

The Glorious Evolution

#Chapter 1: Levi Larson, A Blind Child in A World Ruled By Darkness. - Read The Glorious Evolution Chapter 1: Levi Larson, A Blind Child in A World Ruled By Darkness.

Chapter 1 - Levi Larson, A Blind Child in A World Ruled By Darkness.

"I CAN'T SEE!!"

"My Eyes!!! MY EYES!!!"

"MOMMY!! MOMMY!!"

Inside a half-destroyed living room, a little child was seen sitting on his knees, screaming at the top of his lungs. He had his hands grasping tightly into his face, which was covered in blood, seeping from his eye sockets...

He seemed to be in so much pain, the only thing he could do was wail until his breaths became ragged and short.

His reaction was understandable as his eyes had just gotten ripped out of their sockets by a tall man with a dignified stoic expression.

He was dangling them from his hand like he was holding onto a piece of fruit.

Although he was wearing a black suit with a white shirt and a blue tie, not a single drop of blood tainted its fabric. On the other hand, his white-gloved hands had turned crimson, dripping with blood on the wooden floor, drop by drop...

This was the result of the massacre he committed in the living room.

Besides the wailing child, two bloodied corpses were seen lying a few meters away from Levi... Their bodies were mangled beyond recognition, filled with massive bite marks, leaving torn flesh all over the place.

Yet, both corpses had their hands stretched toward the little boy, leaving a scene of two parents desiring to protect their child, but falling hopelessly to their mortality...

"Silence him, but leave him alive... It won't take long before he becomes a Sleepwalker." The tall man ordered expressionlessly.

In an instant, a shadowy figure appeared right behind the child and landed a straight chop on his neck, silencing his whimpers...Then, he waved his hand once in front of Levi's empty bloodied sockets and they were sealed shut.

All of this happened in less than a second.

Thud!

As Levi's face landed on the wooden floor, feeling his blood running cold and his consciousness fading away, a single image surfaced in the darkness filling his mind...Two nightmarish creatures walking away from him, one bigger and scarier than the other.

Seemingly sensing being seen somehow, the bigger monster turned his head around and smiled devilishly.

His smile was so sinister, it started to get bigger, and closer until...

Beep! Beep! Beep!...

The irritating sound of the alarm engulfed Levi's mind, collapsing the entire nightmare and forcing him to sit up straight with a shaken visage.

As drops of sweat flowed down his forehead, Levi didn't even bother to clean them. He held his beating heart and kept his head lowered as he tried to regulate his breathing, taking deep breaths with pauses in between.

The moment his agitated heartbeats died down, Levi said expressionlessly, "The same nightmare again...You guys are losing your touch."

"Tsk, the rumors were true, you are a tough nut to crack, boy."

Suddenly, four monstrous creatures appeared around Levi, leaving a few meters of distance between each other.

It was like he was at the center of pitch-black darkness and the only thing he could perceive were those nightmarish creatures.

If someone else was in the same room, he would see nothing but Levi, sitting on his bed, murmuring under his breath like a crazy person.

Levi turned his head to face the one speaking, and then said calmly, "I will say the same thing I said to the ones before you...If you want to sign a contract with me, then it has to be through official channels."

"Official channels? Do you mean you want to become a Daywalker through me? You? A crippled useless blind! Ha, hahaha! You guys never told me he was such a jokester."

The nightcrawler laughed, his gaping maw widening immensely, exposing a throat filled to the brim with shark-like teeth.

"What can I say, it was funny at the beginning, but now, it's just getting sad."

The other nightcrawler, who resembled a floating skinless golden fish, could only shake its head in annoyance.

It knew that Levi wasn't joking and if one of them were to suggest commencing with the Daywalker contract, he wouldn't hesitate to accept it in a heartbeat.

But, that's the thing...

"I would rather choose an old man with one step in the grave before I link my legacy with a worthless cripple like you." The first nightcrawler sneered coldly, "A human with no eyes desiring to become a Daywalker, truly, the joke of the century."

As the last sentence resonated deeply in Levi's mind, the nightcrawler turned around and left, no longer having interest in tormenting him.

"Let's get out of here, Ash'Kral will be here soon."

The rest of the nightcrawlers went away too, knowing that Levi's house was a hanging spot for quite a powerful nightcrawler in this area.

"Your loss."

After they left, Levi didn't seem too bothered by their words.

He reached out with his hand to the right nightstand and opened the first drawer after a couple of attempts. Then, he picked a small key that was placed in the rightmost corner, seemingly marking it there.

After picking it up, he sat down on the side of the bed and lifted his trousers, exposing two metallic cuffs tightened around his ankles.

The cuffs were connected with two small chains, which were linked to the wall.

He reached down and entered the key in both holes, freeing his legs at last. As he gently massaged his ankles, Levi sighed after touching a black monitor that was secured tightly on his right ankle.

Mettalic cuffs and an ankle monitor, such extreme measures might seem bizarre, but in the case of Levi, they were a must to ensure the safety of the people close to him.

After the Great Fall of Civilization a hundred years ago under the invasion of the Nightcrawlers from the Shadow Dimension; blind individuals, traumatized victims, mentally unstable people, and such, all became considered a national threat to the safety of the citizens.

All due to the Nightcrawlers' ability to invade people's dreams if their minds were spiritually linked to the Shadow Dimension.

The way to link it was quite simple, they had to be exposed to pitch-black darkness for more than two hours straight...In other words, they had to be asleep, completely blind, or willingly close their eyes for a long time to establish the link.

Thus, anyone with a high index of mental instability under the new rigid laws was forced to wear this ankle monitor to keep them within the confines of their designated Holy Regions.

It helped the governments get instant location details if they ended up getting manipulated or seduced by a Nightcrawler to sign a contract that would give away their bodies for a price.

In the case of Levi, he was just shown a nightmare by those nightcrawlers of the worst memory of his entire life...The memory of his parents getting slaughtered and having his eyes ripped out of their sockets.

Such a traumatic experience was all the fuel the Nightcrawlers needed to attempt and seduce Levi to sign his life away, for the price of getting his revenge...

Since he was completely blind, linking him permanently to the Shadow dimension, he was under their constant harassment daily for the past decade.

Unfortunately, hundreds if not thousands of nightcrawlers had given it their best, but not a single one of them managed to break Levi's mental defenses and get the best of him.

It wasn't because his mental fortitude was indestructible, he simply was wise enough to understand that signing such a contract would never get him the answers he wanted, his family's retribution, and his sight back...

Of course, there were bound to be some close calls, but still, he pushed through.

If he knew those nightcrawlers had it in them, he would have signed those horrible contracts in a heartbeat even if it meant becoming a Sleepwalker running amok.

Unbothered by the familiar crowd of distant nightcrawlers roaming in the infinite darkness, Levi picked a small device that resembled a silver hearing aid piece on top of the nightstand.

This was NeuraLens, the most used device across the globe in all Holy Regions due to possessing all the qualities of a smartphone and the ability to produce holograms.

Usually, it came in pairs; an earpiece, and a thin contact lens made out of hydrogels placed on a single cornea.

The earpiece was the main device and was connected to the contact lens, allowing the user to tap into the services of a personal Astra AI assistant and the ability to create tiny holograms that only he could see unless he wanted to expand them.

Unfortunately, Levi could only rely on AI services through sound.

After picking it up, he wore it on his right ear, hiding it under his messy curly black hair...With a single press of a small button at its side, a feminine robotic voice resounded in his ear.

"Welcome back, Sir Levi. What can I help you with?"

"Please enlighten me with today's news in Tamara's settlement." Levi requested politely as he started walking towards the bathroom, keeping his hand affixed to the nearest wall to him.

Although he could use the NeuraLens Ai to guide him to the bathroom, Levi preferred doing it on his own by counting his steps.

He only relied on the device's services in unfamiliar places so that he wouldn't be always reliant on it for every simple task.

"In Tamara's settlement: The Sunstrike Agency has succeeded in its twentieth major expedition, conquering a Shadow Castle and reclaiming more than fifteen kilometers of surface area."

"Interesting, they succeeded in less than three days." Levi smiled a little in awe, "As expected of a tier 5 agency with a 97% clearing rate...They don't mess about in their expeditions."

One of Levi's biggest dreams was to join the ranks of a high-tiered Daywalker agency and also be part of the expeditions to reclaim their planet from the infestation of the Nightcrawlers.

He knew that besides saving his planet; if he were to succeed in joining those agencies, finding out the truth about what happened a decade ago would be much easier.

That's because those high-ranked agencies might be private, but they had significant authority in their respective holy regions.

Alas, just as Levi started daydreaming of such a bright future, a low-pitched snicker suddenly assaulted him from the rear.

"Boy, remove that foolish smile of yours, it ain't happening, not today, not tomorrow, not ever."

Without needing to turn, Levi knew that it was Ash'Kral speaking, one of the few nightcrawlers, who had spent years hanging around him.

Seeing that Levi continued wiping his face with a towel, not bothering to address his snarky remark, Ash'Kral moved in front of him, edging closer to his face.

"Boy, haven't I warned you not to ignore me?"

Levi slowly lifted his head and gazed directly into Ash'Kral's massive singular eye that was dominating the center of his head.

The eye glowed deep crimson and had a resonating slit pupil that seemed to ripple like liquid fire, creating a bizarre hypnotic effect.

There were cracks in its leathery ash-gray skin around the sunken eye, making his head resemble a deep volcanic crater on the verge of eruption.

He had three worn skin-like wings that extended asymmetrically from his thin body.

With his veined greyish skin that clung tightly to his skeletal frame, it made him resemble a fiendish nightmare that would make any child faint at first sight. Even Levi had taken more than a year before finally getting used to his terrifying appearance.

This was quite telling, as he had seen tens of thousands of nightcrawlers in the past decade; Some were terrifying, some were mystique, some were taking beautiful humanoid forms, and some were even cute.

Yet, Ash'Kral was still one of the few ones giving him the creeps every time he saw him. It wasn't just his appearance, his entire atmosphere screamed of sinisteress.

Still, after spending years in each other's company, some familiarity was bound to be born.

"Ash'Kral, will there ever be a day, where you will stop hating?" Levi sighed exasperatedly as he started brushing his teeth.

The moment he said this, the ominous mood collapsed immediately as Ash'Kral let out a faint chuckle, "Is it hating when it's fact?"

Levi paused to bubble the toothpaste foam in his mouth before spitting it in the sink. Then, he wiped his lips and said calmly, "It will be a fact when I fail."

"Truly, your delusion never ceases to amaze me."

Ash'Kral floated on his back while resting his head on his long gruesome claws...Then, he threw a question at Levi, a question that always seemed to shatter Levi's dreams.

"You have yet to tell me how are you supposed to become a Daywalker and absorb light when you are lacking the most important organ to make it happen."

With a cruel smile, Ash'Kral pointed at Levi's eyes.

"..." Levi went silent in front of the mirror.

He knew there was a mirror there...He knew that his reflection was gazing back at him, showing him an image of a teenage boy with a sharp jawline, fair skin, messy wet curly black hair reaching down his neck, and most notably, two hideous scorched scars in place of his eyes...

Levi reached out with his hand underneath his wet hair and gently caressed the scars with a soft smile playing on his thin lips.

Then, he uttered softly, "I know that in this era, light is worshiped and darkness is avoided...I know that everyone thinks of me as a walking time bomb, capable of turning into a sleepwalker and causing havoc at any moment...I understand that without my eyes, I can't grow as fast as the others, and my chances to sign a daywalker contract with a nightcrawler is slim to none, I understand all of this."

