kept crying and shaking their heads, insisting they didn't know what these men were talking about.

Seeing this, the Bishop's face didn't change... he slowly lifted the sobbing Levi by the back of his neck. Then, he walked to the parents, leaving them to stare at their son kicking and screaming, but to no avail... even when the spiritual pressure was lifted, there wasn't much they could do against them.

The Bishop stopped in front of Brian and Ruqya. Then, he held Levi up so they could see him clearly... before their horrified eyes, a scarlet tentacle claw emerged from his shoulder blade.

He brought it closer to Levi's back and said, "Last chance... tell me who you really are."

"We don't know!! Please! Stop! He is just a boy!"

"We beg of you!! Take everything! I can give you my company, my houses, my everything! Please! Put my son down, please don't hurt him... please!"

Brian and Ruqya cried out hysterically, shaking their heads violently... their watery eyes were already as red as the claw before them. Hearing Levi's fearful cries and calls for them made them feel like someone was tearing their hearts from the inside out with their bare hands.

The sickly feeling.

The dread.

The despair.

They had never felt such emotions this strongly in their life before, feeling like they could pass out any moment, just to avoid seeing their son getting hurt.

Alas, that wasn't an option, and the Bishop wasn't one to make false threats.

He sighed, "Then, let's see how far your ignorance goes."

He pressed his cold claw against Levi's small back, making him flinch instinctively... before Levi could react, the Bishop dragged it downward.

Aaaaaa!!!

A deep, red wound opened as Levi let out the sharpest scream there was, filling the apartment with the echoes of his cry. They soon were mixed with the sound of his parents' sobbing, screaming, and pleading.

They looked like they wanted to eat the Bishop and Darius' flesh apart... and yet, their hateful, despairing eyes meant absolutely nothing before them.

He just kept looking at them silently, bathing under the Larsons' unified cries... when he saw no other reaction, no sign of divine awakening, only human despair, he frowned.

"Mortals..." he said indifferently, "I guess we were wrong... maybe the Radian bloodline runs faint in your ancestry, and you had no clue about it."

The Larsons didn't even hear what he said... Levi's mind was occupied with the agony of his burning back, while the parents had a single thought in their minds: how can they save him?

Nothing... nothing came to mind.

Their device and Astra AI were the first to go after the Bishop and Darius made their move... a single thought was enough to break them apart without being close to them.

"Darius." The Bishop ordered, "Harvest their memories... There might be something there related to their ancestors."

Darius lifted his hand, and his eyes dimmed to soft gray... then, two faint spiritual strings emerged from his fingers and landed on the parents' foreheads. It took him no less than three seconds to harvest every memory from their birth to this final moment.

Though the agony of the process was so much, it left them falling on the ground with their hands holding their heads tightly, feeling like they were about to explode... in a way, they were... Levi watched as blood poured down their ears, nose, mouth, and even some facial pores.

He was seeing this, but his brain failed to register what was happening... it was like the pain of his wounds, the harrowing sight of his parents bleeding from their heads while screaming until their throats turned hoarse... everything about this whole situation felt like a sick dream.

A sick dream he wanted to wake up from so bad... but it wasn't.

While Levi's traumatized, dead pupils were affixed on his parents, his ears picked up on a disgusting wet noise... like someone fiddling their finger on wet spaghetti.

It didn't take long before he found the source of the noise... tens of sickening dark red tentacles slithered out from the Bishop's back, each one ending in a small, snapping mouth that looked like twisted dogs from the seventh hell.

Brian and Ruqya lifted their heads from the ground with great difficulty and looked at their son, who was surrounded by tens of revolting tentacles.

They reached out with their arms shakily, uttering simultaneously with a hoarse, low tone.

"Take... me... instead..."

"How loving... but, they were meant for you in the first place."

As Levi heard the Bishop's unbothered response, he blinked once... when he opened them, his heart went still for a moment like the world around him.

It was like the universe went silent for him, so he wouldn't need to hear his parents' screams and the sound of their flesh being chewed on like they were some sort of food for dogs...

But nothing could protect him from the sight... his eyes were as white as a ghost, looking utterly dead as he watched his parents' blood splatter across the golden-lit floor, the table, the couch, the TV, the wooden puzzle... his home.

Bit by bit... his vision started to lose color as his irises turned pitch-dark while his pupils remained red.

