

The Glorious Evolution

#Chapter 41: Never Again. - Read The Glorious Evolution

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Unfortunately, Levi was turned deaf to the entire world. He just kept repeating more in his mind while guiding the divine light into the seed like he was bewitched by it or the prospects of obtaining strength at last.

It was like putting candy before a child for the first time after watching it on TV for more than a decade. Levi bit hard and refused to let go!

Thirty seconds...Forty seconds...One minute!!

'You little shit, you will get yourself killed and ruin everything on day one!'

As Ash'Kral watched the steaming hot blood seeping down Levi's nose, he knew that he had reached dangerous levels of heat and he had to stop him. Otherwise, death was a guaranteed outcome!

Without an ounce of hesitation, Ash'Kral focused his spiritual vision on the Three-Body Problem sphere and used his mental prowess to disturb the orbital path of the three seeds!

The moment he did this, the Sun Seed made contact with the Nine Senses seed and sent an electrifying shockwave across Levi's entire body.

Levi was jolted awake and immediately lost his concentration on guiding the divine light. This interrupted the process and pushed the divine light away at last.

The moment the heat stopped rising, the adrenaline that was keeping Levi conscious went away with it.

Thud!

Levi didn't even understand what happened before he found himself passed out on the ground. Hearing the abnormal thud of Levi's fall, Arthur immediately stopped his studies and peeked outside of the room to check on his brother.

"Levi, you goo..Levi!"

When he saw him lying on the ground on top of a pool of sweat and blood while creating a tower of steam above, he swiftly dashed to him.

Just as he wanted to flip him to the side, he yelled in pain after touching Levi's burning skin.

"What the hell is this."

With an anxious expression, Arthur picked up Levi and took him to the bathroom, placing him inside the tub. Then, he turned the faucet on top of his head.

Not done yet, he turned on the shower head too and started spraying Levi like he was caught in invisible fire.

He had no idea what was going on, and the only thing on his mind at the moment was to cool his brother's temperature.

Fortunately, his quick thinking saved the day as Levi's temperature started to decrease significantly. After a minute or so, Levi's scarlet skin returned to somewhat its natural color, and his nose stopped bleeding.

Still, Arthur kept spraying him with cold water for a couple more minutes...Only then did he try to wake him up.

Levi remained unresponsive, forcing Arthur to request assistance from Astra AI on what to do next. After describing the situation to her, Astra advised him to apply cold compresses, such as wet towels or ice packs wrapped in cloth to the neck, armpits, groin, and wrists.

Arthur stopped the running water and followed Astra's instructions, knowing that it wasn't right to keep spraying water on someone who passed out. But it was an emergency, and he had to do it.

After finishing with this, Arthur picked up Levi and wiped out the water with a towel. Then, he placed him on the bed and put a single cold towel on top of his forehead.

Next, he brought his head near his nose and heart. When he found out that both were starting to get regulated, he finally sighed in relief.

"You prick, if you are going to kill yourself at least tell me." Arthur cursed while glancing at his burning red palms.

He still couldn't fathom how hot his brother was and how he managed to survive it. Just one touch was enough to burn some of his palm's skin off.

Only Ash'Kral seemed to know.

'He might not have inherited the Radians' heat immunity, but it looks like he did inherit a high resistance to heat compared to the average human...It just needed an awakening.' He thought.

He understood that no normal human would survive what Levi had gone through, as his temperature had crossed way past 43°C(109°F), which was the known temperature for organs shutting down.

Ash'Kral figured out that when Levi started hitting those crazy numbers, his dormant Radian genetics related to heat resistance were forcefully awakened by one of the three seeds to save him.

When it came to the survival of the host, the seed would do anything and everything to help it survive.

Sometime later, at the brink of dawn...

Levi woke up with one of the nastiest headaches of his life. When he touched his head, the cold towel dropped on his chest, confusing him for a moment.

'What happened?' He asked while looking around him, trying to find Ash'Kral in the darkness.

Ash'Kral popped out of nowhere and scolded him immediately, "You almost got yourself killed, idiot!"

When he heard this, Levi knit his eyebrows and tried his best to recall what happened through the pain of the headache.

Unfortunately, he found out that his memories were limited to the start of the seventh cultivation session. After that, everything went blank.

Seeing his reaction, Ash'Kral went on and narrated what happened and how close he was to an uneventful death if it wasn't for his brother saving his ass.

After hearing everything, Levi felt a chill course down his spine as he truly couldn't remember any of that.

Suddenly, Arthur's sleepy voice resounded in his ears.

"Big bro, you are finally up."

Levi turned to face his brother after picking up on his nearby location from his voice. Arthur was indeed sitting on a chair next to Levi's bed, as he had never left after putting him to sleep.

"Arthy, thank you for everything, and I am sorry for such a screw-up." Levi sighed, ashamed.

While he didn't know what happened at the seventh session to make him lose his marbles like that, he understood that he shouldn't have taken such a risk in the first place while being alone.

He knew that seeking to break the limit was too dangerous for his body, but he believed that he had it under control, like the previous sessions. Such overconfidence almost brought him to an early downfall.

"I don't care what you did, I just want to know what it is so I can be prepared next time." Arthur said solemnly, "Be honest, did you sign a contract with Ash'Kral? I heard about our savior's description from Shia and the others. I know it's him."

While Arthur wasn't one of the brightest minds out there, his instincts were pretty sharp.

"Yes."

Levi nodded, having no interest in hiding the truth from his brother.

"Is it what you have wished for?" Arthur asked, his tone carried a hint of concern.

Unlike the others, who had no idea about what was going on with Ash'Kral, Arthur understood that his brother had been targeted by him for a very long time.

The fact that Levi's massive hole was healed miraculously had been eating a big portion of his mind, wondering, fearing, that his brother might have signed a Sleepwalker contract to save them.

"It might not be what I have wished for, but I am in control and that's what matters." Levi smiled as he summoned the Nocturnal contract, showing his brother what kind of terms he signed.

Although he knew that his brother trusted him 100%, he still needed to show him the contract to ease his worries.

After all, Sleepwalkers were able to steal entire identities, mannerisms, behavior, speech, and everything about their partner after absorbing their memories.

That's what made them so scary as no one could figure out if they were dealing with a Daywalker or a well-trained Sleepwalker.

After Arthur browsed through the entire contract, his eyes widened in disbelief.

"You signed this?"

"I had to."

"Why..."

"It was the only way for us to live."

"I see..."

Arthur lowered his head and kept his mouth shut. His hands were clutched into tight fists. Although the contract was quite decent with only two bad terms, which were no death insurance and no fixed period, Arthur hated this for his brother.

But all he could do was accept it in silence, knowing that if Levi hadn't signed it, he would be dead by now.

Picking up on his brother's heavy heartbeats, Levi smiled serenely, "It's alright, the contract has given me more than I have ever wished for."

"What about your peculiar transformation?" Arthur asked, "You were inked up from top to bottom with golden lines, and you had sun symbols in your stomach and forehead. The symbols resembled the Solar Aegis Sanctuary insignia immensely."

Levi wasn't caught off guard by the description. Ash'Kral had already explained his transformation during the second session. Unlike Arthur, who found it cool, Levi was just relieved he didn't have to transform every time he cultivated.

That would be a giant pain in the ass and would always force him to be careful every time he tapped on the divine light.

"You can say so." Levi smiled.

"Damn, I wish my future contracted nightcrawler can give me a similar cool transformation." Arthur eased a bit, showing an envious look.

"Then, you better eat those books so you won't fail the intelligence trial and attract the strongest nightcrawlers to sign a contract with." Levi shooed him away with a hand, "Go, go, you only have two months and it's nowhere near enough to cram everything."

"Thanks to Shia and Jojo, I have enough SR pills to last me until the day of the assembly." Arthur said with a resolved tone, "I will show those f*ckers that I have the brains and the muscles."

Levi chuckled as he listened to his brother's thundering steps while heading to his room. Just as he was about to close the door, Levi remembered something crucial.

"Arthur, don't tell anyone I became a Daywalker, not until after the assembly."

"I gotchu."

Arthur shouted from inside the room even if he didn't understand the reason.

'Are you sure about keeping the truth from your brother?' Ash'Kral snickered, 'I thought you brothers had no secrets between you.'

'This is for the best, at least now.' Levi replied calmly.

He decided to keep the truth about their bloodline to himself for now, knowing that it would do nothing but confuse his brother.

He was already struggling with his books; there was no point in filling his brain with ideas that would change his entire perspective about their identity and family.

At least, not before the Contract Ritual Assembly.

If Arthur were to become a Daywalker, Levi would check if he could also absorb the divine light.

As for his Three-Body Problem and the inevitable death awaiting him if he couldn't solve it? He was going to take this to the grave with him.

Chapter 42: SS Potential.

While Levi was cultivating under natural sunlight for the first time on his balcony, finally enjoying a relaxed session after a series of grueling ones, Shia was on a train to the capital. Her goals were clear: secure his recommendation letter and gather the materials needed for Blee'der's upcoming evolution.

The distance between Tamara's settlement and Heliodor's capital was no less than fifteen kilometers. So, she would arrive in about ten minutes max.

Jamal and Sergio were accompanying her since their agency's headquarters were in the capital.

They should have left after their interrogation, since they were ordered by their senior captain to report back concerning the Harrowing Forest Massacre. But they held it off until Levi woke up to check on him.

"Will you request the recommendation letter from Lord Idriss or Madam Naima?" Jamal asked curiously as he gazed at Shia, who was playing holographic chess against Sergio.

"Both options are sh*t, but I would rather eat dirt than request anything from that old geezer." Shia gave him a dirty glare for even bringing up such a suggestion.

"Come on Shia, are you really going to remain hung up on the past?" Jamal sighed, "His protection totem has saved our asses. Isn't that enough to drop your grudge?"

"Neva!" Shia growled at him with a lollipop in her mouth.

"Shia, you know it's just hair, right?"

Even Sergio rolled his eyes at her ferocious animosity toward her father. Especially when her grudge didn't warrant such a reaction in their minds.

"It's just hair?"

Shia narrowed her eyes coldly at Sergio until he felt a chill creeping down his spine. Still, he stood his ground.