With the same smile, he turned to Ash'Kral and said, "You think I am delusional, but I am simply trying to make the best of my unfortunate situation, nothing more, nothing less..."

After hearing this, Ash'Kral neither mocked Levi nor teased him if even by a little. Instead, his eye gleamed for a split second.

But soon, the look disappeared and Ash'Kral chuckled, "Boy, for a child of your age, your maturity always freaks me."

"I know, I am a genius, you should strike the iron while it's hot and sign a contract with me."

"You wish."

"Tsk, useless." Levi clicked his tongue and went to the kitchen to prepare his breakfast, uncaring about Ash'Kral's chuckles in the background.

Chapter 2 - Ash'Kral

However, just as Levi opened the fridge, his ears twitched, picking up on the thundering noise of footsteps coming from the direction of the apartment's front door.

Recognizing the owner of those footsteps, Levi could only sigh and close the fridge.

Knock Knock!

"Big bro! I am coming in!"

Before the burly, unpolished voice could finish echoing in the apartment, the front door was already opened widely, exposing a hunk of a man, 6,6 inches tall, and built like a walking tank!

Although his size wasn't really the biggest out there, he was still a universal wonder as he was merely sixteen years old!

A year younger than Levi, yet looking like a divorced middle-aged man with a white wife-beater tank top on, tightened black shorts, and a pair of plastic slippers.

His age wouldn't be questionable if it weren't for the hint of pure innocence on his face, three precise hair strands on his chin, and his lustrous dark ponytail.

He was holding a grocery bag filled to the brim with protein-related ingredients in one hand, and in the other, he was carrying a black gym bag.

Since the apartment was merely slightly bigger than a studio, Arthur saw Levi standing in front of the fridge the moment the door was unlocked.

Immediately, his eyes lit up.

"Big bro, cooking breakfast for us?" Arthur grinned widely as he put a heavy emphasis on 'us'.

"I am fasting today."

Levi walked away from the kitchen, instantly losing his appetite. He went to the closet and put on his training shorts.

"Tsk, you don't have to act like this, I have already eaten on the way, I just wanted something light."

Arthur looked upset as he closed the door and went to the kitchen, placing the groceries on the counter.

"Light, yea right." Levi's eyebrows twitched under his thick curly hair.

While he knew his little brother was a genetic anomaly to reach this size and build this kind of muscle without being a daywalker, it came at the price of him needing to eat ten times the average daily.

In other words, if Levi were to make breakfast, he would be cooking for the next hour to help him hit his morning protein target.

"Ahh, I even bought you some SR pills, you can't even cook breakfast for your little brother...How sad."

Arthur sighed loudly to fish for sympathy while pulling a small orange bottle. Then, he threw it in Levi's direction.

"To your right, catch."

Levi's ear twitched, and in an instant, his hand flashed, catching the bottle with uncanny precision.

Yet, neither Levi nor Arthur showed much of a reaction to this incredible scene.

"I checked our balance sheet last night, we have just enough to last until the end of the month before we receive the monthly welfare check." Levi asked sternly as he tapped his finger on the bottle, "How did you afford an entire bottle?"

"I did some coaching at the gym to a weird rich girl," Arthur replied casually while emptying the grocery bag.

It was filled with ground beef, chicken breasts, salmon, bananas, yogurt, eggs, rice, and some vegetables...The only snack was a package of sugar-free biscuits.

"Weird? How so?" Levi raised an eyebrow, knowing that his brother was always the weird one in any room. For him to call someone else weird was quite intriguing.

"She is bald."

"..." Levi went silent for a moment.

Sensing that he was being judged, Arthur chuckled and said, "She isn't sick or anything, she is bald by choice and keeps telling everyone to refer to her as Monk Jojo."

"Monk Jojo...What's a monk?" Levi tilted his head in confusion.

"Who knows?" Arthur shrugged while cracking eight eggs into a massive cup, "I rarely associate myself with her; she always makes a scene in the gym with her peculiar exercises."

"I see," Levi smiled faintly while putting a training pad in the center of the living room, "If the money is good, who cares?"

"Preach, she paid me one thousand lumen credits for a single one-hour session." Arthur snickered, "What a fool, I would have done it for one hundred to get in an extra training hour."

"One thousand? Not bad."

Levi was quite satisfied with the payment as he knew that one thousand lumen credits were enough to pamper themselves until the end of the month.

Although he wasn't eating as heavily as his brother, he was also training with calisthenics and on a healthy protein-based diet.

In this era, natural food was quite expensive primarily due to the great fall of civilization and the nightcrawlers' insatiable hunger to feed on natural light from any source.

It didn't matter if they were plants, animals, or humans...Any living being capable of absorbing direct sunlight was in the crosshairs of nightcrawlers.

Nightcrawlers fed and evolved on this type of light, but ironically, they could not absorb it directly as the sunlight was able to burn their skin off during first contact.

While humans could not store and transform light into energy as plants do through photosynthesis, nightcrawlers still primarily targeted them.

It was for a simple reason...They could possess their bodies through a Sleepwalker contract, bestowing them the ability to expose themselves directly to sunlight without needing protection from the Shadow dimension!

Fortunately, for a nightcrawler to transform into a Sleepwalker, they could not force the host into signing any bullshit contract.

That's why they wait until humans sleep and invade their dreams, seeking to manipulate and seduce them to sign the contract.

"Here, I only need a couple of pills to earn me some extra hours for training."

As Levi sat on the training pad, he poured five pills into his palm and threw the bottle back to his brother, knowing his location through sound.

Arthur caught the bottle and started gazing at his brother in silence, taking in the sight of him dropping to the ground and hitting push-ups with immaculate form.

Levi was wearing only a pair of shorts, exposing his fine-tuned body, which would make any other man absolutely jealous.

If Arthur was considered a pure bodybuilder, then Levi could be called an aesthetic athlete.

But, Arthur wasn't relishing his big brother's physique, but the three clawed scars on his back.

As he stared at his brother's scars, his heart couldn't help but feel heavy.

Levi paused mid-set and without lifting his head, he said calmly, "Your heartbeats have slowed down...Haven't I told you to stop feeling guilty over something you weren't responsible for?"

"I know, but it still doesn't make me feel less shitty." Arthur smiled bitterly.

During that horrible night, Arthur was left with his uncle in the capital city of the Holy Heliodor Region.

Meanwhile, Levi accompanied his parents to Tamara's settlement as his father had a business venture that would have substantially helped grow his Nightwere company.

While it was fortunate that Arthur wasn't with them, it crushed him every single day to know that he wasn't there for his brother, for his parents...

Although he knew he was merely six years old at the time and could do nothing but be added to the victims' list, it still didn't alleviate his guilty conscience.

"Well, feel shitty somewhere else, you are interrupting my workout," Levi shooed him away with one hand and continued doing his push-ups single-handedly.

"Harsh as always, big bro."

Arthur picked up their breakfast and placed them on the table next to Levi. Then, he sat down and sighed.

"Why are you so stubborn? I told you just to live peacefully, you don't have to force yourself to avenge our family." He narrowed his eyes coldly, "I will handle it on my own and will make sure to retrieve your vision back regardless of the cost."

Levi froze in his position while in the middle of a one-arm push-up.

Then, he slowly raised his head, his hair covering his scorched marks, and uttered expressionlessly, "I lost my peace ten years ago."

As he was saying this, the scene before him reflected more than six new nightcrawlers crowding the entire house, each of them gazing at him akin to a fresh meal.

They had been talking and bothering him ever since his brother arrived, but he had already mastered the art of zoning out their voices.

"..."

Arthur went silent for a moment, knowing that no one truly could understand what his brother was going through daily.

It was a miracle he hadn't already lost his sanity living such a life.

Arthur understood that everyone in the world could see nightcrawlers. All they needed to do was keep their eyes closed for more than two hours, exposing themselves to pitch-black darkness.

This was the reason humans created a drug called Sleep Replacement Pills/Drops. Once taken, the consumer would enter a short period of hibernation that lasted for less than two hours. Yet, when he woke up, he would possess the energy of someone who had slept for more than six hours.

However, such pills were made out of ingredients harvested from a specific species of nightcrawlers' blood and other natural dimensional materials.

Thus, they weren't available for everyone at all times, as the only ones capable of harvesting and collecting those materials were Daywalkers.

In simpler words, sleeping every single day was exclusive for Daywalkers and the rich, as those pills were more precious than gold in this chaotic era.

"How many?" Arthur asked coldly.

"Six."

"Gotchu."

Without question asked, Arthur closed his eyes and started eating his breakfast, desiring to connect his spirit to the Shadow dimension and join his brother and the nightcrawlers crowding their home.

"No need, I am planning to head out after an hour." Levi stopped him with a faint smile, knowing that his brother always had his back.

"You sure? I just want to give them a piece of my mind." Arthur cracked his knuckles.

"They aren't worth anyone's time. If they had anything better to do, they wouldn't be here." Levi replied calmly as he gazed directly into six floating nightcrawlers surrounding him.

'Talking crap about us to your brother again?' One of the nightcrawlers smiled sinisterly while facing Levi.

Just like how humans couldn't see nightcrawlers unless they established a spiritual link with the Shadow dimension, the nightcrawlers also couldn't see or hear humans.

They had to emerge physically into the world, and the only way to gain such access was through either **Stygian Gates** or establishing a contract with humans.

Before Levi could reply, another nightcrawler shaped like a rotten eggplant with thousands of worms biting into its surface jumped in and said menacingly, "Boy, don't mistake our inaction for weakness."

"Am I wrong? You being here instead of pledging your allegiance to any Nightcrawlers' Nest makes you nothing but jobless bums." Levi fired back, unbothered.

"Hahaha, he got you there." Ash'Kral's amused chuckle echoed from a distance.

Heated, the nightcrawlers all glanced in the direction of Ash'Kral, watching him lie on his side while scratching his buttocks with his ominous claws, not even looking in their direction.

The eggplant nightcrawler floated in the direction of Ash'Kral until he was merely two meters away from him. Then, he uttered with a murderous grimace, "Aren't you laughing a bit too much?"

Ash'Kral's chuckles died off slowly until silence invaded the spiritual bridge of darkness. The veteran nightcrawlers, who were used to hanging out around Levi and Ash'Kral, didn't bother to educate their newest member about the hierarchy in this space.

Seeing that no one spoke after him and they merely kept looking at him akin to a dead man walking, the Eggplant nightcrawlers sensed that something was wrong.

"Bastard, look at me when I talk to you."

Yet, he doubled down, knowing that he couldn't be harmed in the spiritual bridge of darkness. After all, his physical body was in a different location in the Shadow dimension and he was here purely through spirit just like Levi.

It was like Earth and the Shadow dimension were two physical planes while the bridge of darkness was a spiritual plane connecting them through darkness.

'How impolite of me.'

Ash'Kral slowly turned his head until his massive dreadful crimson eye faced the eggplant nightcrawler.

The moment the eggplant nightcrawler looked at Ash'Kral's sinister eye, he heard his voice whispering near his ear.

"Can you handle it though?"

"Aaaa, AAAA, AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

In an instant, the eggplant nightcrawler fell on his back and let out the most ear-screeching wail he could muster.

Even the thousands of worms came out of his surface and crawled away from him like he was infected with the black plague!