This painted his world black and white... leaving only one color dominant.

The color of Blood.

Levi could only stare in silence, his tiny hands trembling, his lips shaking, and his tear-streaked face frozen solid.

He wanted to scream, but nothing came out... his mind couldn't process what he was seeing ... a scene so foreign, so nightmarish, no one dared to even dream of it.

When his mother saw her son looking at them like this... even when her vision was impaired by blood, even when her body had massive chunks of flesh missing, even when life was slipping through her fingers, Ruqya still showed a small, comforting forced smile.

Then, she said with a soft, hoarse voice, "Don't look, Levi... Don't look, baby... just cover your eyes and ears... It's okay, mommy's here... mommy loves you so much, do you hear me? Don't forget that... never forget that..."

Meanwhile, Brian didn't say anything as his mouth was bitten off... and yet, he didn't need to... his smoldering but loving stare expressed thousands of words.

Alas... they couldn't hold it for too long.

Levi just stared at his parents falling to the ground, their bodies covered in bite marks, reaching toward him with fading, lifeless eyes.

"Mommy... Daddy...?"

Levi finally spoke; his voice was barely a whisper... it was broken and hollow, like he was still in denial. Even the pain from his back felt like nothing but a soft massage compared to what was going on in his heart and mind.

The Bishop turned Levi to face him. He pulled him closer and stared deeply into his trembling, darkening eyes... he could see that they had become empty, lifeless, like a shattered mirror.

And yet...

"No hard feelings, child... You were born with power you could never understand. It doesn't belong to someone like you."

Without warning, the Bishop reached out with his gloved hand and pressed it against Levi's face.

Without an ounce of hesitation, he plucked his eyes out one by one in an instant... it was so fast, it took a split second before the blood streamed down Levi's cheeks as he let out a high-pitched screech.

But his vision? It went instantly dark... making him reach with his tiny hands for his parents, searching for them through the immense pain.

Pain that was enough to kill any other child... but somehow, he was still conscious. The Bishop dropped him on the floor like he was worth nothing anymore to him.

He just lifted the precious bloody gems and showed a devilish smile, "The key to achieving my ambition... is in my hands."

Meanwhile, Levi was left on the ground, screaming for his mom and dad while his hands covered the bloody holes left behind in his face.

"I CAN'T SEE!! MOMMY! MOMMY!! MY EYES! MY EYES!! AAAAAHHHHHH!!!"

"Silence him, but leave him alive... It won't take long before he becomes a Sleepwalker," the Bishop ordered expressionlessly.

In an instant, the shadowy figure of Darius appeared right behind Levi and landed a straight chop on his neck, silencing his whimpers... then, he waved his hand once in front of Levi's empty, bloodied sockets, and they were sealed shut.

The Bishop glanced around the destroyed apartment one last time. "Let's go... the officers will be here in a few moments."

A shadowy portal opened behind them, leading to the Boundless Expanse... Darius stepped through first, followed by the Bishop, who was still holding the eyeballs in his hands.

Then, the portal closed behind them, leaving only silence, blood, and the faint, fading scent of blueberry in the air...

Tinkle... Tinkle.

The silence was broken periodically with blood drops falling from the table onto the floor, trickling slowly from the tainted wooden puzzle...

It was still incomplete, missing half of the pieces... but now? even if it was completed, the meaning was no longer the same...

The completed wooden puzzle would have shown a picture of a small, cozy portrait of their family... a man, a woman, and two sons... sitting together on a couch with a window behind them. The father's arm rested protectively around the mother's shoulders, and the mother held the little boys on her lap.

A picture of their little family turned into a wooden puzzle to finish together and frame it... It was called: Our Little World.

And now... half of the pieces were drenched in red while the golden border looked like a frame for a tragedy.

The father's face was covered in blood entirely.

The mother's smile was crossed through with a dark smear.

The child's bright eyes were gone, buried under the splatter.

Only the other child wasn't touched by the blood directly... but his entire world was now framed in red.

The words on the corner... the puzzle's name, 'Our Little World', were now stained too, leaving only 'Our World' barely visible.

It was as if the "Little" piece... the heart and soul of the family, was gone.

It was just their world, or what it had become... broken and incomplete.

Forever.

Chapter 319: The Cell.

"Noooooooooooo!!!"

