

## Evolution 57

Chapter 57: The Recruitment Office.

Out of nowhere, Ash'Kral's malicious voice echoed from behind Levi. When he turned around, he found the little creature flapping his tiny wings, his singular eye narrowed to the limit.

"You heard wrong," Levi coughed, quickly changing the subject. "I only have half a day before the assembly... do you think it's best to unlock the second ability now?"

"You can, but I doubt you'll be able to use it," Ash'Kral replied lazily. "Don't forget, you ain't a Daywalker in their eyes... and it's best to keep it that way."

Levi thought for a moment. Unlocking it now might help in emergencies... but then it hit him.

He'd be fighting non-Daywalkers.

Some of them might be tough, sure... but he was a Daywalker. Did he really need a second ability to handle civilians? That thought alone made him feel ashamed.

I'm already signed up... so I've got nothing to lose, Levi told himself, steeling his heart. Echolocation is the only ability I need. If I still lose... it means I need to improve myself, not stack cheats.

Ash'Kral simply smiled and said nothing.

...

The next morning...

Levi had finalized his preparations and eaten his breakfast. Without waiting for anyone, he left the apartment and headed straight to the recruitment center in a taxi. He carried only his smooth black metallic staff and a backpack filled with essentials.

He had called Arthur the day before to check on him. Lord Idriss still wasn't finished with his training... and Arthur had said they'd meet again at the assembly itself.

Levi could only smile sympathetically, not even wanting to imagine the kind of hell his brother was being put through.

After a fifteen-minute ride, the driver dropped him off near a massive crowd of people ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-six.

Three long queues wound in front of a modest government office... the recruitment center, and the first blockade on the path to becoming a Daywalker.

Usually, nearly all young people within that age range qualified, as the requirements weren't that strict:

-Two-time repeat limit

-Must be under twenty-six

-No serious criminal record

-No major mental instability

-Definitely no ankle monitor wearers

Simple conditions... meant to give most children a fair shot without needing connections or wealth.

But for Levi, that last condition had always been a wall.

As long as he wasn't a Daywalker and remained blind, the ankle monitor wasn't coming off. That monitor made him ineligible... until now.

He focused his hearing, filtering out irrelevant sounds until he picked up a specific street noise behind the crowd. Using it to map the area, he made his way toward an empty curb and sat down, resting his backpack on his lap.

He waited silently... surrounded by families, friends, and supporters of the candidates.

The recruitment process usually lasted about two hours at most. With three recruiters and Neuralens scanning tech, things moved fast. They only needed to scan a device and confirm a candidate's public records. If everything checked out, they were in... and sent straight to the Solar Aegis Sanctuary.

Levi was waiting for the final moments of the recruitment window. The later he went in, the fewer eyes and the less drama.

As for Arthur? Lineage candidates like him were processed privately.

Since Levi was technically one of them—sponsored by a lineage—Shia had taken it upon herself to shield both brothers during recruitment. A lot of effort had gone into making sure Levi slipped through the cracks.

Eventually, the serpentine lines vanished. Most applicants were accepted and sent toward the sanctuary, faces split between excitement and dread... a few were turned away, shoulders sagging as they left in silence.

"It's the moment of truth..."

Levi exhaled deeply and stood up. His posture straightened, head held high, black circular glasses hiding his unseeing eyes. To any observer, he didn't look blind at all.

He entered the office and used echolocation to guide himself toward the booths.

Two were already closed... only the central one remained staffed.

Levi walked up and gave a polite smile. "I'd like to participate in the Contract Ritual Assembly."

The recruiter was an older man... full white beard, deep-set wrinkles, and a bald spot he tried to hide by styling the rest of his hair backward. Yet, it still gleamed under the harsh lighting.

"Name?" the man asked, clearly impatient.

He'd nearly finished his shift and was moments away from joining his coworkers for coffee... until Levi walked in.

Levi instantly recognized the man's voice. He was the same recruiter who had thrown him out alongside Arthur last year. Still, he kept his face neutral.

"Levi Larson."

The recruiter paused. The name stirred something in his memory.

"Is this your second attempt?"

"No."

"Hmmm... I see."

The man didn't dwell on it. He dealt with hundreds of faces and names each year... they blurred together. But when he pulled up Levi's public record, his eyes widened.

"It's you again! I knew I recognized you!" the recruiter snapped. "Brat, haven't you wasted enough of my time last year? Why are you back again?"

"You told me to come back with either a recommendation letter or a miracle that restored my sight," Levi said calmly. "Check your inbox."

He forwarded an official file via Astra AI.

The recruiter was already reaching for security when his screen lit up with a signed recommendation letter.

At first, he assumed it was fake... but as he skimmed through the document and saw the Morningstar insignia, his jaw slackened.

"You... you got the Morningstars to sponsor you? You?"

"Yes, me," Levi smiled faintly. "Got a problem with that?"

"No, no, I was just... looking out for you," the man stammered, his tone shifting completely. "You don't know how brutal the trials can get. Someone like y..."

"I'll stop you right there," Levi cut in smoothly. "I've got a signed letter, and I also have Shia Morningstar's number. If you've got a problem, I can call her... You can explain to her why her family's sponsored candidate didn't make it into the assembly on time."

"No, no, no... no need to bother Miss Shia with such things."

The recruiter stood up, sweating, flustered. He quickly approved Levi's application and forwarded a copy to his inbox.

Levi had Astra read it aloud, just to verify... then gave a nod and walked off toward the Solar Aegis Sanctuary.

The recruiter stared after him, torn between calling the authorities or contacting someone inside the Morningstar family. A reward might be involved... or at least some clout.

Then he sighed.

Since the letter was legit, whatever happened next wasn't his problem. As a senior civil servant nearing retirement, he wasn't about to get involved in something that might jeopardize his pension.

If someone in the Morningstar family had issued that letter... that was their business. Poking around would only get him in trouble.

'I don't get paid enough for this crap...'

He shut down his booth and left to join his peers for coffee, not even mentioning what had just happened.

Unbeknownst to either of them... the moment Levi's name was registered, a signal was sent to a very interested party.

"As expected... Shia really tried to pull a fast one on us," Lord Idriss said with a sip of tea.

He was seated at a small table on the rooftop garden, enjoying the sunlight with his wife.

"If it weren't for your visit to Tamara, we wouldn't have known until it was too late," Madam Naima replied, a tinge of disappointment in her voice for her daughter.

Sponsoring a blind candidate to appear on national TV? Their lineage's image would be humiliated.

"I disagree," Lord Idriss said, recalling his first meeting with Levi.

The boy hadn't impressed him with action... but there was something else. A hunger. A fire. A quiet, dangerous potential.

"For people like him... disabilities aren't weaknesses. They're fuel," Idriss said, smiling. "Let the boy compete. If he succeeds, great. If he fails... we still have Arthur. If we reject him now, we might lose them both."

"And public opinion?" Naima asked, frowning.

"Darling... have you gotten too caught up in politics?" Idriss said with a shrug. "Public opinion? Since when have we ever cared for that? Let them laugh... our family will remain untouched. Our agency will stay at the top."

Naima stared at her husband... then laughed softly.

She realized she had, in fact, grown soft. Too many years behind a desk had dulled her edge.

"I think I'll be joining you on the next expedition," she said, a dangerous glint in her eyes. "Time to warm up my blood again."

"Really? Haha! Now that's some good news," Lord Idriss grinned, eyes gleaming with delight.