'PLEAAASE!! PLEAAASE!! MAKE IT STOP!!!'

'Hmmm? I don't understand?' Ash'Kral tilted his head in confusion while still staring at him. 'I thought you wanted me to look at you?'

'MERCY!! MEEERCY!!!'

The Eggplant nightcrawler screamed for a few more seconds before finally caving in, to whatever agony he was put in...

Levi and the other nightcrawlers could only watch in silence as the eggplant nightcrawler faded into nothingness.

As Ash'Kral's gleaming crimson eye snapped at them, no one dared to share eye contact with him.

Even Levi kept his head lowered, continuing with his push-ups like the whole situation didn't involve him.

"That's what I thought."

Seeing this, Ash'Kral returned to his relaxation session...

Chapter 3 - The Sun Disk Towers.

After Levi was done with his daily workout routine, he went to take a quick shower, uncaring that a crowd of monstrous nightmares was seeing his private parts.

As for what happened earlier? He was already used to it.

Levi wasn't given the creeps by Ash'kral for no reason...He had seen him do unspeakable things to nightcrawlers provoking him quite often until he built a reputation around him.

Unfortunately for the Eggplant nightcrawler, he knew no better...

On the other hand, while Ash'kral always teased and bothered Levi, he had never invaded his dreams or assaulted him.

When Levi was done with his shower, he walked to the closet with one hand stretched forward, counting as always.

His hand touched the automatic closet and with a press of a button, it opened to a specific set of clothes that were identical to each other. Black pants and a white T-shirt with a baggy hoodie.

It was like he had no interest in fashion and just wanted to be as comfortable as possible.

After putting on his clothes, he wore standardized white sneakers, which had become somewhat dirty. Then, he put on black sunglasses with a circular design and closed the closet.

As he reached the door, he slid his hand to the side and picked up an average white cane.

However, the moment he unlocked the door, Arthur was already next to him in the same outfit and a half-eaten banana stuffed in his mouth.

"Wher...ar we goin..?" Arthur asked with his mouth full, seemingly uncaring about hijacking his brother's alone time.

"Seeking a recommendation letter for the Contract Ritual Assembly." Levi answered calmly.

"This again, ahh, aight."

Arthur wasn't in the mood to argue about this subject again. He had already said and did everything to stop his brother from participating in the Contract Ritual Assembly with him.

It wasn't that he didn't believe in him, but he knew that one of the main prerequisites of becoming a Daywalker was to have eyes that possessed a great resistance to sunlight.

There was a fine line between having great resistance to light and being completely immune to it.

In Levi's case, the only way to absorb light was through his skin or by eating Growth Totems. Both methods were quite inconsistent compared to using one's eyes to stare directly into the sunlight.

For humans, light was just well, light, but for Nightcrawlers? It was their main source of growth and evolution...It was everything to them.

However, they were cursed to desire it but have no resistance to it directly. In other words, if they wanted to feed on light, they had to do it in four ways: Feed the light absorbed by plants, feed on humans or animals directly, or sign a contract with a human to possess his body.

While the first parts were self-explanatory, the last one was where it got tricky as nightcrawlers could either sign a beneficial contract for both parties or a one-sided contract in favor of each party.

Of course, it was almost impossible for a nightcrawler to sign a contract that disadvantaged it.

This left us with nightcrawlers attempting to seduce the mentally weak humans to hand over their bodies for a cheap price of either quick revenge, destruction, or such evil desires.

Those sorts of contracts gave birth to Sleepwalkers, humanoid monsters with the ability to shapeshift and move in both light and darkness.

But, when a beneficial contract for both parties was signed, a Daywalker was born.

In Levi's case, he was considered a muggle just like every other blind person in the world, having the worst possible 'talent' to grow as a Daywalker.

"Brother, even by some miracle we obtained a recommendation letter from an established agency and you were allowed into the ceremony, what are you going to do at the last part of the ritual?" Arthur smiled wryly, "You know that at the end of the day, it's the nightcrawlers who are choosing their potential partners, not us, at least, for the less talented. In your case, the nightcrawlers won't see much value in the amount of

light you absorb daily. I would hate to see you get rejected by those ugly f*ckers in front of everyone."

"If I get rejected, so be it, but one step at a time, one step at a time..."

Levi seemed unbothered by this many odds stacking against him...Odds were enough to break even a normal citizen down and force him to quit before starting.

But not Levi...For him, he would never rest in peace until he met the two nightcrawlers of his nightmare.

"By the way, shouldn't you be in school by now?" Levi's voice suddenly turned stern, sending shivers down Arthur's spine.

He might be 6,6 inches tall and built like a tower, but before Levi, he was always the little brother even when there was a mere one-year difference.

"Come on Levi, we have only one month left before the semester ends, and also the Contract Ritual Assembly is in two months. With my sexy physique, I am bound to pass the trials and become a certified Daywalker." Arthur tried to appease his brother, "School will be useless then as I will be joining the Grand Daywalkers Training Center."

Levi went silent, knowing that his brother was speaking tons of sense. For normal commoners, high school and college were still a must to secure some resemblance of a good future.

But, for those aiming to become daywalkers? They got trained from birth on almost everything; sometimes, it still wouldn't be enough to become one.

One would wonder why was a Daywalker's occupation so coveted.

It was simple, Daywalkers were the heroes of today's age, the guardians of humanity, the only ones slowing down the encroachment of darkness, and most importantly, the most authoritative beings in the entire world.

Almost all the Holy Regions' Governors were powerful Daywalkers capable of creating miracles with a snap of a finger.

In this age, there was no such thing as a commoner politician.

Thus, becoming a Daywalker would set anyone apart from the herd. Yet, the biggest upside of becoming a Daywalker was their ability to sleep whenever they needed to since the contracted nightcrawler would protect them from others' invasion.

While Arthur's words made sense, Levi still said with a lowered voice, "Arthy, don't argue with me. I don't want you to stay in school for a grade, I just want you to gain knowledge."

"Don't forget, there is also a trial for intelligence in your precious plan."

"Are you insulting my intelligence? Huh?" Arthur seemed annoyed, "Just because I have big muscles doesn't mean I am dumb..."

"What's seven multiplied by eight?" Levi asked with a serene tone.

"This...Cough, one hundred and..."

"Maybe you should stop hitting weights and start hitting'em books. You will bring shame to our family name during the assembly." Levi interrupted with a vexed sigh.

"Not if you were there." Arthur roasted back with a wide grin.

"Asshole, you know it frowned upon to abuse the disabled?" Levi chuckled, "So be it, go wear something else, we might be out for a while."

"Hmm? Where are we going?"

"Borders."

"Borders?" Arthur laughed, "Smart, we have already gotten kicked out of every private agency in the settlement. We might as well visit their Daywalkers at the borders."

"But, how are we going to enter the outposts?"

"Don't worry, I have it covered."

"Aight."

...

As Arthur walked outside of the apartment complex, feasting his eyes on the breathtaking scenery of Tamara's settlement, Levi was met with a sea of nightcrawlers floating all over the place, hunting down new traumatized victims and waiting for any Stygian Gates to open up.

Unfortunately for them, there wasn't an ounce of darkness in the settlement as it was entirely built to limit the nightcrawlers' access.

That's because portals linked to the Shadow dimension opened up only after fifteen minutes passed in an area completely pitch-dark.

This pushed all the holy regions to design the cities with glass roofs on buildings and place synthetic protective light in every nook and cranny.

This ensured that during the day, it was nearly impossible for any stygian gate to open up and cause an invasion right at the heart of the settlements and capital cities unless there was some foul play.

Of course, there was an entire department responsible for supervising the quality of the synthetic light network across each city.

As for the night and underground's darkness? For now, let's say humans were protected by divine intervention.

Meanwhile, Levi and Arthur rode on an electric dirt bike and drove towards the borders, skiving off cars and pedestrians, unbothered by their curses at Arthur's reckless driving.

After driving for a short while, they reached the outskirts of Tamara's settlement, traveling on top of beautiful yellow wheat fields while the sunlight shone brightly on their skin.

A few people were sitting on top of trees or the center of the fields in a meditation position while having their eyes affixed on the radiant sun.

Levi and Arthur paid them no attention as it was a common occurrence for Daywalkers to absorb direct sunlight in open natural fields.

The peace, the wind, the smell, and the lack of buildings helped them be more attuned to their bodies and their Shadowlife Seed.

"It must be a clear sky today."

Feeling the warm light, Levi couldn't help but raise his head, seemingly wanting nothing more but to gaze at the breathtaking blue sky.

But, all that was reflected was eternal darkness and the ugliness of the nightcrawlers crowding the skies...

Although the noise buried Levi's voice, Arthur held Levi's hand and pointed his finger at specific places in the sky.

Then, he started describing with a foolish happy smile, "There is a cloud there that looks just like a massive sword. Right next to it, another cloud resembled a headless turtle. The other one, it looks, wait, it looks like that thing we use to unclog toilets and sinks...What is called..."

"Plunger." Levi smiled.

"Plunger! Yes, it totally escaped my mind."

Arthur laughed and continued describing anything interesting that he saw on the way. While his vocabulary was weak, his brother always guessed what he meant, seemingly reading his thoughts.

Levi might have gone blind at seven years old, but this didn't stop him from reading and knowing about the world...In fact, it made him focus on nothing but reading, knowing that it was the only way for him to draw the world in his mind.

...

After a short while, the Larson brothers arrived at the borders of the Holy Heliodor Region.

Tamara's settlement was one of the few settlements in the region situated extremely close to the borders.

That's why it was populated with many branches of high-tiered Daywalkers' Agencies in the capital.

"We are getting close to the Sun Disk Towers." Arthur shared as he gazed at tens of tall towers, reaching up to two hundred meters each.

Each tower was separated from the other at a great distance, surpassing many kilometers. Levi and Arthur knew that those towers surrounded the borders of the Holy Heliodor Region in a massive circle, mirroring the movement of the Holy Pillar.

Those towers were powered by sunlight and possessed gigantic mirrors able to reflect concentrated beams of sunlight in 360 degrees, turning them into killing machines for nightcrawlers at the borders.

Arthur drove to the nearest tower and was forced to stop at the heavily guarded gates of the outpost surrounding the tower.

There was already a long queue, awaiting their turn to be checked by the guards, as no one was allowed entries to those outposts unless they were certified Daywalkers or approved citizens.

Levi and Arthur were neither, leaving them to park their dirtbike at the side of the outpost walls and watch the moving queue.

While Arthur was scanning the daywalkers from the citizens, Levi was eyeing the contracted nightcrawlers, each hovering in a small radius, staying near their partners.

Before long, Levi's presence attracted the majority of the nightcrawlers and they all switched their attention to him.

A rocky hog with gleaming green cracks, piercing blue eyes, and two thick tails moved towards Levi and wondered with a hint of scorn, "Is this the infamous Soulless Gaze? He doesn't look the part, were the rumors inflated?"

"Doubtful, there is only one infamous blind kid in this area."

A hulking insect-like beast with a hardened exoskeleton and amber eyes commentated calmly as he kept floating around Levi.

While Levi was surrounded on both sides, he didn't bother to glance at these two nightcrawlers.

He kept his indifferent sockets affixed on a hazy serpent-manta hybrid with shimmering red scales and a long tail seeping with blood.

"Soulless Gaze, a child with an unbreakable mental and a gaze as hallow as an abyss." The serpentine nightcrawler uttered near Levi's ears, "I heard you were begging for any nightcrawler to make you a Daywalker...Is that still the case?"