"Yes, it's just hair." He doubled down solemnly, "Shia, you have been blessed to be born in one of the most prominent families in the region. Your father might be stern and rough, but all of his actions are done for the sake of his family and agency protection. That's why we respect him so much as our leader and would do anything he asks us to. So what if he cut your hair and forced you to keep it low? Is that too much of a price to carry the Morningstar's surname?"

Jamal murmured from the side, "If it were me, I wouldn't have hesitated to go bald if it meant getting the Morningstar surname."

Listening to their words, Shia quietly licked her lollipop, saying nothing. Her eyes stayed on the holographic 3D chessboard, though her mind churned with a mess of thoughts and emotions.

She lifted the Queen piece and played with it in her hand. Then, she let out a long exhale and placed it in the best strategic position on the board, stunning Sergio.

"Checkmate."

Then, she turned her head toward the giant glass window, eyes fixed on the cattle grazing in the fields. She didn't respond or argue; there was no point.

They were looking at the situation through their own lens, not hers. To outsiders or those less fortunate, she had no right to complain or rebel against her father.

After all, there were other people whose lives were currently in the gutter, struggling to just sleep daily and suffering from nightcrawlers' invasions each night.

She knew all of this and never took away from the pain of others. But this didn't mean that her problems meant nothing.

This didn't mean that just because other people were suffering, she must never utter a single complaint in her life.

As her eyes focused on the glass and she saw her reflection and her short crimson hair, she couldn't help but smile bitterly.

It was never about the hair, and she knew her friends would never truly understand...Not unless they had lived her life. To them, her family was royalty, something to admire or envy. They couldn't see the weight behind the image.

How could one ever understand the troubles and woes of another soul that he envied?

"Cough, well, whether it's Madam Naima or Lord Idriss, it will be an upheaval battle to secure the recommendation letter without telling them about your deal." Jamal swiftly returned to the original subject, not wanting to spoil the mood any longer.

"True, while I give utmost props to Levi's intelligence and powerful spiritual vision, if your mother were to hear that he is blind, she would reject you instantly." Sergio nodded.

Shia knew that her friends were right.

The recommendation letters were given to all the high-ranked agencies to recommend potential children with no background or ones with outsider identities, such as belonging to other holy regions or survivors from nightcrawlers' nests.

If this were all, the recommendation letters wouldn't carry much weight for those agencies. Their true power was the priority recruitment that came with it!

In other words, the agencies recommending any rising talents would have dibs on them during the Contract Ritual Assembly if they were to become Daywalkers.

This led the agencies to value their limited recommendation letters even more, reserving them strictly for the most talented children without influential backgrounds.

That's why Levi was always rejected by every single agency at the doorstep, not even the security guards bothering to entertain his wishful request.

"Don't worry, I have a plan to convince her." Shia smirked.

Sometime later...

Shia was seen sitting at a well-decorated coffee table on top of a hardened concrete roof, unlike the rest of the buildings near it.

The roof was covered with a massive transparent white tent, protecting it from the intensity of the sun while also bathing it in a warm light.

Although the roof was made of concrete, it was hidden beneath a lush garden with a wooden path leading to the rooftop door.

Shia sat at a table beside a patch of crimson flowers that resembled roses, but with crystallized petals that reflected light like gemstones.

As Shia took a sip of peppermint tea, her eyes were affixed on those gleaming flowers, taking in their refreshing smell. But soon, she averted her gaze after picking up on the rooftop door opening.

A gorgeous middle-aged woman entered, dressed in a milky white sundress and adorned with gold accessories on her neck, ears, fingers, and wrists. Her short, wavy brunette hair fell slightly over her smooth forehead.

Light makeup highlighted her mature beauty, so much so that it seemed to outshine even the vibrant garden around her.

This was Madam Naima Morningstar, the true household head of the Morningstar family and the second in command within the Blood Hunters Agency.

She might not be as powerful as her husband, but her administrative skills and ambitious mindset were the ones keeping the family and agency in order. Idriss Morningstar was more of a figurehead, whose job was to simply kill, destroy, and win.

Such a power couple was feared and respected even outside of Heliodor's region.

When Madam Naima saw Shia sitting on the soft futon like a hooligan, one arm resting on her knee, her thin eyebrows furrowed in quiet disapproval.

"Chaima, haven't I told you to act right?" Madam Naima chided, her voice stern but delicate, "You are representing the Morningstar lineage outside, and if the youngest daughter acts in this manner, won't they think of us as savages behind doors?"

"Hi daughter, hi mom, how are you? Were you hurt in the Harrowing Forest? I heard someone placed an assassination hit on you. I was worried sick about you. Don't be, I can take care of myself." Shia narrowed her eyes irritably, "Isn't this how conversations

between moms and daughters are supposed to be after a near-death experience? Instead, you are nagging me over my posture."

"You aren't dead...Don't be melodramatic, it's unbecoming. Plus, your father is already looking into the assassination attempt."

Madam Naima scowled as she sat next to her daughter, not bothered in the slightest by Shia's criticism of her reaction.

"I told you to pick any of the Blood Crystal Flowers behind you and commence your evolution, but you rejected it and chose to search for it on your own, almost killing yourself in the process." Madam Naima added indifferently while pouring a cup of tea for herself, "Be responsible for your decisions."

Shia's heart chilled as she gazed at her mother's emotionless look, realizing that more than ever, she had no love for her.

She almost died in the forest, and while she understood that it was on her, Shia still expected, wished, for just a hint of care or worry from her mother.

Alas...Her blood was as cold as an icy sea...

Shia buried her emotions at the bottom of her heart and said expressionlessly, "You're right. I was asking for too much."

"Good, a Morningstar should never seek compassion or empathy. In this cruel world, such emotions are delicacies for nightcrawlers." Madam Naima advised with a nod of approval.

"Thank you, I will keep it in mind." Shia gritted her teeth for a split second and then reclaimed her composure.

"Why have you asked for me?" Madam Naima glanced at a classic golden watch on her wrist and said, "I have four meetings after breakfast, make it quick."

"I need a recommendation letter."

Shia went straight to the point, no longer having any interest in bonding with her mother.

"For?"

"I need it for my friend."

"What's his background and potential?"

Madam Naima immediately entered into business mode, believing that her rebellious daughter, who refused to accept any favors from them, wouldn't lower her pride for just anyone.

"Orphan native, SS potential."

"SS potential?" Madam Naima raised an eyebrow in surprise, knowing that such ratings were given only to genuine geniuses born with unique qualities.

Instead of telling her about him, Shia requested Astra Ai to show his 3D holographic image.

As Madam Naima stared at the massive blue-colored holographic figure, she couldn't help but ask in intrigue, "How old is this fine specimen? And what's his name?"

"Sixteen years old." Shia smirked, "He is called Arthur Larson."

Chapter 43: Recommendation Letter.

"Sixteen years old?? He has already reached this height and weight? Look at those refined muscles. He looks like he can lift an entire car." Madam Naima's pupils widened in shock, a rare display of emotion.

"I told you, he has SS potential. I am sure the nightcrawlers in the assembly and other agencies will fight tooth and nail over him." Shia said.

"Who wouldn't? I can already see him being a powerhouse in the future." Madam Naima said solemnly, "Shia, make sure to recruit him to our agency. If you need more than the recommendation letter to convince him, don't hesitate to ask."

Madam Naima understood that genetic qualities were one of the most important factors that decided one's potential and limitations.

Sure, the chosen nightcrawler was still the main decider of a Daywalker's limitation. But it helped a lot to have a talented human as a partner and not a deadweight.

That's because when the Shadowlife seed unlocked rewards for the hosts, it tapped into both the genetic pool of the nightcrawlers and humans to define the best evolutionary path.

In other words, if Arthur chose an enhancement specialization nightcrawler, their raw strength would be absolutely barbaric since their seed would be taking advantage of both of their amazing genetic codes.

After all, the seed considered both humans and nightcrawlers as its hosts, which meant, it would accelerate their evolution simultaneously as long as they had actual noteworthy traits to evolve.

On the other hand, if an average human were chosen, the seed would rely mostly on the nightcrawler's DNA for their evolutionary path...This was what usually happened.

"I will see what I can do."

Shia stood up after receiving an email with the recommendation letter signed by her mother.

Anyone between the ages of twelve and twenty-one could use this letter to enter the Contract Ritual Assembly, even if they were in a wheelchair.

Usually, the letters came with the names of the bestowed owners to ensure no fraud happened. But, Madam Naima didn't need to do this as she trusted her daughter would never try to pull a fast one on her.

The family's rules were simply too strict, and if she did such a foolish thing to ruin their family's reputation, the punishment awaiting her wasn't for the weak.

As Madam Naima watched the back of her daughter walking towards the door, she glanced at the Crystal Blood Flower garden and offered, "Why don't you take a flower with you? You have already wasted six months being a Junior Daywalker; your younger cousins will surpass you in no time like this."

"I wish them all the best."

Not bothering to stop for even a moment or turn around, Shia walked out of the door and entered the glass elevator.

After it closed behind her, Madam Naima was left alone. But one should never forget, in this world, you would never be alone.

"Your daughter is feisty as always."

A sudden, alluring voice echoed in Madam Naima's ears, coming from a giant red rose with pitch-black stems and thorns. It slithered down her sleeveless robe like a whip.

"Leave her Ros'mourn. She is in her teenage rebellious years, just like I was." Madam Naima replied calmly while sipping her tea, "A day will come when she will grow up and understand us."

"If she kept moving at this pace, I doubt she would make it out alive." Ros'mourn giggled, her toothless mouth appearing on the bottom petal of the crimson rose.

"If she dies, it only means she isn't strong enough for this world or what lies behind it." Madam Naima murmured as she gazed at the clear sky, "Maybe, it's a much merciful way to go..."

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In Tamara's settlement...

A sudden call interrupted Levi's cultivation session. When he asked Astra about the caller and found out it was Shia's, he paused his cultivation and took the call.

After greeting each other, Shia went straight to the subject and told him that she had secured the recommendation letter for him.

"So quick? How?" Levi was left surprised.

He knew the importance of recommendation letters for each agency, and he expected it would take Shia a great effort to convince her agency to waste it on a blind kid.

Shia went on and explained what she did to secure it, leaving Levi speechless at her boldness.

He knew that if he used the recommendation letter planned for Arthur, everyone in the Assembly would give the Morningstar family funny looks.