Levi woke up screaming while his body was drenched in sweat... his heart was pounding so hard it hurt, making him tighten his grip on it. He sat up in bed, gasping, shaking, and with a face wet with tears.

"No! No! No...!"

He started hitting the bed again and again with his fists, shouting until his voice went hoarse... the nightmare of the cursed night he went through this time was completed, untwisted, just the truth.

No nightcrawler manipulated it, which made it even harder for him to live it again.

To see his parents murdered in cold blood.

To experience the pain of his eyes being ripped out.

To live through that trauma from start to finish...

And so, he just sat there, shaking, crying, until his throat was raw... but slowly, he started taking deep breaths while whispering to himself.

"It's just a dream... I have been through this before... don't let it ruin you..."

He kept repeating it again and again until his voice steadied a bit. Only then did he finally look up, finding himself able to see normally.

But he didn't feel an ounce of happiness... he just looked at the gray walls around him and the little-to-no furniture in the small room.

The room had nothing but a bed, a sink, and a small light hanging from the ceiling, which was flickering in and out... the air smelled of rust and mold.

Levi realized he was in a cell... no, an asylum cell. It was so small, he felt the walls closing in on him.

Before he could analyze his situation, the blue rusty metal door creaked noisily, capturing his attention.

The cell door opened, showing a guard standing in front of it, his features somehow unreadable, like Levi couldn't make sense of his appearance.

But he didn't focus too long on him... behind him were two figures, strapped in white straightjackets... only their faces were visible.

The guard pushed them inside and then slammed the door shut.

Levi froze instantly... his heart started pounding hard again. Every sharp breath he took felt like liquid fire coursing through his lungs.

The sight of them... the monsters who had destroyed his family... made his whole body shake in rage.

He clenched his hands as his vision turned blurry, feeling like he was slowly losing control over his body... and then, everything went dark before he knew it.

When he opened his eyes again, the first thing that pierced through his cloudy vision was the floor covered in a puddle of blood.

The Bishop and Darius were lying motionless in front of him... their white jackets were fully stained red as their throats were chomped off like someone took a bite of them.

When Levi saw this, he took a step back and tasted his saliva, finding a rusty, disgusting taste... still dazed, Levi looked at his hands, which were covered in blood to the elbows as if he used his bare hands to rip their bodies apart.

And the worst part? He couldn't remember anything...

Before Levi could try to force himself to recollect his memories, the door opened widely and the same guard stepped inside... he glanced at the corpses in front of Levi and his monstrous, bloody appearance that resembled a true cannibal.

No words, he lifted his gun and fired.

Levi felt the bullet hit him in the chest... he looked down and touched the hole, then his vision turned blurry as he fell backward on the floor next to the Bishop and Darius.

The last thing he saw on the floor was the Bishop's dignified face utterly mauled to death... his eyes were ripped away, his face bloodied and bitten off like his throat... he looked like a survivor of a wild animal attack.

As this memory registered in Levi's mind, even while dying... he couldn't help but show a short, cruel smile. He didn't remember what he did to them, but their ending satisfied him.

Unfortunately... this wasn't the goal of the spiritual trial.

A moment later...

Levi woke up again on the same bed... screaming, sweating, and crying. He had gone through the same nightmare from start to finish. Though this time, he kept his memories of the last attempt.

So, he managed to recollect his emotions somewhat faster this time. As he sat on the bed in silence, arms holding his knees tightly, Levi couldn't help but smile bitterly, "All of this to make a point... so cruel."

Ka-thung!

The door opened again... the same sound, the same guard, and the same two figures... Bishop and Darius.

The moment they were pushed inside, Levi felt the panic and rage rise within him again, like a trapped animal was banging on the walls to be freed... to be released at them.

Levi swiftly looked to the other side, clutching his heart while trying his best to regulate his breathing... but he struggled immensely.

He knew that if he looked at them, if he let even a glimpse in... he would lose control.

But as he sat there, staring at the wall, thinking hard about how he was going to work this through... the Bishop's voice resounded in the cell.

It was low, calm, and mocking.

"Your parents were delicious."

He said only four words, and yet... a single one would have been enough.

Everything stopped, the world went silent for Levi... then, black.

A short while later, Levi regained his vision, looking around him in confusion... it didn't take him long to find the Bishop and Darius lying in the corners of the cell near a bloodied edge of the bed.