"Why are you asking? Are you planning to refer me to your friends?" Levi whispered with a faint smile.

Arthur saw his brother talking to himself and knew immediately that he was conversing with nightcrawlers.

Although his brother didn't tell him what he planned on doing, he trusted that he had it covered.

It was for a simple reason, Arthur had never met with someone as shrewd and smart as his big brother.

That's why he respected him and listened to whatever he told him to do, knowing that it would always be for his good sake even if he didn't understand it at the time.

Meanwhile, Levi's comment left the three nightcrawlers to chuckle in amusement.

"The rumors told no lies, you have no shame when it comes to securing a contract."

"Shame doesn't pay the bills." Levi still had the same smile, "Shame won't get me my peace and vision back. So, how about we drop this meaningless shakedown and get to business."

"Business?" Blee'der narrowed his eyes menacingly but with a hidden hint of intrigue, "What does a hairless child know about business?"

"I know that your partner is trying to help you evolve to Tier 3 through a Remarkable Evolution." Levi's tone became serene as he gazed straight into Blee'der's eyes.

The chuckles died off and the amused expressions melted away.

The three nightcrawlers all stared at each other with a tint of surprise before finally looking back at Levi...This time with penetrative cold gazes.

Chapter 4 - The Nightcrawlers' Evolutionary Paths.

"Boy, you have three seconds to tell me your source of information before I slice your neck off." Blee'der's voice turned sinister.

Levi knew that his threat was for real since he was a contracted Nightcrawler, which meant his partner wouldn't hesitate to pull the trigger if he/she found out that their private information was leaked.

Still, he was unfazed.

"Calm down, I have deducted your plight on my own." Levi clarified with a relaxed tone, "This outpost leads to the Harrowing Forest, the only place in the entire Northern Africa District with a compatible soil for the Blood Crystal Flowers to grow in."

"I know that your species requires either Blood Crystal Seeds for a Limited Evolution or the Blood Crystal Flower for a Remarkable Evolution." He paused, "While the seeds can easily be obtained, the Blood Crystal Flowers sprout only at the depths of the Harrowing Forest."

"It was off-grounds before due to being ruled by a Shadow Castle, but with the Sunstrike Agency clearing it, the forest finally became somewhat safe for rogue and low-ranked Daywalkers to explore it."

"I believe the three of you are part of the same Daywalkers' squad on a mission to locate the flower, as you don't seem interested in having a mere limited evolution."

"Do I need to say more?"

When he finished, the three nightcrawlers were left somewhat dazed, realizing that Levi had hit the nail on the head about almost everything.

Seeing their reaction, Levi went silent for a moment and leaned closer to Blee'der until his mouth was next to his ears...Then, he whispered, "What if I told you that I know a way with a high chance of helping you secure the unattainable Perfect Evolution?"

"Get the f*ck out of here." Blee'der immediately pulled away from Levi like he had just heard the worst joke to grace his ears.

"Perfect evolution? Boy, you don't have to bullshit us, we ain't going to help you get contracted."

"Hahaha, perfect evolution he said, Blee'der and Shia are struggling to even pull off remarkable evolution."

The other two nightcrawlers also snickered at Levi's remarks, not taking him seriously in the slightest...Their reaction was understandable.

Nightcrawlers were believed to be separated into nine tiers, starting from Tier 1 and reaching their final form at Tier 9.

Since nightcrawlers were considered a race with an unknown number of species and variants, some were born as low as Tier 1, and some were believed to be born straight as Tier 9.

Though no one could be certain about the latter.

The only certainty was that every single nightcrawler was capable of evolving to its final form, whether it ended at Tier 5, 6, 7, or even 9.

The little evolutions along the way controlled the final form's limitation.

Those mini evolutions occur between each Tier and could range from a Limited Evolution to a Remarkable Evolution and, finally, a Perfect Evolution.

In simpler terms, if a Tier 1 nightcrawler evolved to Tier 4, using nothing but limited evolution each time, his final form might have been completed at Tier 4 forever.

On the other hand, if a Tier 1 nightcrawler grew using nothing but perfect evolution between each Tier, there was a strong chance that its potential would be finalized at Tier 8 or 9.

The only problem with the second method was the difficulty. It was so high that only a select few dared to follow this treacherous and unknown path.

"You can laugh all you want, but you guys do realize that I have been associating myself with thousands, if not tens of thousands of nightcrawlers across a decade?" Levi replied with his known unprovocative smile, "Don't you think I might have heard something useful here and there?"

Blee'der and the other nightcrawlers shared knowing glances, realizing that Levi had a point. The main concern with perfect evolution was the lack of knowledge.

While limited and remarkable evolutions also required many trials and errors before a known evolutionary path was discovered, perfect evolutions were on a whole different level.

For instance, Blee'der's species were of the Blood Half-Mantras, and they were known for requiring Blood Crystal Seeds as the main material and a couple more secondary materials to succeed in limited evolution for the first three Tiers.

The Blood Crystal Flowers as the main material for the remarkable evolution.

Both evolutionary paths were discovered by the greatest evolutionist, Dr Isaac Mendel. He was also responsible for discovering many of the evolutionary paths for thousands of other nightcrawlers, helping the Daywalkers grow more powerful than ever.

However, even though he was one of the brightest minds in this era, he had found only one hundred perfect evolution paths in total...Those evolutionary paths usually last for three tiers or fewer.

This spoke volumes about how difficult a process it was.

"Why are you telling me this?" Blee'der narrowed his eyes, "Let's say you are being truthful, what do you gain from this? If you want my help to get you a contract, then forget it, I don't have that much sway."

"Don't be jumping to conclusions." Levi said calmly, "All I want is a written recommendation letter to participate in the Contract Ritual Assembly."

"Recommendation letter? You want our agency to sponsor you in the assembly?"

Blee'der and the other nightcrawlers raised their eyebrows in surprise.

"Yes."

Realizing that Levi was as serious as one could be, the three nightcrawlers couldn't muster a single bad remark.

There was a point when mockery lost its value...

"Soulless Gaze, I don't know if you are simply crazy or a fool, who has yet to be slapped in the face." Blee'der shrugged his wings, "To be honest, I don't give a shit. If your information is right, I will get you the recommendation."

"That's all I want." Levi smiled.

Blee'der gave a slight head nod to his buddies, and then they returned to their partners, relaying the news to them.

"Arthy, check for a three-member squad in the queue holding their weapons and tell me what they are doing."

Levi requested while leaning against the dirt bike, gazing at the three nightcrawlers, who had just disappeared out of his sight and turned into humanoid hazy auras.

He knew that contracted nightcrawlers could jump between the Shadow Dimension and the real world whenever they desired.

However, they could not coexist in both of them simultaneously...Their current spiritual aura forms implied that they had taken their physical weapon form to join the conversation.

It wasn't like they couldn't speak with their partner without being in the Shadow dimension, but they could only converse telepathically.

As expected, Arthur swiftly located two men and one woman huddled in a small area, conversing amongst each other while looking in their direction.

All three of them had their signature weapons out.

"They keep pointing at us while talking." Arthur described, "The two men don't seem too pleased while the woman looks like she is trying to convince them of something."

"I see."

"What did you do?" Arthur asked, curious.

Levi informed him about the details of the deal, leaving his brother with his eyebrows raised in surprise.

When he finished, Arthur asked him again, "Do you really know his tier 3 perfect evolutionary path?"

"Of course not, if I did, I would have sold it long ago." Levi replied, "Mom's textbooks never went into exact details on each nightcrawler's evolutionary path."

"..." Arthur stared at his brother's speechlessly.

Knowing that his little brother was questioning his decisions, Levi turned to face him and said calmly, "Sometimes, a risk has to be taken to move forward."

Chapter 5 - Nocturnal Contract

"Risk...Brother, if you were found lying to three Daywalkers while already being under surveillance, no one would care if you got killed." Arthur said with a hardened tone while eyeing Levi's beeping ankle monitor hidden under his trousers.

"I know, but don't worry, if I didn't have it covered, I wouldn't have included you."

"You know I don't give a shit what happens to me." Arthur narrowed his eyes at the approaching squad, "Do your thing, I gotchu."

Before Levi could reply, Arthur tapped him twice on the shoulder, silencing him immediately. This was their signal of people being too close to Levi's comfort.

A moment later, a delicate short girl stood in front of Levi and Arthur while being accompanied by a tall dark-skinned man and a short man with a big belly.

The girl had short hair that resembled a crimson blood drop and was wearing thin orange sunglasses.

She had a skin-tight red suit, covered with a half-open black jacket. She had her hands inside her jacket's pockets while sucking on a lollipop with a white plastic stick.

While Levi couldn't see her appearance, the smell of blood on her was too stenchy, he couldn't help but scrunch his nose.

The girl saw his reaction and didn't seem bothered. In fact, she was amused by it.

"Not a fan of my smell?" She asked, her voice was as lovely as her face.

"My apologies, my nose is a bit sensitive," Levi said politely.

"Understandable for someone with your condition,"

Shia spoke as she kept moving her head from side to side, seemingly incapable of believing Levi's condition.

When she saw that his head was affixed in its place, she couldn't help but utter with a hint of marvel in her voice.

"How interesting, I thought everyone with complete blindness had already gone extinct or had eye replacement surgery," Shia murmured to herself, but Levi heard her as loud as thunder.

"Shia, we have no time for this, night is fast approaching, and if we want to reach the depth of the forest before sunset, we have to move now." The short man spoke coldly as he gazed at the Larson brothers, "From first sight, I can tell they are full of it."

Suddenly, a crimson crescent-bladed glaive with a curved blade came out of Shia's black jacket, exuding an ominous bloodthirsty aura.

The moment everyone's eyes affixed on it, Blee'der's mouth and eyes manifested on the weapon...He didn't seem pleased one bit.

"Fatty, are you questioning my judgment?" He asked coldly.

"Yes, when was your judgment ever right?"

Just as Blee'der was about to snap back at him, Shia intervened, "Sergio, Blee'der, we have already discussed this, let's find out what kind of information he has, and then we can make our judgment."

Uncaring that Levi and Arthur heard her, Shia showed them a pleasant smile and said, "We don't have much time, so, let's carry our conversation inside."

"Please lead the way." Levi smiled back.

...

A few moments later, Shia's squad had gotten inside the outpost and brought Levi and Arthur with them.

The guards allowed them in since they belonged to a quite well-known agency in the Holy Heliodor Region...Of course, they had to pay up a 'fee'.

"Woah, this place is packed with Daywalkers..." Arthur exclaimed as he kept spinning his head all over the place, leaving no area unscanned.

Meanwhile, Levi was also receiving information from his NeuraLens' AI as she was able to scan a ten-meter radius and give Levi detailed descriptions of everything in the radius.

With her help, he was able to envision the appearance of the Outpost.

It wasn't anything special as it resembled a small town with mostly transparent glass-based buildings arranged in a perfect structure that allowed all the streets to meet at a single point; the center of the outpost where the tall Sun Disk Tower was built.

After a short walk, Shia and her companions brought the Larson brothers to a motel room for some privacy.

Then, Shia sat on the bed while the other two stood near the corners. Levi and Arthur were offered chairs and a herbal tea while facing Shia directly.

"Now, will you kindly tell us how you plan on helping Blee'der achieve perfect evolution to Tier 3?" Shia asked with a kind smile.