After all, those letters were the same as sponsorship, putting immense focus on the chosen candidates. If they were found to have used it on someone blind, it would do great damage to their reputation.

"As long as Arthur puts on a great show and chooses our agency at the end, I will be fine," Shia said casually.

"I see." Levi chuckled, "I believe you don't see much hope in me not embarrassing your family in the assembly, right?"

Shia's giggle was heard from over the phone.

"You think too lowly of me. As much as I want you to embarrass my family's name, I have a feeling that you will give us an unforgettable show."

"Is that so?" Levi smiled, feeling somewhat appreciative of her belief.

"But, it's just a feeling, don't let it get over your head." Shia suddenly warned, "The yearly assembly is an opportunity for which all candidates prepare extensively. They might not be Daywalkers yet, but some monsters appear once in a while, who can even defeat Stage Two Rookie Daywalkers while still being civilians."

"It's gonna be much, much, worse for you. Do you know why?"

"Yes." Levi nodded.

Levi understood that his spiritual vision could work only on Daywalkers or Nightcrawlers. Since the assembly would involve normal civilians, his spiritual vision would capture nothing.

Simply put, he was going in completely unprepared against opponents who had been trained in martial arts, sword fighting, and other battle skills since birth, all ready for this very moment.

This was no daydream of a child who thought that being blind might give one an advantage in battles.

This was real life, and being blind was a massive disability, especially if one wasn't already well-trained to fight while being blind.

Levi might have been training his body, building great muscles, and even learning boxing on the side, but he wasn't vexed in battles at all...This showed during the Harrowing Forest.

"If you know, then I hope you take the safer trials and just surrender when it comes to battles." Shia advised him, "No need to get badly wounded over nothing. No one will take mercy on you as they know that nightcrawlers prefer candidates with cold hearts, who wouldn't hesitate to do anything for the sake of growth."

"Thank you for your concerns," Levi said appreciatively.

Shia went quiet for a few seconds and then sighed helplessly. Then, she changed the subject, having a strong feeling that Levi was going to do what he wanted to do.

"I am in the capital right now. Once I purchase the required materials, I will return to Tamara." Shia asked, "You will need a lab, right?"

"Most preferably." Levi nodded.

Levi already obtained the full formula for Blee'der's Tier 3 perfect evolution from Ash'Kral. He knew it would require a lab as the procedure involved many tools.

"Hmmm, then I will rent out a public one." Shia said, "If it were up to me, I would have brought you to my agency or family's labs. But, they are highly monitored and I can't promise that your knowledge won't be stolen."

Since Evolutionists were considered one of the most lucrative and rewarding careers besides being a Daywalker in this day and age, many businessmen had chosen to build public labs for the less fortunate.

After all, not everyone could afford an entire lab with its expensive pieces of equipment. Thus, the public labs were born and were rented by the hour for any aspiring Evolutionists or traveling ones from different regions.

Security was ensured through nocturnal contracts due to the sensitivity of those sessions, as not even the owner had the right to pry inside a used lab.

"No worries, a public lab will do wonders."

"Good, see you later then."

Chapter 44: The Ancestral Rooted Plane.

Two days later... One hour before dawn.

Levi sat in a round, plastic blue tub filled with steaming water, his body submerged up to the shoulders. He had started his nightly sessions a few hours ago, and unlike the reckless attempt on his first night, he was now following a more disciplined approach.

He'd created a temporary training schedule, limiting himself to one cultivation session per hour. This allowed his body enough time to fully recover before diving in again. Between sessions, he filled smaller containers with cold water and poured them into the large bathroom tub for later use.

The method gave him an extra ten seconds of cultivation time during each round, but he was beginning to question whether the benefits were worth the cost.

'The water bill's going to be insane if I keep this up,' Levi thought, standing up and stepping out of the tub. 'Might even put me on some government watchlist.'

He knew full well how tightly water and other natural resources were monitored. In their world, governed by the laws of the Holy Light, each region could only use the resources available within its blessed territory or rely on imports from neighboring lands. Anything beyond that was always at risk of exposure to nightcrawlers.

Fortunately, Heliodor's region stretched just enough over the Atlantic Ocean to secure a sustainable water supply under the Holy Light's protection. A wide river also separated it from the adjacent settlement of Sale, further boosting their independence.

Still, that didn't mean they could waste resources without scrutiny. The government monitored all usage closely, especially for residents in small households like

Levi's...Just him and his brother. If he kept consuming this much water every night, it was only a matter of time before someone took notice.

"Well... it did help me reach 5% faster than expected," Levi muttered. "Time to retire this method."

A small smile played on his lips as he activated his spiritual vision. Examining the seed embedded within him, he noted the fine network of cracks: he had passed the 5% mark...just barely, but enough.

The near-death experience from his first night of training had unlocked a genetic trait granting him high resistance to heat. That breakthrough made a huge difference...Now, even training just once an hour, he was progressing just as fast as before.

"Do I have to show the tattoo to unlock the rewards?" he asked his partner while drying himself with a towel.

"It's mandatory," Ash'Kral replied, snickering faintly.

Levi's brow twitched. He muttered the incantation, and moments later, the three-seeded, black-inked tattoo bloomed into existence on his tailbone. One of the seeds now glowed with a faint crimson light.

Though he couldn't see it, he felt a mild burning sensation...nothing alarming, and nothing unexpected. He'd read everything about the reward system.

This was standard.

Without hesitation, Levi reached behind him and touched the glowing seed.

The instant his fingers made contact, like pressing a hidden button, his body went limp and slumped onto the couch, falling into unconsciousness.

While it might have seemed ordinary from the outside, in truth, Levi's consciousness had been transported inside the Nine Senses Seed!

As the light adjusted to his spiritual vision, he found himself standing atop a vast, perfectly still surface of red water.

"Red...? Shouldn't it be colorless?" Levi blinked, caught off guard.

Lifting his head, he immediately spotted the source of the crimson hue beneath him. For the first time, his usually soulless eyes...eyes that had driven thousands of nightcrawlers into despair...flickered with a trace of emotion.

"What the..."

Those were the only words he could manage to utter, his mouth slightly agape as he gazed at a massive scarlet tree, glowing gently like a living flame and stretching across the entirety of the Rooted Plane.

Its fiery glow painted the sky in deep crimson, mirrored perfectly by the still water beneath it.

The reflection was so flawless it gave the illusion of two trees joined at their base...one reaching toward the heavens, the other sinking into the depths. It felt ancient, sacred. As though it held secrets older than time.

"Where am I... Is this really the infamous Rooted Plane?" Levi murmured, eyes wide with awe.

He recalled reading that once a Daywalker completed a stage or broke through a plateau, they were transported, alongside their contracted nightcrawler, into the Rooted Plane: a spiritual dimension within the seed, home to its will and consciousness.

From what he understood, one was supposed to encounter a modest, ten-meter Shadowlife Tree, a small golden tree whose reflection revealed a shadowy twin beneath. This illusion was how it earned its name...**Shadowlife**

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But what stood before him now was something else entirely.

The crimson tree was unimaginably vast, so massive it dwarfed comprehension. It felt less like a tree and more like a World Tree, something out of legend.

Just then, a familiar voice spoke up from his shoulder.

"Boy, I've already told you to forget everything you've read about Daywalkers," Ash'Kral said calmly. "This is no ordinary place. This is the Ancestral Rooted Plane. You should be honored to be here."

"Ancestral Rooted Plane?" Levi echoed, still stunned. "Just what kind of seed do you have?"

His curiosity about Ash'Kral and his mysterious seed was growing by the day, but the little prick had no intention of revealing anything.

"You haven't earned that knowledge yet."

"Tsk."

"Click your tongue all you want, nothing changes," Ash'Kral chuckled.

Realizing he'd get nowhere with questions, Levi shook his head and turned his attention to the task at hand.

"Alright then... how do I activate the reward station? Same as with the Shadowlife Seed?"

"Yes. Just speak your request and it will appear."

Levi nodded, then cleared his throat and spoke with a respectful tone:

"I respectfully request consideration for a reward in recognition of my contributions to the seed's growth."

Ash'Kral rolled his eye.

"So dramatic," he muttered. "You could've just said, 'I want my reward.'"

But Levi wasn't about to use such casual words, not when standing before a tree the size of a celestial body.

As his words traveled across the still surface, the red water rippled slightly. When the sound reached the tree, a sudden burst of light erupted, blinding Levi's spiritual vision.

He raised his arms to shield his eyes.

When the flash faded, he slowly lowered his hands, only to find himself stunned for the second time in minutes.

Before him stood a massive wall of nonagon-shaped crimson leaves, millions of them, arranged neatly to form a monumental nine-sided flower.

The outermost leaves were dim, but those near the center blazed brightly, creating a surreal image of a half-lit, radiant blossom.

Levi stared in awe. Then, with disbelief in his voice, he turned to Ash'Kral.

"Are those... all abilities you've mastered?"

"Yes," Ash'Kral replied as if it were nothing.

But Levi knew better. Anyone who saw this would instantly realize this was anything but normal.

Ancestral Rooted Plane? Millions of mastered abilities? Nothing about this seed, or its master, was ordinary.

"Why the surprise?" Ash'Kral said casually. "I've lived a long, long time. These are just fragments of my accumulated experience."

"How long did you live to reach this level of madness?" Levi muttered, still dazed.

His shock was understandable. Most Daywalkers began their journey with Tier 3 or 4 nightcrawlers, Tier 5 if they were gifted. A Tier 5 might have mastered a hundred abilities at most.

With each breakthrough, the Daywalker would enter the Rooted Plane and randomly unlock one ability from that limited pool.

But this? Millions?

Levi couldn't even process the scale.

"All you need to know," Ash'Kral said annoyedly, slapping the back of Levi's neck with his tiny wing, "Is that I don't have the patience I used to. So, quit wasting time and claim your reward. We've got two months to prepare you for candidates who were trained before they could walk."

"Fine, fine," Levi muttered, "Keep your secrets, old bat."

Chapter 45: First Unlocked Ability.

Levi focused on the sea of red leaves, knowing that each leaf represented a mastered ability.

Without further ado, Levi floated towards the gigantic nanogon flower, feeling like he was standing before an endless library of abilities.

Instead of overwhelming him, Levi felt more excited than ever about his path as he could see just how insane its potential was.

