

## Evolution 67

Chapter 67: A Fun Little Wager.

After Levi arrived next to his rivals, he sat down and asked with his usual unprovocative smile, "Is there a towel or something?"

Nurah stared at him speechlessly for a moment before uttering, "You are actually crazy..."

"Crazy? He is a cheater, that's what he is," Demetris scoffed.

He wasn't impressed in the slightest with how Levi passed the fourth stage.

Maybe he was jealous of his score. Maybe he was embarrassed at being bumped to third place after Levi snatched rank one from Nurah.

Or maybe, he genuinely believed there was no decent way to pass a stage where endurance and stamina were supposed to be tested.

Whatever it was, Levi didn't even bother to respond. In his mind, it wasn't up to him to dispute an accusation.

Yet, to his surprise, Nurah was the one backing him.

"Aren't you being a bit of a sore loser?" Nurah narrowed her eyes in displeasure. "Instructor Seraphis told us we could use whatever means necessary to reach the finish line, as long as we respected the rules."

"Yes, and the rules were put in place to ensure our stats get measured accurately," Demetris retorted. "In what universe does a triple SSS count when he slid across the lake instead of swimming it like we did?"

"How is that his problem?" Nurah frowned. "I'd like to believe that discovering loopholes within rules should be rewarded, not punished. It's a sign of intelligence, not cheating. If you think otherwise, you're just being a hater. I know for a fact you would've done the same if the idea had come to you."

"Me? I don't need to abuse the rules to come first," Demetris sneered, refusing to back down.

If only the viewers and nightcrawlers thought the same way, he wouldn't be getting grilled on the networks and across the Shadow Dimension.

-That's one of the coolest trial finishes I've witnessed in a long, long time. If what he did counts as cheating, then you might as well cancel the assembly. No sane nightcrawler will see wrong in what the boy did- One of the nightcrawlers commented out loud, his voice as rough as an unpolished diamond.

Is that...?

Levi immediately lifted his head, recognizing the voice as belonging to the crystalized black rhino he had met during his shower. He couldn't help but smile at the support, sensing that the rhino said it to repay him for showing him the way.

The nightcrawlers and viewers backed up the rhino's claim with overwhelming support, even though they knew Levi's trash light affinity would make any result he pulled obsolete in the end.

"Instructor Seraphis, it's your call."

Demetris reached out to the silent overseer above them, realizing no one was on his side in this matter. He knew deep down that he was right; he believed that if Levi's results were accepted, the stat accuracy would become meaningless, as an SSS would equate to an F.

Unfortunately for him, Instructor Seraphis knew what he was doing when he designed the Gauntlet of Titans.

He silenced the nightcrawlers' ruckus with a thought and said calmly, "Levi Larson's final score is legitimate."

The moment Demetris and his older brother Mantis heard this, their expressions turned dark. While Mantis cursed at the TV screen from beside his agency's companions, Demetris kept his emotions in check and asked for clarification.

"Did any of you ever wonder why Larson succeeded in traversing the lake in one slide? Why was it even possible, considering that many hurdles should have made it impossible? Why did I leave resting chairs at the top of the slope in the middle of a competition?" Instructor Seraphis asked.

With each question fired, Demetris, Nurah, and even the viewers felt their pupils narrow as the realization struck... Instructor Seraphis wanted them to do exactly what Levi did!

Even Levi was somewhat taken aback. He hadn't expected the instructor to incorporate the slide into the trial's design.

But when he thought about it more closely, everything was too perfect to be a coincidence.

The shallowness of the water... the steepness of the hill... the smooth grass field... the launching area between the hill and the lake. Everything had been constructed precisely to make the slide viable, but only for those with the guts and skills to attempt it.

While Levi had done his part to ensure success, he now realized none of it would've been possible if the conditions hadn't aligned so seamlessly.

'Instructor Seraphis... he's the real deal,' Levi thought, gazing at the instructor's contained golden spiritual aura with admiration.

"You thought I was testing your endurance or balance with the fourth stage... but in reality, it was to test your adaptability," Instructor Seraphis continued. "Why do you think you scored only an A grade?"

"It can't be..." Demetris mumbled in disbelief.

The viewers were equally stunned, but some Daywalkers familiar with Seraphis' teaching methods weren't surprised. His tests always had curveballs. They just hadn't expected one like this.