In the hopes that Levi's information would be correct, she was respectful, kind, and understanding. However, Levi knew that her nice attitude was a mere facade.

"Hold on now, how will be assured that you will keep your end of the bargain if I spill the beans?" Levi asked.

"Fair enough." Shia brought out Blee'der and placed it in front of them, then she said, "I am willing to sign a Nocturnal contract."

Sergio and Jamal's expressions immediately turned gloomy.

"Shia..."

Before they could say anything, Shia silenced them with a hand wave. Then, she turned back to Levi and smiled, "If your method checks out, I will risk my own neck and reputation to ensure that you participate in the Contract Ritual Assembly. We will have this written in Nocturnal contract."

Levi corrected her with a similar smile, "Not any Contract Ritual Assembly, I am only interested in the upcoming one in two months."

"Of course, that's what I meant." While she said this, the thoughts in her mind were different. 'He might be young, but he isn't easily fooled.'

Without further ado, Shia tapped once on her signature weapon, and a pitch-black spiritual piece of paper manifested before everyone...It floated at the center, turning the atmosphere quite solemn.

This was a Nocturnal contract, the sole reason nightcrawlers and humans had a chance of coexistence.

No one knew of its origins besides a false name for its creator, not even high-tiered nightcrawlers had a clue.

The only thing known was that its terms must be respected at all costs as the moment both parties signed the contract, their souls were bonded by it.

If a party were to void a term, the contract would deliver the written penalty instantly.

It possessed such an overwhelming and mysterious authority, that its presence always commanded attention.

Just as Shia was about to write the terms, Levi interrupted with an apologetic smile, "Before we sign, I have to confess something."

"God damn it, I knew he was full of shit." Sergio snapped instantly.

"Boy, were you lying to me?" Even Blee'der's expression turned sinister.

"Hold on, give him a chance."

Meanwhile, Shia still had hope in Levi, halting her partners from doing something that would jeopardize the deal.

"Thank you." Levi nodded politely and then explained, "First of all, I have never guaranteed that my method will succeed 100%. All I said was that I have a method to help him achieve the unattainable perfect evolution. Whether it succeeds or fails, it depends heavily on your cooperation."

"What do you mean?" Shia held her chin in intrigue.

"I have my ways and at the moment, I have no interest in sharing details." Levi said calmly, "If you truly desire perfect evolution, all you can do is put your trust in me."

"Trust..."

Shia stood up and walked to the reflective glass wall.

As she gazed at the rogue Daywalkers forming exploration squads in front of the outpost's exit, she shared with a serene voice, "In our world, trust has lost its value. Everyone and everything requires the addition of Nocturnal contracts."

"Even the lifelong partnership with our contracted nightcrawlers can only work when our life and death are bound together."

She turned to face Levi and added, "You also know this. Otherwise, you wouldn't have accepted the use of a Nocturnal contract."

Levi nodded in agreement.

"So, I can tell you right here, I don't trust you, but I do trust that you will give it your all if you put your life on the line." With the same kind smile, Shia asked, "So tell me, are you confident enough in your method that you are willing to sign off your life to me in case you fail?"

"..." Levi went silent.

He understood that Shia wanted him to sign off a lifelong subordinate contract, which was nothing but a fancy name for a 'Slave'.

With the introduction of Nocturnal Contracts and their absolute power, slavery became quite rampant in the world.

Of course, since the term was frowned upon, it was changed to a lifelong subordinate.

Since only entities with Shadowlife seeds could summon the Nocturnal Contract, most Daywalkers had several lifelong subordinates under their name.

'Brother, you won't sign such crap, right?'

Suddenly, Arthur's solemn voice resounded in Levi's ear, coming from the earpiece.

Since it was attached straight to the ear, the messages sent were heard solely by the owner. Unless there was someone with extremely sensitive ears nearby.

Levi merely showed him a comfortable smile, unfazed.

Arthur knew that his brother couldn't use holograms, so he was unable to send a message or a vocal without being heard by their company.

'Okay...'

Although Arthur was quite bothered by the whole deal, all he could do was put his trust in his brother.

Facing straight ahead, Levi asked, "May I ask why you want me to work under you?"

His question resonated with Sergio and Jamal as they also gazed at their friend Shia, wondering what she wanted from a blind kid.

"I don't know yet, consider me intrigued." Shia licked her lower lip, "It's quite rare to find someone with complete blindness still alive and sane."

"..."

"..."

While her answer left her partners somewhat speechless, realizing that she was seeing Levi as a plaything, it didn't bother Levi.

"Fair enough." He replied calmly, "I am willing to approve these terms."

The moment he said this, silence engulfed the motel room...Even Shia was a bit taken aback, raising her eyebrows in surprise.

She expected him to negotiate the contract, understanding that her terms were quite extreme.

She knew that securing a perfect evolution was nothing but simple. She had low hopes that a blind teenager would help her achieve it even if he were to hear something from the nightcrawlers hanging around him.

After all, how would he know for sure that it would work?

But now? Everything changed.

"Your confidence gives me hope." Shia's eyes gleamed in excitement under her sunglasses.

Chapter 6 - Five Minutes.

A few minutes later...

The contract terms were finalized, leaving both parties somewhat satisfied. In the case of Levi, he made sure to include three big terms.

Firstly, Arthur would not be harmed or affected by her party whether Blee'der's evolution succeeded or failed.

Secondly, if the evolution went through as anticipated, Shia had to ensure that Levi joined the Contract Ritual Assembly in the next two months regardless of the cost. If she failed to deliver, she would pay ten million lumen credit to Levi.

This wasn't all, she had to attempt sponsoring him for the next years until he successfully joined...Each year she failed, she had to pay him the same amount again.

This condition was extremely harsh as ten million lumens wasn't an amount any Daywalker could produce easily...Only high-ranked or rich Daywalkers could afford such a penalty.

Third, if he were to succeed, they must not speak of this deal with anyone or mention his name.

In other words, this was a one-time deal.

After the terms were written in luminous ink on the Nocturnal Contract, Shia went first and signed her full name at the bottom.

When she finished, she extended her palm at the contract, her eager smile couldn't be maintained.

"Excuse me, is it possible to have ten minutes with my little brother?" Levi suddenly requested with a soft smile, "I would like to put his mind at ease."

"Little brother?" Shia tilted her head in confusion and then glanced at the agitated mountain behind Levi.

"That's your little brother?" Jamal's eyes widened, "Are you messing with me? He looks older than us!"

"Yes, he is one year younger than me," Levi replied calmly.

"The hell? Are you telling me this behemoth is still a teenager?"

Sergio gulped a mouthful as lifted his head to look at Arthur's face, almost breaking his neck in the process.

"Guys, this is not the time."

Although Shia was just as shocked as her partners, she still brought back the conversation to the more important subject.

"You can have five minutes tops."

She approved and walked to the room's door, followed by her squadmates whose dumbfounded eyes never left Arthur.

"That will do." Levi nodded in appreciation.

The moment the door was closed and Arthur saw them keep a respectful distance, he immediately turned to face Levi.

"Big bro, what's your next move?" He asked, "Did you find Blee'der's perfect evolution?"

"How could I?" Levi chuckled, "I never left your sight."

"Levi...How can you laugh in this f*cked-up situation?"

Arthur scratched his head in agitation, trying his best to understand his brother's angle, but failing miserably.

While he wasn't the brightest of minds, he had read the terms of the contract. There wasn't an ounce of play work or fine print in the terms.

In other words, unless Levi genuinely produced a method to help Blee'der's evolution, he was cooked beyond reproach.

"Arthy, relax." With the same serene smile, Levi said, "While I don't know the answer, I know who does."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

Arthur lifted his head in confusion, but Levi's attention was already on someone else.

"Ash'kral, don't you think it's time we are done with foreplay?" He asked as he gazed at the infinite darkness before him.

Surprisingly, not a single nightcrawler had invaded Levi's personal space even though he was in an outpost packed with Daywalkers.

It was all because of one entity...

"Boy, I don't swing that way."

Ash'kral emerged from the darkness, his sinister crimson eye manifesting first akin to the awakening of a slumbering devil.

"I don't think we have time for jokes." Levi tapped on his wrist twice and said calmly, "We have four minutes and thirty seconds to negotiate our Daywalker contract terms."

"Boy, have you finally gone mad?"

Ash'kral twisted himself around Levi akin to a serpentine without touching him. He brought his menacing slit in front of him, seemingly trying to read out Levi's motives.

"Ash'Kral, please don't insult my intelligence." Levi said composedly, "I may not have eyes, but my observation skills aren't to be underestimated."

"What are you on about?" Ash'kral frowned.

"I see you want to act dumb all the way...Fine by me."

Levi leaned against the chair and picked up the teacup on the small table on his side after a couple of attempts...Then, he took a sip and started speaking, his tone unchanging.

"Ten years...For an entire decade, you have been beside me. You were the first nightcrawler I have laid my eyes on as a child after the incident. While you scared the living crap out of me and gave me unspeakable nightmares, I realized something..." He smiled, "Those nightmares were normal, and they continued for five years until I

reached twelve, the minimum required age for a human to sign his name on a Nocturnal Contract."

"..." Ash'kral remained quiet.

Unbothered by his silence, Levi continued on, "While the nightmares were normal, I couldn't help but note that all of them shared one single detail...You, possessing my body at the end."

"I am sure you aren't foolish to leave behind such an obvious hint of your strong desire to own my body, which made me believe that it was my intuition warning me about you."

Arthur listened to his brother's whispers, realizing that he was talking to a nightcrawler in the bridge of darkness.

While he had no idea what he was talking about, he kept his ears open and didn't interrupt him.

"Once I became twelve years old, that's when you pulled back and watched as the nightcrawlers held a free buffet each day to torment me. Some invaded my dreams when I slept, some kept showing me the most hideous scenes known to mankind, and some were outright making it impossible for me to live."

Levi paused, still maintaining the same serene smile like he was retelling a story unrelated to him instead of a childhood trauma that no one could imagine...

"Yet, throughout all of that misery, you made sure to eliminate any nightcrawler that seemed close to winning me over. You might not know, but I have a really strong memory and remember every single nightcrawler my spiritual eyes landed on."

"Every, one, of, them." He intoned word by word while looking straight into Ash'Kral's gleaming red eye.

"..." Ash'Kral still refused to interject.

"One disappearance might be a lucky coincidence, but every time?" Levi chuckled, "You can imagine my surprise when I realized that you were my guardian angel, keeping me safe until I grew to my late teen years."

While Levi's mental fortitude also played a heavy role, he was still a child. A child with dead parents and a future inhabited by outlandish creatures.

There were bound to be some close calls, where he simply wanted to give up...

"You're welcome." Ash'Kral finally spoke, his voice devoid of emotions.

"Welcome? Haha, hahahaha," Levi couldn't help but break out laughing wildly, his white pearly teeth fully showing.

"Your shamelessness truly puts mine to shame." Levi's chuckles died down, and then he carried on coldly, "You think I haven't figured out that you were behind all of it? That it was you, using those nightcrawlers to cripple my spirit for the promised day?"

"The promised day?" Ash'Kral's slit thinned a little.

"Yes, the day when I realize that my dream of becoming a Daywalker is nothing but, a dream." Levi sneered, "It would have happened either in the Contract Ritual Ceremony or after I reached thirty years old, the final window of becoming a Daywalker."