While it was impossible to unlock all abilities through his evolutionary path, it didn't really matter since he could learn them on his own.

Those rewards were simply acting as instantaneous power-ups, which didn't take away from his ability to learn them on his own.

"Since you are still Tier 1, does this mean I can choose abilities from this entire lineup?" Levi inquired as he stood before the dimmest lineup of leaves at the very bottom of the flower.

"Yes, if you want the central abilities, you have to reach the appropriate power level to wield them." Ash'Kral replied calmly, "Otherwise, it will be the same as owning a useless brick."

"True." Levi nodded in understanding.

While this might be disappointing to some, Levi understood that it was much more effective to own low-level abilities that matched his current power than to be greedy for the strongest one on the wall.

After all, abilities cost energy depending on their complexity, effects, and results.

If someone was capable of casting a storm-based ability, their energy reserve must be deep to afford it. Otherwise, by the time the storm manifested, it would fade away just as fast.

"Before you pick, I will give you a small tip to limit the randomness," Ash'Kral said while flying towards the leftmost side of the nonagon.

Then, he pointed his wing toward it and explained to Levi that each side of the nonagon represented one of the Nine Senses. The side he was indicating stood for the **Sense of Smell**

, and every ability locked along that section, from the base up to the midpoint, was linked to that particular sense.

"I see." Levi raised an eyebrow in surprise. "This helps a lot."

Levi knew that picking abilities randomly from the nine senses wasn't effective at all. After all, he was told that he couldn't wield three unique senses at his current level, which meant if he were to unlock abilities related to them, he was screwed.

Even abilities related to sight were going to be limited immensely since he was missing his eyes, and his spiritual vision was considered a unique sense on its own.

But now, he could pick a path and focus on it until he got decently good at it before deciding to choose abilities from another side.

After Ash'Kral finished showing each side and its related sense, he went to sit on top of Levi's shoulder.

"You have the sense of touch, smell, hearing, and taste to pick from. You can even choose the spirit sense, but I highly advise against it at the moment." Ash'Kral shared, "Unlike other senses, the spirit sense consumes spiritual energy exclusively to use any kind of ability or technique."

"I understand." Levi nodded, "While I have a decent spiritual energy source, if I chose the spirit sense, I would be locking myself in a psyche path."

"Bingo." Ash'Kral tapped him on the head.

Levi could be considered a gifted soul when it came to psyche specialization, as no one at his age dared to dream of owning such immense spiritual vision.

Since spiritual vision could be used only if one possessed the necessary mental prowess to wield it, the fact that Levi was able to wield it continuously for an entire day meant that his pool of energy was unmatched.

However, choosing this path at the very start wasn't ideal...Especially for him, when he had other options.

"Pick wisely, the moment you make your choice, it will be your primary sense for the first rank," Ash'Kral advised.

"Does that mean I won't be unlocking any other ability from the other senses?"

"You can, but it's most effective to pick the first rewards from one side until you build a decent fighting style. Then, you can start freestyling with your senses until you perfect it." Ash'Kral added, "My previous partners each chose their primary sense and made a stance out of it."

"Stances?" Levi inquired.

He knew what it implied, but he wasn't too sure when it came to Ash'Kral and his dead gang of partners.

"You can consider them as Battle Arts: there is the Echo Keeper Stance(hearing), Phantom Touch Stance(Touch), Essence Seeker Stance(Smell), Soul Taster Stance(Taste), and Truth Visionary Stance(Sight)." Ash'Kral clarified calmly, "Each stance uses one sense primarily while reducing its weaknesses with the powers of other senses."

"Of course, each stance has its preferred style of weapons."

"Interesting." Levi rubbed his chin thoughtfully, understanding that his current choice would determine a decent part of his journey.

Still, his perfectionist tendencies kicked in, and he couldn't help but ask, "Will it be possible to master all stances and learn the same amount of abilities as you?"

Ash'Kral chuckled, but he wasn't being sarcastic. He looked at Levi and smirked, "Why ask if it's possible when a living example of its feasibility is standing before you?"

"You're right." Levi smiled back.

Although he knew that the Three-Body Problem was going to be the major obstacle stopping him from fulfilling such an achievement, Levi didn't allow it to kill his dream.

He never compared himself to others, and this made him want to learn from the past partners of Ash'Kral, but not take their choices as his.

He felt this way in dealing with the Three-Body Problem and their lifelong progress.

Levi floated in front of the side with auditory-based abilities and said, "My hearing has become my primary sense after I lost my eyes. I don't know about the others, but I know choosing auditory-based abilities in the early stages will help me in the long run."

Levi could be said to have trained his ears to quite a supernatural degree compared to the average human.

He was able to pick up on the faintest whispers amidst the noise and even hear other people's heartbeats if they were close.

He didn't know if this was related to his Radian bloodline empowering his ears after he lost his eyes or not, but he always felt his ears to be special...Much more special than the average blind person, as they were also known to have their senses attuned after losing their sight.

"Smart choice." Ash'Kral approved. He also wanted Levi to choose this path.

Although Levi didn't need Ash'Kral's approval, hearing it had set his heart at peace with his choice.

Without further ado, Levi reached out with his hand and picked one of the dimmest scarlet leaves on the auditory sense section.

The moment he touched it, the entire nonagon flower collapsed into the still ocean underneath him.

Levi glanced at it disappear for a moment with an eager smile, seemingly incapable of waiting until the next time he summoned it again.

For now, he switched his focus to the leaf in his hand. Taking a deep breath, Levi turned the leaf slowly, knowing that the ability's name and its details were written in Ilthorien language on its back.

When his spiritual vision landed on the name and its details, he couldn't help but gasp in astonishment.

//**Echolocation:** It's an ability that detects objects and surroundings by sending out or receiving sound waves and interpreting the echoes that bounce back.//

"Echo Location...To unlock this as your first ability, your luck isn't too shabby." Even Ash'kral raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"This, this, is massive!" Levi exclaimed in delight, "Doesn't this mean I can paint a new world in my mind through bouncing sound waves?"

Levi understood that this ability was vastly different than simply being able to hear better. The ability to bounce sound waves and interpret their echoes was massive for someone blind, as it enabled him to manifest a similar copy of our world through sounds.

It was more or less a vision through sound.

"Boy, aren't you looking down on me?" Ash'Kral sneered, "That's the simplest utilization of Echolocation, which was mastered by other nightcrawlers with similar ability."

"Do you mean?"

Levi felt his heart skip a beat at the sudden realization of what Ash'Kral implied. Ash'Kral didn't hesitate to spell it out for him.

"Every ability I have learned was mastered to perfection." Ash'Kral smirked, "In simpler terms, your unlocked Echolocation is nowhere near the same quality as similar abilities."

"Can you tell me of one example?" Levi asked excitedly.

"Tap the leaf on your forehead and you will absorb all the knowledge related to the ability." Ash'Kral waved his hand lazily.

Remembering that he had the answers in his hand, Levi swiftly placed the leaf on his forehead and watched it melt into his skin, breaking into light particles.

After it disappeared fully, he felt a slight tingle of pain, and then a wave of knowledge assaulted his mind, filling his spiritual vision with thousands of images and letters.

In less than a second, the images disappeared, and Levi's vision returned to the Ancestral Rooted Plane.

As he turned his head to Ash'Kral, Levi couldn't help but utter from the bottom of his heart.

"You are a true monster..."

"I know." Ash'Kral chuckled, "Now, let's choose your first signature weapon."

Chapter 46: The Crafting Station.

The moment Ash'Kral said this, a crimson platform rose from the still water until it reached Levi's height. Its base was crafted from red roots entangled into a tough dread, while its surface bore Ilthorien inscriptions etched along the edges.

At the center, a hollow, three-dimensional crimson nonagon orb spun slowly, capturing Levi's attention.

"The Crafting Station... It looks different here," Levi murmured.

He had read that Daywalkers would typically encounter a tree-based platform, which they referred to as the Crafting Station.

It was named as such because they would place their contracted Nightcrawlers upon it and transform them into whatever weapon they envisioned.

But this crimson orb was something new.

Ash'Kral jumped into the orb and said calmly, "Don't overthink it. The crafting process is the same as the others... The only difference lies in the quality of the weapon and the range of your imagination."

"You mean I can craft any weapon I desire? Even ones that change form or have shifting states?" Levi raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"Go wild," Ash'Kral replied lazily. "Just make sure the weapon you choose unlocks the most potential of this specific evolutionary path."

Since Levi had three evolutionary paths, it meant he would unlock a weapon at 5% progress for each path. He had already asked, and Ash'Kral had told him that while each weapon could activate abilities from other paths, the outcomes would vary depending on how extreme the choice was.

This meant he needed to choose a different type of weapon for each path, making sure they complemented and interconnected with each other.

"Easier said than done," Levi murmured.

Knowing this choice was crucial—perhaps even more important than his abilities—Levi took a seat and prepared to think it through carefully.

"There are three categories of weapons: melee, ranged, and mental. Every weapon in existence falls into one of those."

Levi began listing weapons in his mind: swords, katanas, staffs, polearms, daggers, rapiers, axes, bows, rifles, shotguns, sniper rifles, mind orbs, and so on...

There were hundreds of possibilities—and that was just the known ones. Levi knew many Daywalkers had gotten creative with their weapons, just like Shia.

She wielded a crescent-bladed glaive, a hybrid between two weapon types that vastly expanded her fighting style.

Then there was Mantis, who used weapons that mirrored the form of his Nightcrawler's praying arms.

This made Levi understand that creativity was not only allowed but encouraged. Nothing was holding him back.

Still, he didn't let his imagination run wild just yet.

"The best weapon for me is the one I feel most comfortable wielding," Levi frowned. "But I've never used a weapon in my life."

"That's why Daywalker candidates are trained from a young age," Ash'Kral said casually. "Some families focus on a single Nightcrawler species or Battle Art for this reason."

Levi nodded, aware that many lineage families followed the practiced path of their firstborn Daywalkers.

This lets them build legacies around specific Battle Arts and pass down refined techniques more effectively.

A newborn Daywalker forging their own path would rarely surpass a candidate from an established line, assuming equal talent and dedication.

Of course, this only worked if their first Daywalker reached great heights. Otherwise, their potential would plateau.