"One more note. Stats accuracy means nothing to me. Besides light affinity, I couldn't care less about your scores. I have my own eyes to judge, and so do the nightcrawlers," Instructor Seraphis added indifferently. "Or have you forgotten your original reason for entering this assembly?"

"No..."

"Then why are you focused on stats instead of delivering your best performance, regardless of what the rules say?"

As he spoke, Demetris lifted his gaze toward the thousands of eyes looming in the sky... watching his every move like hawks.

"Possessing a great light affinity is a good start, but it's not what gets you far in life. It will get you signed, yes, but not by Tier 4 and higher nightcrawlers. Those monsters only commit to a partner when they know he's not a one-gift wonder," Instructor Seraphis concluded, then looked directly at Demetris. "So tell me... are you a one-gift wonder?"

A one-gift wonder referred to children born with amazing light affinity but no other redeeming qualities. While that might land them a contract, their path as a Daywalker could be even harder than someone with lesser talent.

After all, light affinity was mainly about eye resistance to light... not combat effectiveness.

"No, sir!" Demetris shook his head firmly.

"Then keep your mouth shut next time and work harder in the upcoming trials."

That was Seraphis' final word before he drifted away to observe the rest of the candidates.

He only said this much because the others couldn't hear. He would never compromise the competition's integrity.

After the instructor departed, Demetris approached Levi and said quietly, "My apologies... it seems I wronged you."

"Don't sweat it. It happens," Levi replied with a kind smile.

Demetris gave a respectful nod and walked away to sit elsewhere.

"You think he apologized sincerely?" Nurah asked, crossing one leg over the other.

"Not in a million years." Levi shook his head, listening to Demetris' heartbeat.

He could feel the boiling rage inside, tightly controlled, but very much alive.

This whole episode had humiliated him. He hadn't just been proven wrong... he'd been scolded in front of nightcrawlers and his entire home region.

"I think so, too." Nurah giggled. "You are definitely in his crosshairs."

"What are you giggling for?" Levi chuckled. "He might be coming for me... but I'm coming for you."

"Oh, is that so?"

Nurah smiled seductively, but Levi didn't spare her a glance.

"I'm afraid this trial was your last chance to widen your lead," Levi said calmly. "From here on out, all you'll see is my shadow."

He said it loud enough for Demetris to hear... and didn't care.

He was that confident in the trials to come, the ones where his true talents would shine.

"It seems you're underestimating me," Nurah teased. "How about a fun little wager to spice things up?"

"Hmmm? What do you have in mind?" Levi acted surprised, though he was grinning inwardly.

This was the reaction he wanted; the reason he even approached her.

"Since you're so sure you'll catch up and steal my leaderboard rank, how about we bet some Solar Aegis Coins?"

"How much?"

"Name your price. I have deep pockets," Nurah replied.

Levi didn't doubt her. The Blackthorn family was known as one of the wealthiest in the Northern Africa District, even wealthier than the Morningstars.

Their assassination services were paid almost exclusively in Solar Aegis Coins, the most valuable currency in the world.

"How about the prize money... plus two thousand Solar Aegis Coins?" Levi suggested.

He only had one thousand in hand; Arthur held the other half. But Levi didn't hesitate to bet everything to swindle even more from Nurah.

Nurah didn't flinch.

"Sounds interesting... let's do it."

She extended her thin, smooth hand, and Levi shook it without even turning his head. While his peculiar manner intrigued her, she never imagined he was blind.

Neither did the instructor, nor the nightcrawlers, nor the viewers.

After what he'd done in the Gauntlet of Titans... no one in their right mind believed Levi was visually impaired.

And Levi knew it.

He also knew that going high-profile carried the risk of someone discovering the truth during the week-long assembly.

But he didn't care.

Since Ash'Kral promised that no one would uncover their contract and that he would handle the fake signing procedures, Levi saw no reason to stay low-profile.

He understood that to be signed by Ash'Kral without raising suspicions, he had to overperform.

Sigining a blind candidate was considered suicidal in most eyes.

Levi had to convince the world that his other qualities were so overwhelming... that even blindness couldn't hold him back.

In his mind, it was far easier to explain future miracles under the spotlight than in the shadows.

Suddenly, Demetris returned and requested calmly, "Is it possible to be added to the wager?"

"Well, of course," Levi said with a wide, kind smile. "The more, the merrier."