He was holding onto a steel cup, which was twisted out of shape, dripping red. This time, Levi didn't even look in Darius and the Bishop's direction.

He just lay on the bed with his bloody hands covering his face... tears streamed down his face as he heard the door open again.

He whispered, "So cruel..."

Then, a bullet was fired.

And once more, Levi woke up.

The same room, the same cycle.

No escape... no rest.

Every time, he killed them... every time, he told himself to stop, but his rage, his grief, they didn't listen to reason... they never did.

They just consumed him and took over, whether he liked it or not... leaving him blacking out to wake up covered in blood.

It was like the current Levi wasn't the one avenging his parents, but the little one... the traumatized inner child within him, who was buried in the depths of his heart.

It allowed Levi to live and survive the trauma... behaving like nothing happened. But in reality, it was all a trade.

It would behave and keep him sane... but the moment he reached the day he would have those two animals within his grasp, there was no longer reason, rationality, or such.

There was only justice and revenge.

And if he couldn't do it... His inner child would take over in a heartbeat, uncaring if he was in a spiritual trial, if any of this was real or not... it simply didn't care.

After what little Levi went through that night... the helplessness, the despair, the sadness, the pain; it would be a surprise if he managed to spend a single minute next to them.

No need to mention working hand in hand to free themselves from the cell.

So, Levi wasn't in a struggle to kill the Bishop and Darius... he was struggling to fight against his traumatized inner child and what he promised it in the future.

Ka-thang!

As Levi looked at the sinister smirks of the Bishop and Darius while they stepped inside the cell, he couldn't help but show a helpless smile. He knew what about to happen next, but he had no plans to stop it.

"No hard feelings, you said... all you gave me are hard feelings when I only wanted to live a short, but happy life with my family."

"Curse you... you ruined me."

Chapter 320: Somewhere Else.

"Ruined you?" The Bishop scoffed, "I wasn't the one who ruined you... I didn't care for you or your parents. You possessed a treasure I dearly needed... do I need any other reason to do what I did? Don't be a crybaby... this is the life of mortals; weak, helpless, and just lambs waiting for slaughter."

"True..." Darius chuckled, "Can you imagine their greatest wish to live a short, normal life? To know that anything and anyone can kill you at any time... isn't that the life of livestock? Born as food for superior lifeforms."

Hearing this, Levi could only tighten his grip until his nails pierced his palms... he knew that they were taunting him to kill them, but this time, he truly fought hard against the black hatred consuming his heart and mind.

"You speak high and mighty for someone in the same boat as us," Levi uttered coldly, gazing at Darius.

"Hahaha, not really..." Darius smirked mockingly, "Unlike you, I have already accepted and embraced it... Whatever happens to me or my loved ones happens because I am too weak to stop it... end of discussion. You will never catch me bitching about it, but you will find me working my hardest to reach the necessary strength to murder anyone daring to do the same."

"Oh, don't you worry, I am doing just that... and the two of you are the first on my list." Levi narrowed his eyes frigidly.

The Bishop broke into a short-lived, ridiculing laughter... then, his laugh turned into a menacing glare.

"You should thank me, you're still alive. I was being merciful by sparing you that night... if I wasn't in a good mood, you would have joined your family on the other side... Yet, this is my thanks? Tsk... as expected, mercy is nothing but leaving the problems of the past to fester into a sickness that looks like you."

The Bishop lifted his foot and showed it to Levi... the sole was filthy, crusted with dirt and something darker. Just the stench alone made Levi's grimace turn unholy.

But, when he heard the next part...

"You should be kissing the bottom of my feet to show your gratitude... come on, do it, I still have some faint in y..."

Before he could finish his sentence, Levi started laughing with his head lowered... at first, it was soft, almost like in disbelief of hearing what he said. Then, it broke into a laugh that sounded like a growl of a dormant beast.

A moment later, Levi threw himself off the bed and grabbed the Bishop by his extended leg, flinging him toward the rusty blue door.

TING!

The Bishop smashed against it and slid down to the floor... blood stained his busted lips. Yet, he only turned his head to Levi and grinned in amusement as he spat out in Levi's direction.

Seeing this, Levi rushed in his direction with a cruel look, his leg raised to the limit like he was about to kick a ball.

He knew it would feel good to smash the Bishop's head against the metal gate.

He knew this was what he always wanted.