There weren't many families that met such a standard, so most let their Daywalkers choose their weapons, while mandating similar Nightcrawler types.

Just like Shia and her Morningstar Lineage family.

Though they all practiced the same Blood Arts, each member was free to choose their own weapon. This diversity gave rise to many distinct Blood Arts, even within the same bloodline.

"The only tool I've ever used that even slightly resembled a weapon is my white cane," Levi smiled wryly. "Can you suggest something that fits me?"

Levi decided to ask for Ash'Kral's help, trusting that such an ancient being must have seen every possibility by now. Why waste time when he could draw on that wisdom?

"Hmmm... I believe a staff would suit you, at least in the beginning," Ash'Kral suggested.

"A staff?"

Levi thought for a moment. It made sense. A staff would work well with sound-based abilities. It could produce loud noises and help him measure the distance between himself and his enemies.

"But if you choose a different weapon for another evolutionary path, say, a bow, the switching time will be noticeable," Ash'Kral warned. "If the weapon shapes are too extreme, the shift won't be instantaneous."

"How long does it take to switch?"

"Two seconds if the difference is extreme, like switching from a bow to a shield."

"Two seconds... That's not so bad," Levi muttered.

"Heh, two seconds might seem short now, but later, you'll realize just how long it truly is." Ash'Kral left it at that, letting Levi interpret the rest.

"That complicates things," Levi murmured, massaging his temples.

Ash'Kral's opinion couldn't be taken lightly. If he said two seconds was dangerous, Levi had to take it seriously and reevaluate his options.

"Can I take a day to think it over?" Levi asked.

"Take as long as you need. Just remember, choosing a weapon isn't a matter of time. It's a matter of feeling. A calling," Ash'Kral said. "It's hard to find that call without testing a few out first."

"I understand." Levi agreed.

He understood this wasn't something to solve by thinking through pros and cons alone. It required a physical connection...Experience. After all, no weapon was without weakness.

As Ash'Kral left the Ancestral Rooted Plane, Levi took one last glance at the colossal crimson tree and whispered, "Will you kindly show me the way?"

Then, he willed himself awake, and the crimson seed respected his wish, booting his consciousness back to the real world.

The moment Levi woke up, he had to clamp his hands over his ears in agony as a wave of deafening noise assaulted him.

"Argh... It's so loud!"

He groaned, the sounds of his neighbors' footsteps pounding like thunderclaps beneath him. Outside was even worse.

Though it was just before dawn, the city buzzed with activity as if it were midday.

The city remained constantly lit to prevent the formation of Stygian Gates in its center, which made sleep almost impossible without SR Pills.

Since SR Pills only lasted for two hours and temporarily refreshed one's body and mind, the traditional concept of day and night had become meaningless for many.

Still holding his ears, Levi stumbled to the balcony, following the wave-like distortion that colored his world through sound. He reached out blindly, feeling for the window against the noise pollution.

With great effort, he finally shut it, and some peace returned.

Levi leaned against the window, then fell to his knees, hands still clamped over his ears like a frightened child.

'Ash'Kral! What do I do?! It's not stopping! It hurts!' Levi pleaded internally, overwhelmed by the noise and the chaos within his own head.

It was like someone was drumming right next to his ears, every vibration bouncing around in his dark, sound-painted world, creating unbearable noise.

'Don't panic, boy. It's normal. Your ears were significantly enhanced after integrating Echolocation into your system.' Ash'Kral's voice echoed telepathically, bypassing the surrounding chaos.

'Breathe in and out. Focus solely on my voice, nothing more, nothing less.'

Levi did as instructed, trying his best to concentrate solely on Ash'Kral's voice while tuning out the cacophony.

He was already well-trained at blocking out disturbing Nightcrawler voices after a decade of exposure.

Eventually, the painful roar dulled little by little until only Ash'Kral's voice remained, repeating smugly, "Trampy, trampy, trampy..."

'Bastard,' Levi's lips twitched, but he clenched his jaw and stayed focused to keep dampening the noise.

After getting his laugh, Ash'Kral continued.

"Normally, humans use their ears to focus on what they want to hear. But in your case, your ears were enhanced to match my perfected Echolocation ability...So the formula reversed."

"Now, you'll be hearing everything, all the time. And it's up to you to control what to listen to... and what to block out."

"But don't worry. You've unlocked a perfectly mastered ability, which means there's no learning curve."

Levi nodded in understanding.

He realized that his initial panic had made the pain far worse than it actually was.

That's because unlocking an ability automatically bestowed his body and mind with the necessary knowledge to use it, as though he had mastered it himself.

Now that he was calm, Levi could hear muffled sounds in the background, like his head was submerged underwater.

When he focused on a specific type of sound, it filtered itself to perfection, allowing him to hear exactly what was being said.

— My wife's gonna be pissed as hell, burp, I reek of booze and women's perfume.— Nah, I doubt she's up at this hour. Didn't you buy a whole bottle of SR Pills?— You don't know her like I do...burp, That night demon doesn't sleep when I am out.

As he listened to the two men's unholy conversation, Levi stood and opened the balcony window, trusting that he had things under control.

The moment the window opened, the muffled sounds jumped up an octave, but it wasn't nearly as painful as before.

Levi ignored the chaotic flood of background noise and focused solely on the men's conversation, curious if he could determine their location.

When he willed it, his ears responded like another limb, listening to commands as naturally as if he were moving his hand.

Whoa...

To his amazement, the sound waves bouncing between his ears and the two men's voices formed a wave-like bridge, linking them together!

And that wasn't all. As his concentration deepened, his ears provided more and more detail.

He could now "see" two vibrating gray silhouettes holding onto each other's shoulders as they staggered down the sidewalk. He could even make out the bottle of alcohol in one of their hands.

'Here's a trick,' Ash'Kral said with a grin, 'Place your finger on the sound bridge, and try to focus on how their voices spread outward.'

Levi reached out and placed his finger within the sound bridge. Then, he shifted his intent, no longer trying to listen to what was said, but to how it moved.

Instantly, he gasped in wonder.

The men's gray soundwaves scattered outward, bouncing off roads, cars, people, buildings, and everything they touched!

And each time the waves struck a surface; be it glass, concrete, metal, or trees, the frequencies altered slightly, bouncing back in different colors.

Somehow, each material reflected a different hue.

This painted a living, breathing fragment of the city inside Levi's dark world...Vivid, strange, and full of life, all from a single conversation.

As he stood on the balcony, gazing with his ears at this new world blooming before him, a soft smile spread across his lips.

"I never knew sounds could look this beautiful..."

Chapter 47: Main Evolutionary Trait.

For the first time in a decade, Levi didn't feel like he was blind...Although he was seeing with his 'ears', creating a distorted and a bit chaotic view of the world, he appreciated it more than anything else...

"This is only the beginning." Ash'Kral smirked, "If you were to master sound and vibrations, you would be perceiving the world a hundred times clearer than an average human."

When Levi heard this, he couldn't help but feel enthusiastic about such a promising future. Soon, he stopped eavesdropping on the drunken men and canceled out all the noises, muffling them again.

It was like he could turn himself deaf with a snap of a finger.

This was just as great as using sounds to map out his world, knowing that such a peaceful silence was a wish for many.

"Just one ability was enough to turn me into a superhuman," Levi commented with a spirited tone, "I know many Junior Daywalkers possessing six unlocked abilities, and an ultimate one won't be able to contest against the quality of Echolocation even if they combined them all."

Levi wasn't exaggerating at all...He felt like he was fully in control of sounds with a single ability.

This state wasn't easily obtained since most Daywalkers unlocked low-quality abilities with a single effect.

Such as water bullets, sound blasts, empowered punches...etc.

On the other hand, Echolocation was perfected to the point it gave Levi the illusion that he was a master of sounds...But of course, he knew that wasn't real.

"Although your sound manipulation works great only with effects related to Echolocation, it gave you a sample of what peak sound manipulation looks like." Ash'Kral said calmly, "Now that you have unlocked sound manipulation, it's up to you to start creating your own techniques."

Battle Arts were born out of those learned techniques. Each Daywalker had their own way of mastering the evolutionary traits of their partnered nightcrawlers.

Nightcrawlers with evolutionary traits related to elements allowed the seeds to provide their partnered humans with similar control over those traits.

Usually, the main evolutionary trait appeared at the first stage(5%), which implied that Daywalkers could embark on their Battle Arts road from the very beginning.

In the case of Levi, Ash'Kral was a freak of nature that was considered beyond the Unique specialization, which meant Levi could unlock multiple main evolutionary traits!

Each one could come with an element, physical enhancement, or even spiritual empowerment.

At this moment, he unlocked the main evolutionary trait of sound manipulation.

"I understand." Levi nodded solemnly, "I am up for the challenge."

"Good, I have no plans on taking it easy on you."

A few hours later...

Levi received a call from Shia while he was training his Echolocation ability. Ash'Kral told him that he would start teaching him sound manipulation lessons after he was done with the assembly.

After all, there was no point in teaching him something he couldn't use openly. It made more sense to spend the limited time they had refining what was already in his arsenal, shaping it into a solid fighting style that could give him an edge in the assembly.

Sometime later, Levi hung up and called for his brother. Arthur emerged from his room with panda eyes and a depressed look.

"Brooo...Why is the Ilthorien language so damn complex." Arthur sighed helplessly as he lay on the couch with tens of holograms still open.

"It's complex only at the beginning; once you get the hang of its grammar and phonetics, it will be as simple as English." Levi comforted, using his voice to bounce off his brother's figure and the living room.

This allowed him to see his brother's gray silhouette sitting on the couch behind him without needing to turn his head!

It was like he had a 360 sound vision strapped on his head.

"Grammar and phonetics? Isn't that everything?" Arthur cried, grieving over his future self.

Arthur's pain could be understood. It was indeed extremely difficult to learn the Ilthorien language. Unfortunately for him, it was a must to know its basics at least to avoid the same choke he had in the forest.

That's because all Solar Totems required incantations using the Ilthorien language to activate them.

"Stop whining, it's your fault for missing so much in classes."

Levi walked to the closet without needing to touch the walls. Each step he took created a path. Then, he pulled out his classic black hoodie and pants.

After he wore them, he put on circular black glasses and told his brother to get dressed as well.

"We're going out?"

