

Evolution 65

Chapter 65: Giving Out A Hand.

"My assumption is Astra AI and superhuman senses," Lord Idriss replied. "I've met him... his spiritual prowess alone was on a different plane of talent."

"Wait, don't tell me he's an Ano..."

"We're about to find out," Lord Idriss cut her off, not wanting to indulge in speculation when the truth was unfolding before their eyes.

After Levi arrived at the area with the weighted vests, he noticed that the hill was packed with candidates, most carrying only a single vest.

Since the participants were mixed, the vests were divided into three categories: Light (4.5–9 kg), Moderate (9–18 kg), and Heavy (18–36 kg).

Everyone was free to choose whichever they wanted.

"The points are scored based on one's body weight in correlation with the lifted weight. That's fair to everyone... but not to Arthy," Levi thought, shifting his focus to find his little brother with echolocation.

Sure enough, he spotted Arthur struggling... he had a heavy vest strapped to his back while giving a piggyback to another four moderate ones. He didn't look comfortable in the slightest.

While this weight was already insane in the eyes of most viewers and candidates nearby, Levi knew his brother could lift much more if his form was better suited.

"This trial is his best shot at scoring the highest number of points."

Without hesitation, Levi loaded up a heavy vest on his torso, then placed two medium vests and two light ones on the ground.

-What's he doing?-

-Don't tell me he's about to carry all of that up a five-kilometer slope... How?-

-Wait, is he loading the weight onto his staff?! That's insane!-

Under the stunned gazes of viewers across the region, Levi lifted his loaded staff and rested it across the back of his neck. With a slightly hunched posture, he started up the slope... resembling an old village granny carrying half her body weight on a mountain trail.

"Breathe in... breathe out..."

Levi kept his breathing controlled, syncing each breath with every step. His thighs and calves tensed with effort, tightening to their limits.

Still, he moved faster than many candidates who had to stop to catch their breath.

Arthur was one of them... but not because of exhaustion. He had paused to fix the positioning of the vests.

"Goddamn it... Can this be any more uncomfortable?" Arthur grumbled, resisting the urge to toss a few vests aside and sprint to the top. He knew that would cripple his point tally.

As he crouched to adjust the vests, his eyes caught a metallic gleam below. When he squinted to get a better look, his eyes lit up. "Big bro?!"

He had expected Levi to catch up eventually, but not this fast... not when he had more than a minute's head start.

"Levi!" he shouted, waving wildly, uncaring of the looks he received.

"Arthur! Meet me halfway!"

Hearing Levi's voice, Arthur didn't hesitate. He dropped the vests and charged downhill, assuming his brother needed help.

Thankfully, only five hundred meters separated them. Once they met, Arthur took the metallic staff off Levi's shoulders without question.

"I brought this extra weight for you." Levi wiped the sweat from his forehead. "Fill the staff with the remaining vests. That way, you can carry everything at once."

"Haha! Just what I needed," Arthur grinned. "It's not a deadlift bar, but it'll do."

"Let's move."

Levi gave a slight nod, and together they jogged back to retrieve the vests.

"Jackpot!"

"Quick! Grab them before the hunk returns!"

Elsewhere, two candidates attempted to steal Arthur's vests. One was a burly man in his twenties with a thick beard. The other, a fair-skinned blonde teenager.

They knew the scoring system awarded points based on the carried weight at the finish line... not how far it was carried. Many were already abusing this loophole, ambushing others near the end of the slope to steal their vests and inflate their scores.

Instructor Seraphis observed it all and said nothing. In his eyes, the vests weren't just weights... they were currency. And if you couldn't protect your money, that was your problem.

"Big bro! They're stealing my vests!"

Arthur's voice was laced with fury. Levi honed in on the thieves using echolocation and said coldly, "No one steals from the Larsons."

He shifted from a jog to an all-out sprint... still weighed down, but accelerating with brutal intent.

Arthur matched his brother's energy and charged forward without hesitation, as if he weren't carrying over a hundred kilograms on his back.

In moments, they closed the distance. The two thieves were visibly struggling with just two vests each.

Hearing Arthur's thundering steps, they looked back and paled.

"Crap! The hunk's coming! Run, bro!"

"Run?! I can barely walk! Drop the vests!"

Realizing escape was hopeless, they flung the vests away and tried to flee.

But it was too late.

Levi emerged from behind Arthur like a predator... silent, swift, deadly.

He caught the bearded man by the back of his shirt and slammed him to the ground with a thud.

"Argh!!"

"Noah!" the blonde boy cried out.

He turned to see his brother unconscious, with Levi removing the vest from his chest.

"You bastards!" the boy snarled. "We already dropped the vests. Did you really have to eliminate my brother?! This was his last chance to get contracted!"

"Vicious?" Levi echoed, tilting his head. He stepped closer... calm and cold. The boy instantly dropped into a fighting stance.

"If I wanted to be vicious, I would've eliminated both of you," Levi said flatly. He extended his hand. "If you care about your brother's chances, hand me your vest."

The boy hesitated... then glanced at his brother's motionless body and understood. Without a word, he tossed the vest at Levi's feet and rushed back to wake Noah.

Levi took the vest and helped Arthur load it on the staff. Soon, it vanished under the pile of weight.

When Instructor Seraphis and the nightcrawlers counted the vests on Arthur's shoulders, they realized he was carrying over two hundred kilograms!

-What a Jauggraunt! Is this brat still a teen?-

-His strength is abnormal for someone his age...I can't believe I found a jackpot in such a deserted region.-

The nightcrawlers checked Arthur's participation details and couldn't help but feel astonished at his ludicrous strength...age-wise.

"Now that's the good stuff."

Arthur beamed as he hoisted the load like it was a barbell, then started up the slope, the grin never leaving his face. For him, this wasn't a trial... it was a workout.

"I'm taking your shield. Bring my staff to the finish line in one piece."

Levi tapped his brother on the chest, grabbed the shield, and took off for the top of the hill.

Watching it all unfold, the blonde thief realized Levi had done everything... risking his own points... for his brother. His resentment slowly evaporated, replaced by admiration.

With renewed determination, he lifted his brother onto his back and began his climb... one step at a time.

Meanwhile, Levi reached the slope's peak, carrying only one heavy vest. Though exhausted, it would've been far worse had he carried everything himself. He wasn't a musclehead like Arthur... he had his own limits.

As for the other candidates?

None dared antagonize him now. Not after what they witnessed.

Levi knew they wouldn't mess with Arthur either. Bullies only targeted the weak. And those fools understood... they wouldn't walk away unscathed if they touched his brother.

"Nurah and Demetris already crossed the Silent Lake and made it to the finish line. I may need to go all in if I want to beat them."

Standing at the trial's highest point, Levi sent out a series of echolocation pulses, scanning the landscape.

Below was a steep hill, followed by a shimmering, quiet lake. Most of the top ten were already swimming across, racing toward the finish.

Others sat at the edge, panting in exhaustion... completely spent.

They had burned too much energy and now hesitated to swim the last hundred meters.

With two hours total to complete the trial, no one dared enter until they'd recovered.

Levi noticed that those descending the steep hill were doing so slowly, careful not to fall. The slope wasn't just for show... it tested balance and control.

But Levi knew that going slow would cost him... by the time he reached the lake, the top spots would be gone.

He'd already spent three minutes thinking through each stage of this trial. He didn't grab Arthur's shield just for the giggles; he needed it...

"This could go badly... but screw it."