"That's when you planned on swooping in and giving me the worst possible contract a Daywalker can sign in his life, knowing that I will have no other choice but to sign it if I want my questions answered and my vengeance fulfilled."

"Well guess what, I have no interest in wasting another year, begging for a recommendation letter, knowing that even if I obtained it and aced the trials, no nightcrawler but you, will want me."

Levi turned to face Ash'Kral and said expressionlessly, "So, I decided to take the initiative and choose the date of the promised day...Like it or not, it's happening today."

After he was done, Levi merely picked up the teacup and took another sip, quenching his dried throat...Then, he asked Astra Ai how much time was left for the five minutes to finish.

"One minute."

"Your move," Levi uttered, unfazed.

Chapter 7 - Right Here, Right Now.

Ash'Kral remained silent for a few moments before finally breaking into a burst of wicked laughter.

"Boy, your imagination is on a different dimension." Ash'Kral narrowed his eyes, "Your foolishness will be the end of you. Why would you assume I would go through so much trouble just to sign a Daywalker contract with you?"

"You do know if I wanted to possess your body, I would have done it years ago?" Ash'Kral sneered, "You think you had it in you to stop me from turning you into a Sleepwalker?"

"Not at all," Levi answered calmly, "I knew deep down that you could have easily convinced me to sign a Sleepwalker contract. Your unfathomable strength would have been enough to win me over and hand you my body for the sake of vengeance."

"If you know this much, how can you reach such an idiotic conclusion?" Ash'Kral said.

"It's because I know this much that I am confident in my judgment." Levi replied calmly, "While I have no idea why you prefer a Daywalker contract instead of a Sleepwalker, I am certain that you want something from me, something that even I, don't know about."

"30 seconds." Astra Ai announced in the background.

"Ash'Kral, you either negotiate the Daywalker contract terms with me and help me fulfill the deal with Shia, or you can watch me sign my life away...For I know, it's more precious to you than to me." Levi uttered one last time.

Ash'Kral narrowed his slit at Levi, noticing that he hadn't flinched once. Still, he refused to accept that his scheme was figured out.

"Boy, you should stop your bluff while you still can." He advised.

"20 seconds."

Levi remained silent and continued taking small sips of his herbal tea. In his eyes, he had already said more than enough.

If Ash'Kral still refused to cooperate, this could only mean that he had misjudged the situation or he was holding strong until the last second.

Either way, Levi had made peace with his decision.

"10 seconds."

Still, no reaction from Ash'Kral or Levi.

"5 seconds."

"Big bro, they are coming back."

Arthur informed with an antsy look at the sight of Shia and her partners approaching the motel room.

He heard everything and understood that his brother was in a game of chicken with Ash'Kral using his soul as the price.

While he couldn't hear Ash'Kral's response, he could deduce that the situation wasn't going in his brother's favor.

Unfortunately, no miracle was in sight...

Three...Two...One...Zero.

Cling!

The room's door opened and Shia entered the room. Jamal closed the door behind him and each of them returned to their original position.

"Thank you for your patience." Levi smiled gently.

"So?" Shia narrowed her eyes.

"You have a deal."

The moment Levi said this, he extended his fingers towards the spiritual pitch-black paper, which appeared in his line of sight as well.

Then, a gleaming white pen manifested on his fingers, and he wrote his full name at the bottom, next to Shia's full name.

The instant the last letter was written, all the sentences seemed to have come to life as they shimmered brightly for a few moments. Then, the paper burned from bottom to top, turning into two clouds of ash.

As everyone's eyes were affixed on the two clouds, each person had a different expression.

Jamal and Sergio were surprised the deal actually went through. Shia and Blee'der had similar wide excited grins.

Arthur looked like his soul was snatched out of his body, his face was as pale as sheet paper.

Meanwhile, Levi still maintained the same gentle smile like he hadn't just signed his life away.

At last, Ash'Kral.

As he watched those two clouds solidify into two spiritual seals and slowly move toward Shia and Levi, he couldn't help but finally drop the act.

'Hahahaha, you little brat, you actually signed it. I should have known that you had it in you. Mad, absolutely mad.' Ash'Kral laughed, amused by the whole situation.

Levi heard him and didn't bother to respond, focusing on the seal being stamped on his soul. When it happened, he felt a simple chill that lasted less than a split second.

"The contract has been approved." Shia asked while rubbing her hands in anticipation, "Now, tell me, what should we do to achieve perfect evolution to Tier 3?"

'As you said before, a risk has to be taken to move forward. I applaud your efforts, you have gained my attention.' Ash'Kral shared, 'Now, tell her that her contracted nightcrawler needs to find the variant of Blood Crystal Flower called Obsidian Bloodvine and ground it with the Blood Crystal Flower's stem while using...'

Before he could finish giving out the secret recipe to create a perfect evolutionary formula, knowledge worth millions of lumen credits, Levi's solemn voice resounded in the room.

"I will need you to bring me five Blood Crystal Flowers, Obsidian Bloodvine, and a piece of Ruby Veil Blossom. In addition, I will be requiring all the secondary materials for the remarkable evolution."

"Five flowers, Obsidian Bloodvine, and even the infamous Ruby Veil Blossom? As expected, perfect evolutions aren't cheap." Jamal sucked in a cold breath, knowing that a single Ruby Veil Blossom cost half a million lumens.

"While money can solve Ruby Veil Blossom, it will be quite tough to secure five flowers at once, plus their variant Obsidian Bloodvine." Shia frowned, "I heard there is only a 10% chance for such a variant to emerge."

Neither she nor her partners questioned Levi's information as they knew that the moment he signed the contract, there was no way he would try to fool them.

After all, if Blee'der's evolution failed, his life would no longer be his.

As for asking him about the details? It was written in the contract that Levi wasn't obligated to share his method with them.

This was quite a normal procedure since this kind of vital information was sold for millions of lumens to the right target.

Shia wasn't the sole Daywalker with a contracted nightcrawler of Blee'der's species.

"Alright, at least we have a goal now."

Shia clapped her thighs and stood up with an invigorated look. She looked at her partners and said, "We might require more manpower to collect five blood flowers. Sergio, go out and hire four Rookie Daywalkers at stage three or Junior Daywalkers. The payment is twenty thousand lumens for each blood crystal flower harvested and one hundred thousand for Obsidian Bloodvine."

Arthur raised an eyebrow in surprise, realizing that Shia might be from quite a well-off family. After all, there was no way a Junior Daywalker at Evolution Stage would have this much money to throw away.

"On it." Sergio took off immediately.

"Jamal, I need you to reach out to the Anti-Sleepwalker Bureau and request a temporary lift on Levi's ankle monitor."

"Huh? Don't tell me you want to bring him with us?" Jamal was alarmed.

"Of course, he isn't leaving my sight until we conclude the deal." Shia winked in the direction of Levi, forgetting that he couldn't see.

"Fine by me." Levi smiled.

"If he is going, I am going." Arthur interjected with a cold gaze.

"Why not? You seem to have a bright prospect of becoming a high-ranked Daywalker. It will be a good experience for you."

Shia welcomed him too, knowing that while the Harrowing Forest might have some surviving nightcrawlers of the fallen Shadow Castle, it wouldn't be much of a threat to their party.

"Let's go."

Next, she nodded at her partner and walked to the door. When she was about to leave, she turned around and showed a gentle smile.

"For your own sake, I genuinely hope this works out."

While her smile was gentle, her tone carried a hint of bloodthirsty intent, making Arthur's heart skip a beat.

"Don't go nowhere, we move at dawn."

Thud!

The door was closed, leaving Arthur and Levi in the chamber. Before Arthur could say anything, Ash'Kral asked, "What are you doing?"

"Showing you how serious I am. If I were to give them the correct formula, the deal would go through and I would get my recommendation letter." Levi replied calmly while standing up.

"As I said before, there is no point in participating in the assembly if you were the only nightcrawler interested in me. So, I am getting my contract on my own terms, right here, right now."

"..."

"..."

Hearing this, both Arthur and Ash'Kral were left silent, staring at Levi's expressionless face. Even Arthur was thrown off by his big brother's unbreakable stubbornness to get his way regardless of the consequences, even if it meant walking straight to a life of enslavement.

That's what Arthur thought but in reality, every action Levi made was a calculated move no matter how crazy it seemed.

"While I do appreciate your resolve, it's not enough to convince me of linking my legacy, my life, my everything to a blind child," Ash'Kral said calmly.

"I understand this isn't a simple decision for nightcrawlers." Levi replied, "Once you sign the contract, you return to a Tier 1 nightcrawler, a mortal, and most importantly, you lose your autonomy until the duration of the contract ends."

"Committing to a blind human is even worse...but that's the thing." Levi smiled faintly, "You're different...You chose me specifically because I am blind. I don't know why, but I know damn well that my blindness is an advantageous condition for you."

"Correct me if I am wrong."

After he heard all of this, Ash'Kral couldn't help but feel slightly surprised.

'This boy...He didn't lie, his observation and analytic skills are superb.' He thought to himself as he narrowed his slit in the direction of Levi, 'He has been studying me for years just as I have been doing to him. He only made his move once he was confident in his analysis.'

'Although he hasn't hit the nail on the head, his intelligence and cunningness are unquestionable.' Ash'Kral thought to himself, 'Maybe it's about time I commit, I have tested him for long enough, he might be the one.'

But soon, Ash'Kral shook his head, knowing that it wasn't the time yet.

'He has yet to be tested in the real world.' He smiled sinisterly as he gazed into the distance, seemingly noticing something strange, 'Let's see how he fares in the forest...'

Chapter 8 - The Holy Pillars

Half a day later...

Levi and Arthur were seen sitting in front of the motel's room, awaiting the return of Shia's squad and any sort of movement from Ash'Kral.

Unfortunately, he hadn't reached out since the last time Levi spoke to him.

While Levi seemed at peace with how the situation was developing, Arthur was getting antsy by the minute.

"Levi, you should have at least listened to the formula for Blee'der's perfect evolution." Arthur bit his nails nervously, "It's been half a day already, maybe he has already lost interest. Nightcrawlers are extremely unpredictable."

"Loosen up, don't get yourself early wrinkles." Levi smiled peacefully, "He will come around eventually...If not, well, it's not so bad to work as Daywalker's staff."

"Can you stop joking around?" Arthur glared at his brother.

Arthur always respected his brother's decisions and plans, believing that he had it covered every time. But this situation was simply too extreme as Levi was putting his life in the hands of a nightcrawler.

Arthur could never trust a nightcrawler, especially, when their parents were slaughtered under their hands.

Too bad, all he could do was wait patiently; a virtue, he always lacked.

"Is it sunset already?" Levi asked after Astra Ai informed him of the time.

"I guess so, The Holy Pillars are about to emerge," Arthur replied as he turned around and watched the sun slowly set over the horizon.

As this was happening, the entire outpost came to a brief halt.

Every Daywalker and citizen stopped whatever they were doing and lifted their heads, gazing at the breathtaking sunset.

Some seemed to appreciate the view while the majority had looks of abandonment, wishing that the sun would never set.

Sadly, the sun disappeared on the horizon and took away its precious protective light. But soon, everyone's gloomy expressions were replaced with looks of relief as a wave of gentle luminous golden light started sparkling around them.

It was like the entire outpost was illuminated by a gentle flashlight from the heavens, putting their hearts and minds at ease.

"Have no fear, the Solar Deities will never forsake us...Auryn."

One Daywalker fell to his knees and bowed his head towards the heart of the Holy Heliodor Region.