Arthur's eyes sparkled immediately...He was under house arrest by Levi until he finished the books he was given, leaving only for the gym and errands.

"Shia has got hold of the necessary materials for her evolution." Levi shared, "We will meet up near the Experimental Tamara's Lab in ten minutes."

"Say less!"

Arthur swiftly went to his room and wore a dark blue tracksuit with black sneakers, appearing like he was going for a run.

While Levi didn't need his white cane anymore, he still brought it out with him. No one knew of his awakening, and he had no intentions of giving out any weird signs.

After all, if he were found to have signed a contract in an unofficial way, he would be forced to either show the details of his contract or be eradicated.

Ash'Kral had assured Levi that he had the contract laundering in the Assembly under his control. All he had to do was keep a low profile until then.

While Levi didn't know how exactly Ash'Kral was going to pull it off when his body was inked and the contract was signed, he could only put his trust in him and focus on what he could do.

...

Sometime later...

Arthur was seen driving their dirtbike recklessly, weaving back and forth between the vehicles. After he was brought to the hospital, he requested the authorities to collect his bike, which was left behind in the outpost.

Since he was being investigated and they wanted his full cooperation, the authorities helped him out. If they were to see the way he was driving, they would definitely have regrets.

Meanwhile, Shia, Jamal, and Sergio were standing near a small line of people in front of a reflective glass double door. A massive sign was on top of it that read: Experimental Tamara's Lab.

The building was three stories high and had external glass windows just like most buildings around it. Although it wasn't the biggest in the city, it sure was crowded.

Vrrrr! Vrrrr!

Suddenly, everyone's attention was attracted to the sound of heavy electric revs coming from the back.

When they glanced behind them, everyone's expressions turned pale at the sight of a speeding dirtbike rushing towards them with seemingly no intention of pulling the brakes!

The queue was cleared out almost instantly as no one dared to stay in the bike's path besides Shia, Jamal, and Sergio.

As they gazed at the driver's humongous figure, their eyelids twitched, recognizing him to be Arthur immediately, even though he was wearing a helmet.

Krrrrrrr!!!

Arthur hit the brakes sharply and stopped sideways a mere couple of meters away, not one of them getting fazed.

"What's up!"

Arthur greeted with a wide grin after removing the helmet, uncaring about the rain of curses falling on him from the people in the queue.

"Arthur, drive safely or you won't know how you died," Jamal advised.

"Don't worry, my driving skills are flawless."

Arthur bragged while joining their friends with Levi beside him.

"That's not what he meant." Levi said sternly, "I have warned you many times that high-ranked Daywalkers are hiding everywhere, and if you were to piss one off with your driving, they might retaliate."

"Hmm? You can get killed off driving a bike?" Arthur was speechless. "Are we living in a jungle?"

"Yes." Shia said calmly, "The faster you accept that we are living in a jungle of concrete and glass, the longer you will survive."

Arthur believed that at most, he would be getting a speeding or reckless driving ticket, not death.

He assumed that even Daywalkers needed to respect the laws within the holy region, and they wouldn't assault a citizen for something this trivial.

Alas, this was an ideal outcome. In reality, High-ranked Daywalkers were extremely unpredictable, and if they were to be annoyed while they were already in a bad mood, one should expect the worst.

Shia demonstrated the laws of the jungle immediately as she skipped the entire queue, and the guards still opened up the gate for her, uncaring about the protests of those staying in the queue for hours.

She didn't even bother to reserve a slot; a single phone call was enough to get her the best lab at any time she desired.

"The Morningstar surname sure does wonders," Arthur exclaimed enviously as he walked with Levi behind them.

Chapter 48: Pinky and the Brain.

"Status is a universal key to all the doors in the world," Levi replied calmly, using his voice and other noises to map out the ground floor.

It resembled a hotel with dozens of numbered doors situated near each other. The receptionists were standing at the center of the floor around a circular table.

There were already many people inside. Levi used his spiritual vision to separate the Daywalkers from citizens, now that his echolocation could show him a humanoid figure of everyone.

Of course, if there were Daywalkers, their contracted nightcrawlers would be there too.

Once they spotted Levi, curiosity got the best of them, and they went to check him out.

This time, Ash'Kral wasn't nearby to use his terrifying voice and reputation to scare them off. But Levi had other allies.

"The f*ck are you looking at?" Blee'der growled murderously, "Stay in your lane, or else, it won't end pretty for you or your little partners."

"Believe me, he means it." O'rro chuckled, "This isn't the time to get on his bad side."

Sensing the murderous intent of Blee'der made all the nightcrawlers reconsider getting involved in this situation...Especially, when they had nothing to win from this alteration besides teasing Levi for their amusement.

"Thank you." Levi whispered.

"Never thank me again." Blee'der smirked, "You are my little treasure, and I will never let any harm befall you."

Levi chuckled, knowing that Blee'der would literally do anything to not jeopardize his chance at a Perfect Evolution.

"Miss Shia, please follow me to your lab."

Meanwhile, Shia finished with the lab's arrangement and was led to the elevator by the cute receptionist.

The others tagged along too, and in no time, they arrived at the highest floor in the building. The moment the elevator door opened, Arthur whistled while holding his hands behind his head.

The lab truly warranted such a reaction, as the entire floor was filled with all sorts of high-end equipment and machinery. Everything looked new and clean, from the glassware to the furniture. There were even AI-powered robotic arms for assistance.

The receptionist extended her arm with a welcoming smile and said, "Welcome to our VIP Experimental Lab. Please, if you need anything, don't hesitate to call us. Our support is online 24/7."

"Thank you, this will be all for now."

Shia wired a heavy tip to the receptionist after scanning her public information with her Neuralens.

All workers put their bank information among their public data to ensure a smooth tipping transaction without any awkwardness.

The receptionist's smile widened after receiving the tip, leaving them to their peace immediately.

"Now this is a Lab." Arthur commented in fascination as he walked around the place.

But, just as he was about to touch the equipment, one scolding glare from Shia made him retrieve it.

"This must have been expensive. You didn't have to bother yourself." Levi smiled wryly, "A standard Lab is more than enough."

Levi knew that the formula creation process was quite simple, even for an amateur, not requiring all of this heavy machinery.

"I would rather not take any risks."

Shia lifted a metallic chest and placed it on the nearest table. Then, after scanning the lock with her Neuralens, a soft click echoed in everyone's ears.

She opened the metallic chest, and the first thing that showed was the Blood Crystal Flower inside a smaller plastic container...It was as glamorous as the ones in the garden.

Yet, the Obsidian Bloodvine had taken the spotlight with its ebony-black vine and razor-sharp thorns. It had crystallized red drops running down its long twisted vine, making it seem like it was weeping.

The rest of the materials were also in the chest, ranging from peculiarly colored liquid bottles, small containers filled with dirt, and other types of common plants.

Shia took hold of Levi's arm and pulled him in front of her chest. Then, she said with an eager smile, "Everything you have asked for is here."

Levi started naming each material just to be sure, and Shia kept saying check every time until he was done...Only then did he crack a satisfied smile.

"You have carried your part of the deal; it's time for me to honor my word."

"I can't wait for the final results." Shia smiled.

Without needing Levi to tell them to leave, Shia made a gesture with her head, and her companions followed her to the waiting room next to the Lab.

Since he hadn't sold her the knowledge and just made a deal to evolve her nightcrawler, she had no right to spy on the creation of his Evolutionary Formula.

This kind of knowledge was priced in the millions of credits, and she had no plans on asking her family for this much money...Especially, not with the current tension going on.

After they left, their contracted nightcrawlers followed them along, leaving only Levi and Arthur.

Just as Arthur was about to speak, Levi placed a finger near his mouth to shush his brother and then clapped twice. As he gazed at the bouncing sound waves inside the lab, Levi focused on any sort of leak.

But to his pleasant surprise, he found that not a single wave escaped the Lab. It was perfectly soundproof, ensuring utmost privacy.

"As expected of the best public Lab in Tamara. You can talk now, we are in the clear." Levi smiled.

"I just wanted to know what you will need from me?" Arthur rolled his sleeves, prepared to listen to his brother's instructions.

"First, let's clean our hands and wear proper gear." Levi said, "I might have done my studies, but this is still my first time doing this, and we should take all precautions."

"Gotchu."

Arthur took his brother to the nearest sink. After they cleaned their hands and wore the proper gear (gloves, lab coats, glasses...etc), they returned to the chest of materials.

"Now what?"

Then, they stood in front of the chest of materials, resembling the famous cartoon characters Pinky and the Brain.

Arthur looked as confused as ever, wearing the gloves on the wrong side, and his coat barely fit him, his muscles screaming to be released.

While Levi was staring at the ceiling, while tapping his hands on the box to use the sound for some visualization.

They looked like they had no business being anywhere near this fancy Lab. If Shia was to see them, she would honestly start wondering if she had been scammed.

"Pull out everything and place them gently on the table." Levi doubled down, "Be gentle."

Arthur did as he was told and lined up all the materials on the long ceramic white table. Then, he picked up the chest and placed it on the ground, clearing some space for them.

Knowing that it would be bothersome to keep tapping his fingers for visualization throughout the process, Levi requested Astra AI to release a constant, low-pitched noise. One that was difficult for human ears to pick up on easily.

Astra AI followed the instructions and released the low-pitched noise straight into Levi's ear since the device was the closest to it.

But Levi tuned it out and focused on the visualization it created inside the lab. Since this was a sealed room and the sound wave was constant, all the equipment, furniture, walls, and such appeared grayed out and affixed in place!

Levi took a moment to appreciate the stillness of the scene, fully aware that the moment he spoke, the delicate balance would be broken.

His echolocation ability allowed him to interpret the echoes of sound waves bouncing off surfaces, even filtering out background noise to isolate a single sound with precision.

But it came with a limitation: he couldn't actually hear the sounds themselves, nor witness their impact while the ability was active.

This meant that unless he chose to ignore his own voice or whatever his brother might say, the moment he or anyone else spoke, the fragile silence would inevitably unravel.

"Let's begin."

Levi requested his brother to bring out the required equipment, ranging from a mortar and pestle to a beaker.

Arthur relied on Astra AI to help him find the equipment, which he had no idea what they looked like.

While Arthur was collecting the pieces of equipment, Levi had already opened the container for The Crystal Blood Flower.