But, at the same time... he knew that going for it was going to achieve nothing but repeat the loop.

TING!

In the end, he lifted his foot slightly and smashed it against the metal gate; the pain came in waves instantly, but Levi didn't feel a thing... he just held the small metal bars on the gate and started banging his foot on the door while roaring curses at the top of his lungs.

And yet, it wasn't as satisfying as killing those two animals... this left him to ignore them and start pacing in a circle... His breaths were fast, and he kept tearing his hair apart, resembling a true asylum madman.

While Levi was fighting with every ounce of his being to keep his sanity somewhat intact and avoid slaughtering them, the Bishop and Darius were unfortunately... still there.

Darius lay on the bed and yawned while turning his face to the wall, "If you aren't going to finish us, stop pacing and let me sleep."

The moment Levi heard this, a faint, crazed crackle escaped his lips as he slowly peeked at the chilling Darius.

At that moment, he knew... he wasn't finishing this trial any time soon.

Six months passed during the trial... Time had no voice there; it was a construct Levi had to make for himself to not lose his mind.

Right now... he was sitting on his bed, legs crossed, hands on his knees. His eyes were closed shut, lost deep within his own subconsciousness. He embraced his hatred, rage, and every dark thought that had been consuming him for the past months and just meditated.

Nothing more, nothing less...

After killing the Bishop and Darius over a thousand times in so many ways, the repetition, the loop, made him understand one hidden truth.

It came to him after the hundredth kill.

He stopped seeing this as a spiritual trial to prove a point to the Ancestral Trees... no, it became a test and more than that, an opening for greater things.

This trial was meant to break him and make him accept the folly of what he preached to the Ancestral Trees... instead, Levi started using it to train his mind and regain control over his emotions... to treat the instability at its core.

This didn't mean that he was seeking a holy redemption to forgive those two animals... not in a million years. He sought the cold steadiness that would allow him to take revenge and not ruin it by losing himself to his emotions.

Thus, he kept meditating in silence for days... forcing himself to listen to their voices, their curses, their taunts, and live amidst their presence that felt like an unclean stain.

He could sense them breathing, could hear the small movements they made in their straps... For days, for weeks, they tormented him until they pushed every soft place on him.

Levi wasn't perfect... as much as he tried his best to keep his meditation uninterrupted, they got to him more times than he would like to accept. And yet... every time the loop started, he meditated in silence.

He kept doing this over and over again, each time it took longer to break his peace... After three months, Levi finally reached the mental state to remove their straps and conclude the trial.

But, he didn't... he felt like he wasn't ready yet... like if he went for it, he'd do it just to conclude the trial and be done with it.

No, no, no... Levi no longer felt or thought this way. The moment his perspective changed, so did everything else.

Thus, he refused to leave this place until he reached the mental fortitude necessary to survive through anything.

In his eyes, he had already survived the torment of the Nightcrawlers, which strengthened his mental fortitude...But clearly, it wasn't enough.

He wanted to be able to see the Bishop and Darius's faces and smile without skipping a beat, while at the same time having what it took to slaughter them.

Pure controlled hatred and coldness... Only then could he avenge his parents successfully.

After an entire month of Levi sitting in silence... unmoving, unblinking, and terrifyingly calm... both Darius and the Bishop began to feel something they hadn't before: unease.

"What is this brat doing... does he really think he can conquer his hatred?" Darius scoffed, but his voice came out uncertain.

He was sitting there, strapped next to the wall, eyes half-open, pretending to be bored... but he kept stealing glances in Levi's direction, feeling the unease mounting up each second.

The silence was no longer expressing peace... it made him feel like he was staring at a boulder.

The way Levi sat there, breathing slowly, without moving an inch, made him sense that it was no longer a meditation for restraint. He looked like he had gone beyond rage, beyond pain, and beyond hate.

Sometimes Darius felt like Levi was staring at them with eyes wide open, but when he looked at him, he found them still closed.

This feeling made his skin crawl, like he was no longer staring at an orphan child they could abuse.

"He is not the same... don't waste your breath, he isn't even here anymore." The Bishop said calmly.

The Bishop was right... Levi's soul might be here, but his mind, his emotions, were channeled somewhere else.

Somewhere dark and quiet.

The place where he hid the part that had never healed.

The part that had watched his parents being murdered.

The little child in him that he hid in the darkest corners of his heart.