

Evolution 52

Chapter 52: Family's Love.

After Lord Idriss left them be, Levi helped his brother sit up and clean himself. From the thunderous rhythm of Arthur's heart, he could tell just how much effort had gone into pulling that greatsword. He had poured every ounce of strength into it, pushing well beyond his limits.

"You did good," Levi praised.

"I had to." Arthur gave a thumbs-up with a foolish smile. "He was about to expose us."

At that, everyone raised an eyebrow in surprise. None of them had expected Arthur to be clever enough to deflect Lord Idriss's probing like that.

Still, it worked. Lord Idriss had left without pushing further. Shia knew it was for the best. Even if he'd shown a flicker of interest in Levi, he wouldn't have recommended him.

Each agency was only allowed to give out one recommendation letter. The bigger ones could give two at most. And in Lord Idriss's case, someone had already claimed the second.

He wouldn't be foolish enough to hand Arthur's letter to Levi.

"You lucky dog. I can't believe Lord Idriss is going to train you for two whole months," Sergio said as he stepped forward and smacked Arthur on the back. He tried to hide his jealousy, but it was obvious. Seeing his lord pick a citizen over him stung.

Meanwhile, Jamal had Arthur in a playful headlock, his twig-like arms making it look like Arthur was wearing a black scarf.

"You must be excited," Jamal gritted through his teeth, half-joking, half-burning with envy. He wanted nothing more than to choke Arthur out cold—but knew his arms would snap if he tried.

"Ah... I don't think I'll go." Arthur shook his head, almost twisting Jamal's arm in the process.

Jamal froze.

"What are you talking about?" Shia frowned.

She might have resented her father's rigid expectations, but she still respected his power. A few moments of his guidance were more valuable than most would ever realize.

Arthur had no idea how lucky he was, and yet, he was planning to throw it away. It was beyond foolish.

"I thought we'd train in Tamara," Arthur said simply. "I'm not going to the capital and leaving my brother behind."

"Arthy, I'll be fine on my own," Levi smiled, patting his brother's shoulder. "Go and learn as much as possible. Opportunities like this are rare. Most candidates would do anything to have them."

"Are you sure?" Arthur asked, his brows knitting. "It's a whole two months."

"You think I won't survive two months without you?" Levi's tone sharpened.

'Big bro, I'm worried you might overheat and pass out again from your cultivation,' Arthur sent through Astra AI.

"I'll be fine," Levi smiled serenely, as if to say, I'm not the same as before.

Arthur fell quiet. He had seen it himself; how his brother now moved without a cane, how his eyes saw more than his own. Levi had told him about his new ability and how drastically it had improved his awareness.

Still, Arthur knew that Levi liked to step out every now and then, and it would be harder without him.

"How about you come with me?"

"No. It's best I remain in Tamara," Levi said with a shake of his head.

He preferred the quiet of his apartment. It made cultivation and training easier. The capital would be too noisy, too distracting.

Besides, if Levi came along, Arthur wouldn't be able to focus. He'd be too busy worrying about him.

"Ah... if you say so."

In the end, Arthur relented. He knew better than anyone how stubborn his brother could be.

When they finished their talk, Arthur turned to the silent group and asked, "So... are you going to show us your ultimate or not?"

Everyone had always known the Larson brothers were close. But none of them had expected Arthur to willingly pass on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity just to stay with his blind brother. It was a level of loyalty and love they simply couldn't fathom.

For Levi and Arthur, though, it was nothing new.

They had been orphans for as long as they could remember, raised by each other, protected by each other. The trials they had survived would have melted even stone.

"Ah, sure," Shia finally said, pulling herself from her thoughts. She walked away from the group, her mind racing.

The thrill of her perfect breakthrough had faded, replaced with something quieter, emptier.

'What's the matter?' Blee'der asked softly.

'I don't know...' Shia lied.

She did know. Deep down, she knew exactly what was wrong. But she couldn't say it, not even to her contracted partner.

How could she admit that what the Larson brothers shared was her dream?

A simple dream. To have a family's love. To know, without question, that someone would stand in her corner at all costs.

Instead, her family was a machine. A corporate empire where affection was measured in results. Success granted status; failure meant erasure.