Although it appeared grayed out and had a bit of a chaotic form, Levi still reached out with his fingers and started getting a feel for its petals.

After marking everything important, he picked up a scalpel and sliced the petals off the stem, making sure to be as clinical as possible.

Skreeee...

The moment he did this, Levi tilted his head slightly in confusion after his ears picked up on a very tame high-frequency screech. It was so silent that Levi doubted if humans could even hear it.

"Is this the ultrasonic distress sounds I read about?" Levi murmured.

"What? You heard something?" Arthur looked around them in puzzlement.

"It's nothing, keep guiding me."

"Okay."

Levi didn't trust his brother with the process as he knew that his burly hands weren't used to such agility-based, tiny movements.

However, he was asking for his input every once in a while to ensure that he wasn't butchering the flower...Especially, now that he heard its scream.

He had read that plants released ultrasonic distress sounds when cut or distressed. He also knew that it was their way of responding to harm, but not pain, as they lacked a nervous system.

Still, hearing its low screeches with each cut made Levi feel an unexplainable amount of sorrow...Especially, when a red liquid was pouring out of the wounds, bleeding all over itself.

'If humans' ears were receptive to those high-frequency weeps, would it have changed our treatment of the Plant Kingdom?' Levi wondered to himself after cutting off the Crystal Flower petals and placing them inside a small box.

But, as he listened to the final dying screeches of the Blood Crystal Flower, he shook his head. He doubted anything would change, as he knew that it was within human nature to forgo any morals for the sake of survival.

As long as food was served on the table, nothing else mattered. If it weren't like this, many humans wouldn't turn to cannibalism when starvation shut off their brains and left only two wires active to seek food under any circumstances.

He believed even the most veteran vegan would eat meat if no social constraints were placed on him and he were found starving.

It was simply biology, and it was hard to resist it when no one was there to judge.

After Levi pulled the flower's stem from the soil gently, he collected some of the red liquid and left the rest for the soil to feed on.

Then, he brought the Obsidian Bloodvine over and placed it in the mortar. Next, he poured one of the liquid bottles on them and handed the pestle to his brother.

"Ground them slowly together into a mixture. When you feel some resistance, like the mixture is hardening, pour another bottle of Prismalique Elixir." Levi instructed, "Don't stop until the mixture has turned into a sticky mess. Above all else, don't use too much force."

"Say less."

Arthur cracked his fingers and got to work immediately, using his raw strength to break the plants into pieces without an ounce of resistance. Meanwhile, Levi went to prepare for the next stage.

'Ash'Kral, are you here?' Levi called telepathically.

'What?'

Ash'Kral was currently in the Shadow Dimension to avoid any unnecessary problems. While he couldn't see what Levi was doing, they could converse telepathically.

'I just want to double-check about heating the distillation chamber.' Levi asked, 'Five to ten minutes is too broad...Give me a precise time.'

'It's broad because it doesn't matter as long as you remain within the recommended period.' Ash'Kral chided in annoyance, 'Boy, I gave you all the information you need, follow them to a tee and you won't have any problems.'

"I was just double-checking, asshole." Levi cursed under his breath and stopped reaching for Ash'Kral.

Chapter 49: The Evolutionary Formula.

Although he was given all the necessary information, Levi wanted to be as precise as possible.

He knew that a simple mistake in any of the three Stages of creating an Evolutionary Formula would put both Shia and Blee'der into a whole world of agony.

That's because the final formula's job wasn't to break through the plateau like it was some sort of magical elixir.

It was used as a way to unseal the stagnated evolutionary traits based on the materials used for the formula. Then, the Shadowlife seed would take it from there and evolve the Nightcrawler through the chosen unsealed evolutionary traits.

If the formula were flawless, all the evolutionary traits from Tier 2 to Tier 3 would be unsealed, allowing the Shadowlife seed to commence the so-called perfect evolution.

If it was great, but not perfect, a high number of evolutionary traits would be unlocked while the remaining ones would be sealed forever...This was called Remarkable Evolution.

Last but not least, if the formula was basic and was created just for the sake of breaking through the plateau, it would result in the dreaded Limited Evolution.

In this case, the Shadowlife seed forced the only available evolutionary path on its hosts, regardless of whether it was any good.

Since Levi promised a perfect evolution, he had to be flawless in the creation process.

"Big bro, I think I am done."

Arthur shared while looking at the messy, dark green mixture. Levi went to the mixture and took a deep breath. The moment a revolting acidic scent assaulted him, he nodded in approval.

"Good job, it's perfect."

"Phew, what's next?" Arthur sighed in relief.

Although he knew that the contract terms had changed and his brother's life was not in danger, he still didn't want to disappoint Shia.

"We have finished with the first stage, Formula Foundation. Now, it's time for the second stage, Essence Extraction. It's usually the hardest stage in the creation process of the Evolutionary Formula, but fortunately, we are required to just vaporize and purify." Levi shared.

"I have no clue what you just said." Arthur shrugged his shoulders, "Just tell me what I need to do."

"No, you will learn...The Evolutionist career has a massive role in the advancement of our society. Without them, most Daywalkers would be stagnated at lower levels for a very long time."

"This means, our strength as regions would crumble and we wouldn't have what it takes to deal with the spreading infestation of nightcrawlers."

"Don't forget, we might be protected under the Holy light, but we still need the natural resources from the wastelands to survive."

"You think such an important subject won't be included in the Intelligence Trials during the Assembly?"

When Arthur realized that his performance in the Assembly might be impacted by this, he locked in immediately and requested his brother's explanation.

"Essence Extraction is the most vital and complex stage simply because there are hundreds of ways to extract the essence of each mixture." Levi shared serenely while pouring the mixture into the boiling flask very carefully.

"Each mixture requires its own method that works best with its essence extraction. In our case, we are lucky since we just vaporize the mixture into a purified liquid. A process that would have been a bit complex for amateurs if we weren't using some of the most advanced equipment in the region."

"I see, so the job is to extract the essence of the materials and make a purified liquid out of them?"

Arthur asked as he watched the mixture release vapor, which was turning into red drops. They were trickling into a small glass bottle.

"Not precisely, some processes might turn the mixture into hardened pills, and some remain as steam. The Daywalkers are required to breathe the steam during the process." Levi said with an intrigued smile, "There is so much to learn."

Levi was always an avid explorer of science and any matter related to nightcrawlers. He grew up reading all about them in his mother's textbooks and research papers.

Now that he was applying some of the knowledge he had read, he was quite enjoying the experience.

After a couple of minutes, the process was concluded. The mixture turned into a blackened tart, tainting the flask. But the small bottle on the other side was filled with sparkling red liquid.

"Is this it?"

"No, we still have one last stage, Final Refinement and Activation." Levi replied.

Levi collected the small bottle and returned to the main table. He brought some pieces of equipment with him and introduced the process to his brother.

"This stage might be straightforward and easy, but if a single mistake is made, it will ruin everything." Levi shared.

"Why is that?"

"We have to enhance the formula and stabilize it. In our case, we need to pour three drops of catalytic reagents every two minutes. Once we are done, we will stabilize it with a dose of Prismalique Elixir."

While Levi was explaining, he was using his voice to paint a clear picture of the bottled formula in front of him. He brought the catalytic reagents and poured the required drops with great precision and care. Then, he stopped and continued his explanation for the next two minutes.

He repeated this process three times until the sparkle disappeared from the evolutionary formula.

"Now, to the final step."

With great care, Levi unsealed the last remaining Prismalique Elixir and poured it slowly inside the bottle, doubling its quantity. Then, he closed the lid on it and pulled away from it.

He and his brother stood a couple of meters away and started staring at the two liquids mixing on their own.

A few moments later, the formula released a bright flash of light and a low-pitched frequency only Levi heard.

Then, the liquid started to switch between a crystallized state and a liquid state, leaving Arthur to gaze at it in wonder.

Arthur turned to his brother, having no idea if this meant they succeeded or not. Levi walked to the table and picked up the bottle. Then, he listened to its shifting stable frequency. Without needing to ask anyone, he felt it within his bones.

"We succeeded." He smiled in contentment, feeling a new sense of conquest.

Levi always had a feeling that he would fall in love with being an Evolutionist, but he was doubtful if he had what it took to become one. Having perfect vision and amazing precision were just as important as being knowledgeable.

This success showed him that he also had an opportunity to take on this path.

'With Ash'Kral's infinite knowledge of nightcrawlers, if I were to become an Evolutionist, I would most definitely leave a mark.' Levi thought to himself, 'He just needs not to be an asshole about it and share it.'

Levi had already asked Ash'Kral how he knew about Blee'der's evolutionary path, and the answer he received didn't please him one bit.

He told him that it was related to one of his unique senses, and if he wanted to know, he should work hard to unlock the unique sense first.

Levi assumed before that Ash'Kral must have some knowledge about Blee'der's species' evolutionary path since his pool of knowledge always seemed infinite.

If he didn't know, Levi trusted that he would have gone ahead and found out about it if he was truly adamant about signing him...But he didn't expect it to be related to a unique sense.

Knowing that he wouldn't be unlocking them anytime soon, Levi could only hope that Ash'Kral would cooperate with him.

...

Soon, Levi and Arthur entered the waiting room and noticed that the mood was solemn. No one was laughing or speaking. It was like they were waiting at the hospital for surgery to be finished.

The moment they spotted the Larson Brothers, Shia held her breath in anticipation.

"It's a boy." Arthur said solemnly.

Levi kicked him in the leg and swiftly announced the success of Shia's perfect evolutionary formula, pulling it from his pocket akin to a holy treasure.

Shia and the others immediately ignored Arthur's stupid joke and rushed toward Levi, gazing at the small glass bottle with utter astonishment.

"You actually succeeded?" Shia exclaimed with mixed emotions running amok in her body.

She kept seeking to grab the bottle, but hesitated midway. She believed that if she were to touch it, it might disappear.

Although she was filthy rich and had seen many peculiar treasures belonging to her father, this single bottle toppled everything.

It was the perfect evolutionary formula that would unlock a whole new evolutionary path, something she didn't think would be possible.

After all, perfect formulas were so rare, so coveted that agencies and families spent billions of credits across decades in research and still wouldn't result in anything noteworthy.

"Take it, it's yours."