He was holding tightly to a necklace with an illuminating sun symbol. His face reflected nothing but utter devotion and reverence.

Some Daywalkers reacted in the same manner, and some merely nodded in appreciation towards the sky. Then, they continued with their duties or preparation for exploring the Harrowing Forest.

Their reaction was understandable when the sole reason humanity hadn't gone extinct a hundred years ago was due to those Holy Light Pillars.

After the first contact with the Shadow Dimension, nightcrawlers had invaded Earth from every patch of darkness through Stygian Gates.

In the first twelve hours, more than three billion people were either devoured or forced to become Sleepwalkers for the sake of survival.

Just when hope seemed lost and humanity's extinction was merely a few days away, one thousand Holy Light Pillars fell from the sky on major cities worldwide.

The chosen cities had the most surviving population from the first invasion. Each pillar covered three hundred kilometers in diameter, illuminating entire cities and the nearest regions to them.

The moment the pillars descended, all nightcrawlers were scorched to death instantly in those cities and their underground, giving the survivors a safe haven at last.

At the moment, there were no longer any countries after the old system fell apart; only Holy Regions in infested continents.

"How warm..."

Meanwhile, Levi seemed to enjoy the divine light as he gently moved his palm across the illuminating sparkles.

While he couldn't see them, he had a peculiar feeling of comfort, like he was being hugged by his mother.

He had already asked his brother about it, and he told him that he had never felt the same sensation, and so as the others.

This made Levi assume that maybe the Solar deities were gentle with blind people, making him appreciate the warm sensation each night.

"Enjoying your sunbath under the holy light?"

Suddenly, Shia's irritated voice resounded from behind Arthur and Levi.

When Arthur turned around, he noticed that neither her expression nor her partners' was good.

"You seem distressed...Were there any issues with the recruitment?" Levi inquired calmly.

"How did you know?" Shia knitted her eyebrows in wonder.

"You took quite a while to return, which shouldn't be possible when the payment is quite generous on your part." Levi smiled serenely. "I assume that most reliable rogue Daywalkers were already signed to other agencies' squads?"

"Your guess is half right." Shia sat down next to them and disclosed with an irked look, "It's Mantis, the f*cker from Sunstrike Agency. It turns out, they have already capitalized on their agency's main squad success at clearing the Shadow Castle."

"The bastard has signed 99% of the current Daywalkers in the outpost." Sergio cursed.

"We were even approached by them." Jamal sighed helplessly.

"What's your next move?" Levi inquired as he rested his arms on his white cane, "Are you planning to wait until your agency's members arrive?"

"No, we will move now." Shia uttered sternly, "My agency associates will take days to arrive, as most of them are carrying their missions. With Sunstrike's current numbers, they will most definitely lockdown the entire forest once they make their move."

"Are you mad?" Arthur narrowed his eyes, "It was already dangerous for us with extra members involved. How can you guarantee my brother's safety with just you three?"

"Don't worry, Arthy." Levi answered him, "She can't afford to lose me just yet."

"Aren't you a bit too sensible for your age?" Shia leaned closer to Levi. Then, she whispered, "I am growing quite fond of you...Please don't disappoint me."

Levi merely smiled in response, not bothering to turn his head.

...

A few minutes later, Shia, Levi, Arthur, and the other two were seen walking towards the outpost's exit.

To no one's surprise, the exit was extremely populated with contracted nightcrawlers, awaiting Sunstrike Agency's orders to move out into the forest.

With such a gathering, it was difficult for Levi to tune out all the noises.

'The hell? What's a blind kid doing here?'

'Boy, have you lost your way?'

'Shishishi, it's best to go back, lest your ankle monitor gets you in trouble.'

Levi walked unaffected amidst the mockery. By now, he was immune to their ridicule, as he had heard practically everything.

However, his unique situation attracted their partners' attention, making almost everyone turn their heads and gaze at them.

"Oh, is that Shia Morningstar? Was she also recruited for this mission?"

"Huh? Don't be delusional, her family's fortune is enough to buy all of us."

"What is she doing with a blind kid? Is he even allowed to leave the borders?"

As Shia's squad walked across the crowded exit, murmurs were heard here and there. Although there were close to a hundred Daywalkers, Shia kept her hands inside her buggy jacket, walking with a straight back and a popsicle in her mouth.

The crowd opened a path for them without her needing to say anything.

"Damn, is she really that famous?" Arthur muttered under his breath as he kept looking at the Daywalkers' expressions. Most of them were either envious or star-struck, like they were gazing at an actual celebrity.

Levi heard his brother's murmurs through the noise and answered him casually, "She is quite famous, but their reactions are for her father."

"Her father?"

"Yes." Levi shared, "She is the youngest daughter of Idriss Morningstar, the current head of the Morningstar Lineage Family and the Blood Hunters Agency."

"Blood Hunters Agency?" Arthur scratched his head in confusion, "It can't be, there is only one Blood Hunters Agency in our holy region; It's a tier 5 agen...Huh?"

Arthur suddenly felt a chill course down his spine after realizing that his big brother wasn't screwing around with just any Daywalker, but the precious daughter of one of the strongest Daywalkers and the leader of the second-ranked agency in Heliodor's region!!

With a petrified expression, Arthur looked below him at his brother and saw that he still had the same serene, harmless smile.

"When did you find out..."

"Once I knew her name."

Levi answered while tapping his hearing device, letting him know that he used the Astra AI to search for her name on the network.

"You still committed..." Arthur sighed helplessly, "Brother, couldn't you have picked any other Daywalker?"

Arthur's worry was rational as he heard many negative rumors related to the Blood Hunters' Agency.

The most well-known one...They were absolutely bat sh*t crazy!

"Have no fear, your big bro is here." Levi joked.

"F*ck off."

Arthur massaged his temples, feeling like he was losing years of his life trying to keep up with his brother.

"Welcome back Shia. Have you given my proposal a second thought?"

Chapter 9 - Sealing Totems.

Suddenly, a feminine soft voice echoed across the gathering, silencing the noise almost immediately.

Shia lifted her head lazily and noticed a tall thin man, wearing a skin-tight black and green protective suit.

He had long braided pistachio green hair that reached his waist, making Shia click her tongue in annoyance each time she saw it.

"Mantis, haven't I warned you not to get in my face again if you don't want your precious hair sliced?" Shia intoned with a hint of jealousy.

A sweat dropped down Mantis' forehead as he stared at her serious expression. He heard rumors that the Idriss Morningstar was forcing his entire family to keep their hair at a neck's length maximum; females or males.

It had to do with long hair being detrimental in combat...It seemed like Shia wasn't a fan of this family rule. If it wasn't for their deal, Shia would have given Arthur some bad looks too due to his ponytail.

"Ha..ha..ha, Shia, no need to be so aggressive."

Mantis released a nervous laugh and then tried to win her over again.

"We are going to move at dawn after we add another batch of Daywalkers. Please, feel free to tag along with us, no contract is required and I will assure you that the first Blood Crystal Flower we find goes to you; no payment needed." He smiled welcomingly, "What do you say?"

'Isn't this the same as making us work for her evolution free of charge?'

'Tsk, life truly isn't fair.'

The rest of the Daywalkers showed envious and slightly bothered looks at Mantis' special treatment of Shia.

But, they kept their complaints within the confines of their minds, understanding that they weren't at Shia's level of reputation.

"Not interested."

Yet, to everyone's surprise, Shia didn't even bother to stop. She moved past him while Jamal and Sergio were giving him a dirty look.

She only stopped when she arrived at the closed-shut solid metallic gate, guarded by two governmental Daywalkers.

One looked bored as hell, smoking a thin cigarette and hiding his face under a hat, while the other had an energetic attitude.

The smoker leaned lazily, glancing at Levi behind a pair of thin black sunglasses. Then, he ordered him to come close and show his ankle monitor.

Arthur brought his brother to the guard and helped him lift his trousers, exposing his ankle monitor.

As Arthur looked around and noticed the weird looks his brother was being given, his veins popped up, and his expression turned menacing.

"Don..."

Just as he was about to tell them off, Shia turned around and uttered coldly, "Mind your f*cking business before I rip your eyes off."

Almost everyone turned their attention somewhere else, knowing that the Blood Hunters Agency was filled with monsters, who couldn't care less about their reputation.

In other words, antagonizing the precious daughter of the leader wasn't a smart move as they were unpredictable.

Arthur eased up a bit and gave Shia an appreciative nod.

Shia ignored him and focused on the guards.

Uncaring about the ongoing drama, the smoker Daywalker glanced once at the ankle monitor and scanned it fully with his NeuraLens.

A hologram manifested in front of him, giving him all the officially recorded details of Levi.

//

Name: Levi Ignis Larson

Age: 17

Gender: Male

Background:

Levi Larson grew up in the shadow of tragedy. Both of his parents were slaughtered at the hands of two mysterious nightcrawlers. They also ripped his eyes out and left him to turn into a Sleepwalker; the signature move of the infamous Duskbound Order.

Parental Situation:

Father: Brian Larson, the founder of Larsons' nightwear company. (Deceased)

Mother: Ruqya Altamir, no noteworthy information found. (Deceased)

Current Status:

Levi Larson has been under city arrest for 5 years, which was later on upgraded to a regional arrest after succeeding in all his yearly Forensic Psychological Evaluations.

Danger Level: Low.

Ankle monitor status: Temporarily lift (Fifteen days)

Current Guardian: Shia Chaima Morningstar. //

After he finished, he looked up at Levi and murmured to himself, "He sure has grown."

Levi's ears twitched, hearing his whisper...Taken by surprise, he scrutinized the humanoid grayed aura of the guard, trying to see if he had met him somewhere.

Unfortunately, there weren't many details in a foggy featureless aura.

"He checks out."

The smoker Daywalker waved his hand lazily and lowered his hat, hiding half of his face while leaning against his chair. His partner swiftly opened the gate for them after checking the IDs of Shia and the others.

Ka-thumb!!

The metallic gate let out a thunderous noise, echoing across the silent Harrowing Forest in the distance.

"Please be careful, there are still many remnants of the fallen Shadow Castle hiding underground." The energetic guard saluted them by placing three fingers on his chest.

Shia, Sergio, Jamal, and even Arthur saluted back in the same fashion. Then, they walked outside of the outpost, standing amidst an empty field of dirt and rocks.

There wasn't even a path towards the forest. It was like they were thrown completely into the wilderness.

Ka-thumb!!

The guard closed the gate behind them, following protocol.

Since the holy region borders were defined by the range of the Holy Pillar, those outposts were considered the first line of defense for each region.

Thus, Daywalkers could leave their regions at any given moment and explore the wastelands, but they had to do it at their own risk.

"The outside world doesn't feel as dangerous as I anticipated," Arthur said as he looked around him.

"We are still under the Sun Disk Tower illumination...Let's see if you will say the same when your only source of light is the moon, stars, and your equipment." Sergio snickered.

As he mentioned, the tall Sun Disk Tower didn't act as a mere weapon against the nightcrawlers encroachment, but also as a lighthouse at night.

Right now, it was focusing its light in the direction of the forest, illuminating the entire path towards it...Unfortunately, the forest was outside of its range.

"Enough chitchat, we have ten hours at best before dawn. We must reach the depth of the forest before Mantis' group moves out." Shia ordered calmly, "Bring out your Nightmounts."

All three reached out to a backpack on their right wrist and pulled out a small wooden totem, each one with a different shape and peculiar inscriptions written on it.