Levi and Arthur sought strength, authority, and legacy.

Shia? She just wanted to be loved.

Yet, that seemed more unattainable than any of their paths.

She steeled herself, pushing the ache deep down, just like she'd been taught.

Then, without a word, she summoned her crescent-bladed crimson glaive. Her hair began to crystallize at the ends, and her eyes turned a gleaming crimson.

With one flawless upward sweep of her glaive, a wave of massive blood-crystal towers erupted from the ground and charged the steel door.

BOOOOOOOOM!!

The towers slammed against the steel and surrounding walls, sending shockwaves through the room. If not for the shock-absorbing barriers, the entire Training Center would have been leveled.

Shia lowered her glaive, popped a lollipop in her mouth, and walked away from the smoking scene. Her face was unreadable.

Her short figure cast a massive shadow against the jagged blood towers—an image that captured the quiet, terrifying strength she kept hidden.

"Shia... that was awesome!"

"Holy—now that's what I call an ultimate!"

"Aaaaaah! I so want a perfect evolution too!"

Sergio, Jamal, and Arthur rushed toward her, all grinning with awe. Shia smiled softly at their praise, though her heart wasn't in it.

Then, a quiet voice reached her.

"It will be alright."

She turned. Behind the others, Levi stood, leaning on his cane, his smile calm and reassuring.

She blinked, startled. How had he known?

There was no way he could read her thoughts, yet everything about him, his words, his tone, his presence... it felt like he understood.

She didn't know that Levi could hear her heartbeats, and with them, her emotions. His attunement to others was sharper than most would believe. From her silence and her pulse alone, he had sensed the shift in her mood.

He didn't know exactly why. But he had known she needed reassurance. And he gave it.

Shia stared for a long moment.

Then she smiled, genuinely this time—and murmured, "Thank you."

...

A short while later...

Shia had taken care of the destruction she'd caused. With a wave of her hand, the towering, crystallized blood pillars broke apart into liquid form. Blee'der devoured the scarlet stream eagerly, storing it away for later use.

Though solar energy was required to fuel and manifest abilities, once something was created, it remained. It was like converting solar energy into permanent matter through the Shadowlife seed's will.

Had this not been the case, humanity wouldn't have rebuilt itself so swiftly in under a century. Many Daywalkers had contributed to the recreation of raw materials: iron, steel, glass, and more, reshaping the world in record time.

Without their intervention, civilization would still be clawing its way through a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Instead, society now stood on the shoulders of Daywalkers' governance, focusing on technological advancement and regional stability.

Of course, the emergence of the Solar Aegis Sanctuaries had played a pivotal role in this resurgence, but that was a conversation for another time.

Once the training room returned to its usual state, Shia gathered everyone in front of a pristine wall of smooth silver steel.

Then, with a calm command, she said, "Open up the arsenal."

With a soft hiss, the bottom of the wall split open and slid back, revealing a brilliantly lit display of weapons, each one resting neatly on angled ledges. Swords, spears, gauntlets, rifles, bows, pistols...dozens of weapons, each gleaming with readiness.

Since Daywalkers could wield nearly any weapon type, most agencies ensured their training centers were stocked with everything imaginable. The goal was clear: help future candidates discover the weapons that would eventually evolve with them, sometimes even becoming unique Variants.

"Arthur," Shia began, turning to him with a serious look, "I know you're training under my father starting tomorrow, but it's best you choose your weapon before then."

"Why's that?" Arthur asked.

Shia folded her arms. "Because he can be... stubborn. I fear he might force a weapon on you under the pretense of 'knowing what's best.'"

It wasn't an exaggeration. There were many lineage families where every member used the same weapon type, generation after generation. To some high-ranking Daywalkers, free will was just a liability.

Arthur grinned. "Don't worry. I already chose my weapon when I was eight."

He walked confidently toward the wall, bypassing blades and guns, and stopped in front of a dusty, circular brown shield. Compared to the rest, it looked almost forgotten, untouched for years.

He lifted it from its ledge and strapped it to his arm, turning back to face the group.

With a big, foolish smile, he struck a dramatic pose.

"How do I look? Dashing, right?"