

## Evolution 87

Chapter 87: The Conclusion of The First Phase.

When the viewers and nightcrawlers saw his ratings, they didn't bother taking them seriously, as they knew it was based exclusively on duration.

If Levi had taken the trial earnestly from the beginning, he would have scored SSS+ easily.

"An Anomaly in our forgotten region... who would have imagined?" Lord Idriss uttered.

"This could have been massive for our region's development..." Madam Naima sighed. "If only he weren't blind."

In the eyes of high-ranked Daywalkers and nightcrawlers, an Anomaly signified an extraordinary talent in a single domain...enough to guarantee a powerful evolutionary path, even with a limited evolution.

However, in Levi's case... they believed his options with nightcrawlers would be limited, if not nonexistent, once they found out about his disability.

Thus, they could only hope for a psych specialization nightcrawler to ignore the disability and its negative effects on cultivation, committing to Levi regardless.

Soon, Levi found himself teleported next to Melissa, who had watched the entire race outside the arena's range.

The moment she saw him, she didn't hesitate to give him a tight hug in appreciation.

"Thank you, thank you, Levi. You are the absolute best!"

She was so excited and grateful for his help, she nearly kissed him on the cheek.

When she got eliminated, she became discouraged and on the verge of tears. After all, she was the Morningstars' sponsored candidate, whom they had rested their hopes on.

Yet, she got eliminated under Keira.

Worse, she was the only one eliminated from her squad, which made her feel extremely disappointed with herself.

But, as she was wallowing in sorrow, the gasps of nearby eliminated candidates attracted her attention to the track.

When she saw what was going on, she couldn't help but cover her mouth in shock at the sight of Levi's doll carrying hers to the finish line.

Although he didn't help her cross it, she knew that once the bulk of the dolls arrived, they would push hers through the finish line, helping her conclude the race.

While Levi had no problems giving a hand to his friends, this was still an individual-based performance trial.

He had no intention of letting anyone score higher than him, especially if it was going to affect his wager negatively.

He knew he needed Demetris to finish the race within the top five to maintain his third rank, and Levi wanted that reward specifically.

"Don't mention it. It's what friends do."

Levi smiled faintly as he gently wiggled out of her hug, not too comfortable with physical affection.

After separating, Levi told her that while he did his part, it was still up to Instructor Seraphis to decide whether it would be allowed or not.

The rules might not have been broken...since they stated that dolls needed to cross the finish line for their owners to pass the trial instead of being eliminated by others or leaving the arena's range. But...they meant nothing before Instructor Seraphis' final verdict.

'How terrifying is his spiritual pool to carry out such precise commands and still seem unbothered?' Omar narrowed his eyes at Levi while standing next to the medical staff.

Even the nightcrawlers were astonished, realizing that Levi might truly be an Anomaly, as no contractless child had ever been found on Earth with this kind of spiritual potential.

—Alas... his light affinity.—

—He is the perfect partner... but his light affinity will hinder his growth immensely.—

—Kekeke, you guys know nothing... That boy is far more special than you could ever imagine.— One of the nightcrawlers chuckled in amusement after recalling what Levi did in the light affinity trial.

When questions rained down on him to elaborate, he merely kept laughing in anticipation.

Sometime later...

The Trial of Spirituality concluded following a peaceful battlefield. After Levi passed, only a few battles occurred here and there.

His party remained untouched, as no one was left to take them down besides Nurah. But she didn't bother wasting her time with them.

What happened between her and Levi still occupied her mind during the last remaining minutes, until her doll crossed the finish line.

As for Demetris? He was taken by the medical staff for a check-up after his doll succeeded too.

Of course, he was teleported while still tied up like a shrimp, making some of the medical staff stifle their laughter as they helped him out.

As Instructor Seraphis claimed, the track was designed for all the dolls to cross, even if one possessed the worst possible spiritual potential.

Thus, besides the eliminated candidates, many others managed to finish while remaining hidden until the end of the trial, not fighting even once.

At the moment, they could be seen standing amongst the finishers with a tint of gloat in their eyes as they gazed at the group of eliminated candidates.

'I was right to hide... a battle royale would have gotten me eliminated at the beginning...'

'Heh..Bunch of idiots, why expose your cards before the true Trial of Combat?'

Before some of them could feel pleased with themselves at their 'strategic' decision, Instructor Seraphis concluded casually, "With that, the first phase of the Contract Ritual Assembly has been concluded."

"Huh?"

"Did I hear wrong?"

"What does he mean by finished already? What about the Trial of Combat?"

The candidates gasped simultaneously in stupefaction, not daring to believe what their ears were feeding them.

The Contract Ritual Assembly was split into two phases: the Trial and the Ritual.

The ritual phase started once the trials were concluded and the nightcrawlers were given all possible information about this year's candidates. But the trials were always five, with the trial of combat left for the end.

Alas, Instructor Seraphis doubled down on his announcement.