Shia had an eagle-like totem, Sergio possessed a wolf-like totem, and Jamal held onto a horse-like totem.

All three closed their eyes and murmured different incantations with strange-sounding language while holding the totem in one hand.

The moment the incantation was finished, the three blood hunters threw the totems in front of them. Then, everyone watched as a mysterious light descended on the totems from the heavens, illuminating the fine inscriptions written on their surfaces.

After the inscriptions were fully illuminated, the totems grew in size bit by bit until they were bigger than Shia's party!

Then, the wooden totems shattered, revealing three monstrous Tier 1 nightcrawlers. When exposed to the physical world, the shadowy horse and blue-furred wolf nightcrawlers growled viciously at the party.

The wolf even tried to lung at Arthur with bloodthirsty eyes and saliva dripping down its vicious mouth.

"Ayoo, easy boy, easyyyy."

Sergio pulled into a chain of light, which was linked to a spikey collar on the nightcrawler's neck.

After a couple of tugs, the blue-haired wolf finally started behaving properly as each tug released a painful burning sensation on the collar.

"You still haven't tamed them?" Shia gave them a look of dissatisfaction while patting the wings of her eagle, which was lowering its head in obedience.

Though everyone could see the hint of dread in the eagle's eyes, making them understand that it wasn't listening to Shia out of love.

"We are trying our best, the f*ckers are too rebellious." Jamal cursed as he kept pulling into a similar light chain, forcing the shadowy horse to behave.

"I know a trick that might make it easier for you guys to tame them." Levi interjected softly.

"What do you know about taming Nightmounts?" Sergio glared.

"Quite a bit."

Levi walked towards Sergio, using his cane. Then, he extended his hand in front and requested, "May I get some Luminus snacks?"

Shia gave a head nod to Sergio, making him reach out to his backpack and pull three small orbs, the size of marbles.

Then, he handed them to Levi with an annoyed look, "You better not waste them, I am running low on stock."

Levi merely smiled in response while walking slowly toward the giant blue-furred wolf.

Since the wolf was in the real world, it appeared as a wolfish blue aura in Levi's eyes. Still, Levi could sense that its aggression was growing with each step he got closer to it.

"My late mother's hobby was learning about nightcrawlers in general; archetypes, evolutionary paths, rarities, behavior, and the rest of their seemingly infinite peculiar qualities."

Levi shared softly while placing one Luminus snack on his palm. Then, he pressed it and it started shimmering with purified stored sunlight. The moment the three nightcrawlers noticed the light, their hunger took over their minds!

Even Shia's mount showed hints of wanting to pounce on the snack, but one cold glare from Shia made it reconsider.

Grrrrrr!!!

Meanwhile, Jamal and Sergio were forced to tightly hold onto the light chains, keeping their Nightmounts controlled.

"When studying Tier 1 nightcrawlers, she found out that besides their insatiable hunger for light, and their low intelligence, they reacted excessively to another thing."

Levi brought the Luminus snack right next to the blue-furred wolf's mouth and kept it at a short distance, forcing it to try its best to eat the snack, but to no avail.

"Sit." He ordered with the same serene smile.

The wolf completely ignored his order, its eyes still affixed on nothing but the snack.

"Sit."

Still no response.

Seeing this, Sergio had already lost his patience and commented with an irked tone, "Shia, are you really going to let him waste more of our time?"

Shia shushed him with a finger near her mouth.

"Sit."

After Levi repeated the order three times and the wolf failed to heed it, he brought the Luminus snack right in front of its eyes. Then, he tightened his palm until the orb exploded, releasing a short-lived flash!!

"..."

"..."

"..."

Chapter 10 - I Will Be Gentle Next Time.

Shia, Sergio, Jamal, Blee'der, and the rest of the contracted nightcrawlers were left stunned for a moment...Even the mounts went quiet, their eyes widening as they gazed at Levi.

Calm and collected, Levi took a step back.

A second after the purified sunlight died out, hell broke loose!

GRRRRRR!!! KAAAW!! Neighhhh!!...

The three mounts roared, losing their marbles immediately!

"You bastard! Are you screwing with us?!" Sergio cursed as he tried his best to calm down the agitated wolf.

"What's the meaning of this?" Shia questioned.

She still had faith in Levi, knowing that he wasn't foolish to create such a mess without a result.

"Be patient."

Levi pulled another Luminus snack and brought it close to the agitated wolf. It was walking in circles in its place, but its vicious eyes never left Levi.

After noticing the snack, its viciousness died out immediately and started trying to eat it again.

"Sit," Levi commanded calmly.

Seeing that it still refused to follow his commands, Levi didn't hesitate to blow off the orb, causing the nightcrawlers to snap again.

Without waiting for anyone to interfere, Levi brought out the last Luminus snack and commanded coldly, "Sit."

Under everyone's shocked expressions, the blue-furred wolf sat down on all four paws immediately while whimpering softly, seemingly begging Levi to stop wasting purified sunlight.

Yet, what shocked them the most was the sight of the shadowy horse and the white feathered eagle also sitting down, even when they weren't being addressed!

"Good boy."

Levi smiled kindly and fed the snack to the wolf while slowly caressing its fur. Then, he suggested that Shia and Jamal feed their nightcrawlers too, so they would associate listening to commands got them snacks, and refusing to abide would result in their destruction.

Shia and Jamal did as they were told and watched as their mounts became much more respectful of their presence.

Shia looked at Levi in intrigue and asked only one question, "How?"

"Because my brother is the best at anything he touches." Arthur grinned proudly.

"I wish that was true." Levi chuckled, "The truth is, after thorough research, my mother discovered that Tier 1 nightcrawlers react just as intensely to wasting purified sunlight as they do to consuming it."

"So, I figured you could use it as a trick to make your mounts obedient if the pain of the divine chains wasn't enough."

Shia and her party were left astounded.

"How is this the first time I'm hearing about this?" Shia raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"Because knowledge is wealth in this era." Levi replied.

While he knew that his mother's intelligence was on the high end after reading through all the research papers, he wasn't delusional enough to believe that she was the first and only person to find out such information.

In other words, this kind of knowledge was either kept on the low or sold to interested parties, following the same approach of evolution-related knowledge.

Shia and her party figured out what Levi meant instantly, leaving them a bit puzzled.

"Why haven't you sold it?" Sergio frowned, "I believe such a taming technique would have fetched you a reasonable amount of credits."

"Neither of you seems like the type to have money." Jamal doubled down as he scanned Levi and Arthur's clothes.

"Money?" Levi added sincerely, "I shared a piece of my mother's knowledge with you simply because it would have helped you. Not everything needs to be sold; if one doesn't know where to draw the line, it won't be long before he finds himself selling his soul."

Shia and the others were left a bit astounded to hear such matured wisdom come out of the lips of a teenager.

"Helped us?" Sergio narrowed his eyes at Levi while talking telepathically with his contracted nightcrawler, 'O'thnir, are his motives truly that pure?'

The rocky hog replied calmly, 'I am not sure, the boy is nearly impossible to read with his soulless gaze.'

...

Sometime later, Levi was seen sitting on top of the white feathered eagle, holding onto Shia's waist tightly. He had a big smile as he enjoyed the wind caressing his face.

Meanwhile, Arthur was left to sit on the shadowy horse behind Jamal. His experience wasn't as enjoyable.

"Aw, Aw, Aw, Aw..."

Arthur yelped in pain with each gallop, feeling like his balls were being crushed. Neither Jamal nor the horse was enjoying their time without a saddle. Arthur weighed more than 140 kg of pure muscle, an absolute genetic anomaly.

"How is it even humanly possible to get this big at sixteen without being a Daywalker...Did he take steroids? Is it even enough?"

Jamal murmured as he gazed at Arthur's gigantic hands holding onto his waist, feeling a bit of dread creeping up on him each time Arthur tightened his hands.

Although he was a Daywalker, he was still a mere Junior. In addition, he was of Psychic Specialization, meaning his contracted nightcrawler was geared towards mostly mental-based battles.

This resulted in his body and physical strength being quite weak. He was much weaker than Arthur physically.

Suddenly, the shadowy horse jumped over a small boulder on its path and snatched Arthur's soul with it.

Instinctively, Arthur hugged Jamal tightly, feeling like he would get thrown off the horse.

"Arghh...I...Can't...Breath..."

With eyes popping out of their sockets and a face as pale as a sheet of paper, Jamal kept tapping on Arthur's forearm while trying his best to catch his breath.

"Let go, you are choking him!" Sergio came to his rescue, scolding Arthur loudly on top of his wolf.

"Ah, so sorry...I lost control for a bit."

Arthur apologized with a foolish smile after relaxing his grip, leaving Jamal to cough uncontrollably.

"Hahaha...You almost got had by a civilian; a child even...Haha!"

Meanwhile, his contracted nightcrawler O'rro was laughing at him, uncaring about upsetting his partner even more.

Almost all intelligent nightcrawlers were assholes. It didn't matter if they were contracted or not, they would never miss a chance to bully someone.

"You..You..Get down!!!"

Ashamed and a bit terrified, Jamal immediately stopped the shadowy horse and pulled Arthur down.

"Sergio, it's your turn..."

Before Jamal could pass on the ticking time bomb, Sergio flew past him at great speed, kicking off a cloud of dust.

"..."

"..."

"..."

This left Jamal, Arthur, and the shadowy horse to stare at each other in awkward silence. A few seconds later, Arthur coughed, "I will be gentle next time."

The way he worded it pissed Jamal even more.

"Trust me, I promise I won't go hard." Arthur doubled down with an innocent look.

"Argh, just, just shut up and ride the damn horse!"

An hour later...

Shia, Levi, and Sergio were seen standing at the gates of the Harrowing Forest with their backs facing it.

As they were talking with each other, a tiny black horse appeared over the horizon, galloping at full speed in their direction.

"About damn time," Shia grumbled as she was waiting for over ten minutes now.

Soon, her irritation died down and was replaced with an amused look at Arthur sitting in front while Jamal hugged him in the back.

Since Arthur was built like a tank and Jamal looked like a tall stick, only his arms were visible.

Under the dreadful silence of the night, Arthur and Jamal's distressed voices echoed from a distance.

"Stop the horse!"

"I don't know how!"

"Pull its hair!"

Arthur used too much force, ripping a handful of hair, causing the shadowy horse to yelp in pain and stop mid-sprint!

Just like they had pulled the front brakes of a bike, Arthur and Jamal were sent flying in the direction of the main party.

"What in the..."

Shia facepalmed as she watched those two idiots hugging each other in midair; pure dread taking hold of their expressions.

"Mika, catch them."

Kreeeee!

The white feathered eagle took off immediately and caught them with its talons a couple of meters before they got smacked by the ground.

Then, it brought them back to the party, dropping them off near Shia's feet.

"I swear if you guys leave with him again, I will beat him up!"

Jamal stood up, steam practically pouring from his ears...Everyone's teasing looks didn't make him feel any better about such a humiliating experience.

"Is he always this feisty?" Oblivious, Arthur asked while dusting his ass.

"That's the thing, he is usually the silent one." Shia chuckled as she watched Jamal put his Nightmount back inside another sealing totem.

Then, he took off towards the forest on his own, having no interest in talking about what happened.

After sealing their Nightmounts, Shia and the others chased after Jamal.

The moment they went inside, a sudden chilly wind blew past them, sounding akin to a harrowing scream of a child...