"You heard right... the first phase has been concluded. As for the trial of combat? You have just finished it."

Under the stunned looks of the candidates, Instructor Seraphis created a new holographic screen with their combat performances written for each one of them.

When the candidates who avoided battles saw their squeaky-clean performance tablets and the massive elimination stamp at the bottom, the color drained from their faces.

I must be dreaming... This ain't happening to me... Me, eliminated, me... This isn't right!

No one dared to believe it or accept it.

Who could blame them? All candidates had been preparing for the final Trial of Combat, as they knew it was the most crucial one in the assembly.

Some even had written plans for many scenarios to excel in anything thrown at them. Yet, none of them saw this curveball coming.

Sadly, Instructor Seraphis wasn't a big fan of explaining his decisions.

"Please escort out all the eliminated candidates in the trial of combat. As for the rest? They are still eliminated, but can be signed."

"No!! You can't do this to me!! This ain't right, I passed the Trial of Spirituality!!"

"I didn't know! I didn't know, god damn it!"

"My fighting skills are ten times better! Please, just give me a chance!!"

The escort didn't go well. Many candidates were seen fighting off the staff members with bloodshot eyes, screaming their lungs out for the Instructor to hear them out.

To be eliminated from a trial was one thing, but to get kicked out this far into the assembly was another.

Sadly, the staff members were military-trained. Anyone who dared to cause trouble got smacked in the neck and tossed through the dimensional mirror, sent straight back to their homes.

In no time, the number of finishers in the Trial of Spirituality barely exceeded seven, while the majority of candidates had been 'eliminated'. Yet, they remained standing with baffled expressions, unsure of what was happening.

—Hahaha! Classic move by Instructor Seraphis. You must always expect curveballs in his assembly.—

—I knew something was off with this trial... It's too focused on battles for a Trial of Spirituality.—

—While I am somewhat disappointed with no Trial of Combat, I understand that this is a much better test of one's true character.—

The nightcrawlers and viewers immediately got behind Instructor Seraphis' decision, as they knew that no nightcrawler would bother signing up a candidate who was too much of a coward to fight and showcase his talents.

If they were too afraid to fight in a contained, safe environment due to its chaotic aspect, then they weren't ready for Expeditions, Raids, or even defending their streets from the Gates.

'Phew, it's good that I stuck by.' Levi smiled as he listened to Astra read his combat performance.

While it was highly rated, he received a dip in the final score due to his defeat under Nurah. It might not have counted as him getting eliminated by her, but still...

"God damn it, how am I so f\*cking unlucky."

Arthur pulled his face in frustration after realizing that his chances to show his true prowess had been killed.

The two candidates he beat down weren't good enough to take a single punch from him. He was placing most of his hopes on the Trial of Combat.

"Don't overthink it. The high-tiered nightcrawlers know each candidate's true strength, even if they haven't shown it." Levi said.

"I do hope so..." Arthur murmured as he gazed at the finalized leaderboard:

// 1– Levi Larson – 1343 pts

2– Nurah Blackthorn – 998 pts

3– Demetris Bane – 760 pts

4– Houda Omari (Jojo) – 755 pts

5– Arthur Larson – 690 pts

6– Kiera Joan – 600 pts

7– Rayan Morningstar – 590 pts//

While he made it to the top five, he had been putting everything on the last Trial of Combat to make one last push to the top three. At least, he wasn't eliminated like Melissa, Omar, Selene, and the rest of the candidates.

Ten names were the only ones left illuminated on the leaderboard from one hundred or more candidates...Only Instructor Seraphis had it in him to be this cruel, eliminating more than 90% in less than two days.

No wonder his signing rate was at 100%... even if the eliminated candidates weren't signed, it wouldn't affect his ratings since they were, well, eliminated.

"Go get some rest. The second phase will begin in two hours after the injured have recovered."

Following Instructor Seraphis' announcement, the candidates returned to the apartment complex with looks of relief etched on their faces.

The one thing that was worrying them was getting eliminated before the Trial of Combat, since it implied not getting a chance to redeem themselves.

But it all turned out for the better. Even though they were eliminated, the nightcrawlers wouldn't care too much about it as long as they had shown their potential.

Meanwhile, Melissa remained behind with Levi and the rest of their friends.

"Sir... what about me?" she asked while playing with her fingers shyly.

"What about you?" Instructor Seraphis asked indifferently.

"Am I eliminated too...?"

Melissa seemed to have trouble voicing her dilemma... It was understandable considering the way she 'passed' the trial.

"It's up to you."

Instructor Seraphis left her with this statement and took off before she could ask for more details.

"What does he mean by this...?"

"My condolences."

Levi patted her on the shoulder and walked away to the apartment complex, understanding that Instructor Seraphis gave her a choice between cheating her way to rewards or accepting her elimination gracefully and earning his respect.

If she were smart, there was only one choice.