Levi smiled as he placed the bottle in Shia's hand. Shia held the bottle close to her chest, fearing that she might drop it.

Blee'der popped out in his weapon form and said excitedly, "Shia! Quickly, let's do it here! I can't wait another second!"

Blee'der's rush was understandable, considering that Shia had wasted six months being a Junior Daywalker when she could have already broken through, given the resources at her disposal.

"Here?"

Shia looked around her and realized that it wasn't so bad. The waiting room was spacious, and their privacy was somewhat guaranteed.

After all, contracted nightcrawlers were forced to remain near their Daywalkers inside such establishments, or they could be reported for breach of privacy.

But, for the other rogue nightcrawlers? Most of them do not bother hanging around contracted nightcrawlers as they consider them disgusting traitors.

"Screw it, let's do it."

Shia slipped off her oversized black jacket and settled onto the ground in a meditative pose, cradling Blee'der in his weapon form across her lap.

"Is this really happening?" Arthur wondered with a sparkling look.

He had never seen a live evolution before, and he was about to witness a perfect one at that. He was bound to feel excited.

"Sit and don't talk; she needs to be focused," Levi said.

He pulled his brother, and they sat on the soft blue couch, their buttocks sinking at first touch. Then, they watched Shia and Blee'der's evolution from two different perspectives.

Arthur was looking at Shia while Levi was staring at Blee'der. When it came to evolutions, the nightcrawler must not take his weapon form since his physical form would be affected primarily...Being in his weapon form would negate it.

Shia took a deep breath and brought the bottle to her face. Without further ado, she unlocked the lid and drank it in one gulp. Since the seed was connected to them both, it didn't matter if she drank it or Blee'der.

"Wish me luck."

Shia glanced at her friends one last time before closing her eyes, focusing her spiritual vision on her Shadowlife's seed. Next, she pulled the red jacket sleeve to her elbow,

exposing an inked tattoo of a flying serpent-manta with two tails striking out of the tattoo's border.

It was illuminated faintly with crimson color, informing her that she had reached her breakthrough point. If she were to press on it without drinking the evolutionary formula first, the seed would force a much worse version of limited evolution.

The Daywalkers called it a Brokie Evolution since it was free, and anyone stupid enough to consider it deserved to be called a brokie.

It was as if the seed offered its hosts a choice: accept the bare minimum, or strive to enhance the quality of their evolution by mastering the formulas.

Shia pressed on the inked tattoo and immediately, both her consciousness and Blee'der's were sent inside her Shadowlife seed's Rooted Plane.

It didn't need just the touch, but her willingness to undergo the breakthrough, which meant it couldn't get activated by a mistake.

What stood before them was nowhere near what Levi had witnessed. An above-average-sized golden tree with a shadowy, deathly reflection on the bottom.

Shia was used to this sight already.

She sat on the still waters and watched as the tree's branches started to move towards her and Blee'der, akin to tentacles.

In no time, the branches got hold of them, making it seem like they were going through some freaky bondage play.

But in reality, the tree was reading through all of their evolutionary traits at their correct level. If a Daywalker chose the limited breakthrough, the tree would activate only the most prominent evolutionary traits during its scanning phase.

But now that Shia had consumed the evolutionary formula, it had already done its magic and had unsealed every possible evolutionary trait of Blee'der and was running its diagnostic on the best evolutionary path fitting them!

Chapter 50: The Evolution.

This made the Shadowlife tree keep activating everything in its path, akin to a traffic officer slapping tickets on every car's window in a parking lot!

While this was happening on the inside, Levi and the others were shown a completely different sight.

Shia's tattoo was releasing a bright crimson light akin to a bat signal while her short hair started turning crystallized at the very bottom, making it seem like she was wearing ruby gemstones on each hair strand.

Meanwhile, Blee'der was the one truly undergoing evolution under the envious looks of O'rro, O'thnir, and Levi's captivated gaze.

Blee'der was encircled by long, swirling strings of inscriptions, forming a spinning ring of shifting symbols. Each time one of the glowing strings pulsed, his form twisted, mutating, reshaping.

Again and again, the process repeated, until the original serpent-manta hybrid with shimmering red scales transformed. Now, Blee'der bore three massive crystallized scarlet stones jutting from his back, twin crystalline horns on his head, and a long, sinuous tail made entirely of the same scarlet crystal, gleaming with raw, refined power.

When the process concluded, the strings snapped off one by one until Blee'der was freed from their containment.

Blee'der had no idea about what happened to him since his consciousness was also locked in the Rooted Plane. But after the evolution concluded and the tree's branches pulled away, they immediately woke up.

"It's over..." Shia murmured as she glanced at her dimming tattoo.

When she looked up at her friends and saw the weird looks she was getting, she couldn't help but tilt her head in confusion.

"What's the matter with you? Did something grow in my face?"

She reached out to her face with a dreadful tone, knowing that perfect evolutions almost always result in a mutation spreading to the contracted human. The number of mutations and their quality depended on the Daywalker's rank.

"Huh?"

Before anyone could say anything, Shia's fingers brushed past the crystallized tips of her hair strands. When she pulled them close to her face, her eyes couldn't help but sparkle in joy.

"Kyaa! So cute!!"

She swiftly stood up and brought out a mirror from her side bag, eying her mutated hair with a wide grin.

"I can use this as an excuse to grow my hair."

Jamal and the others' eyelids twitched at the sight of Shia focusing on her hair more than the breakthrough.

"How?" They decided to entertain her.

"Mutations are mostly useful, so those gem-like strands can be used in battles. I am certain about it."

Jamal and Sergio nodded in agreement as they had also heard about this. Since mutations were already rare and appeared mostly in the later stages of one's evolutionary path, most of them were geared for combat.

It was like the seed ensured that the mutation chosen wouldn't be a liability or a mere cosmetic.

Meanwhile, Levi was having a different conversation with the nightcrawlers' squad, whispering under his breath.

"How do you feel?"

"Never better."

Blee'der flexed his massive three-back rubies under the jealous looks of his friends. He also had the widest grin he could muster as he could feel the tremendous increase in strength compared to his previous breakthrough.

Daywalkers' main source of strength wasn't the mutations, the signature weapon, the battle arts, or even the innate abilities.

It was the steady increase in physical and mental prowess during one's cultivation, as each stage completed implied a smaller boost in strength.

When a Daywalker broke through a plateau and evolved, the strength enhancement was considerably higher based on the quality of the evolution.

Since Blee'der went through a perfect evolution, he obtained the highest possible form of enhancement in his rank. If Shia wasn't preoccupied with her hair, she would have noticed the difference too.

"Congratulations on your evolution." Levi smiled serenely, "I am happy for you guys."

"Thank you, little one." Blee'der went to Levi and gave him a solemn look. "If you need anything from me, don't hesitate to ask."

"Much appreciated, but you don't have to feel indebted." Levi shook his head, "We had a deal, and I simply carried my part of it."

"I know and I don't care, I owe you one." Blee'der smirked, "Once you become a Daywalker, you will understand the true magnitude of your favor."

Levi could only respond with a quiet smile, fully aware that for Nightcrawlers, evolution was everything. Guiding one through a perfect evolution from one Tier to the next meant unlocking new layers of potential. If he continued along this path, however slim, there was a chance he could one day reach the final tiers.

After taking a moment to admire her hair, Shia stepped up to Levi and thanked him for staying true to his word. With a rare softness in her tone, she told him not to hesitate if he ever needed her help, offering it freely, without conditions.

Hearing the offer, Levi realized that he did need help with something and it would be less troublesome with Shia's.

"Well, you guys know my brother and I are planning to participate in this year's assembly, but I won't lie to you, we kinda need help concerning combat." Levi requested, "It will be great if you can give us some pointers and such."

"That's it?" Shia rolled her eyes. "We already had plans on training you guys."

"You are foolish if you thought we were going to throw you at the assembly like this." Jamal supported.

"As long as I get the chance to beat Arthur, I am down." Sergio cracked his knuckles with a wicked grin, sending shivers down Arthur's spine.

'What did I do?' Arthur cried inwardly.

"Much appreciated, truly." Levi smiled.

Although he knew that Ash'Kral already had plans to train him, Levi wanted to be more proactive. He understood that Shia had the resources to prepare them more efficiently for the assembly, such as weapons, training grounds, battle experience, and more.

Meanwhile, Ash'Kral might be a monster, but Levi recognized that he might be a bit out of touch with matters related to his current level...With him being a true asshole, he could already see him cursing all of his generations for failing his tasks.

Plus, it would help him mask his newfound strength now that he could utilize echolocation in battles, giving him a new edge.

"So, what kind of ultimate ability have you unlocked?" Jamal returned to Shia's breakthrough, asking her with an intrigued tone.

Levi and the others' ears perked up in anticipation as well, knowing that besides the normal innate abilities unlocked at each stage, they were capable of unlocking an ultimate ability after each evolution.

Those ultimate abilities were considered the best possible abilities for each Tier. That's because the Shadowlife seed combined the mastered innate abilities to create the best possible ultimate ability in each rank.

In this manner, not even the nightcrawler would know what kind of ultimate ability it would be.

Of course, the grade of the evolution played a big part in the ultimate quality of the ultimate ability.

"It's better to show you. Let's go to the agency's training center."

Sometime later...

Levi and Arthur found themselves standing before The Blood Hunters Agency's Tamara branch. While it wasn't as glamorous and big as the headquarters in the capital, it still oozed with overwhelming dominance.

As Levi watched the Daywalkers walk in and out with varying auras and unique nightcrawlers, he felt like this was his call.

Joining a powerful Agency and going out on adventures, participating in Raids, Expeditions, and winning back territory to honor his region.

He might be intelligent, but Levi was still a hot-blooded teenager who grew up reading all about the heroism of Daywalkers.

If avenging his parents was his destined goal, then the Daywalker's life was his dream, as it made him feel like it was the only way for him to escape from his disability.

"Don't be shy, my people don't bite...Well, most of them." Shia chuckled as she led the Larson Brothers inside the agency's branch.

After going in, Shia was greeted by everyone on their way to the training center. Levi and Arthur had caught some attention, too, especially Levi. But, no one came to bother them, not even nightcrawlers...Being with the daughter of Lord Idriss was enough to tame everyone's arrogance.

A few minutes later, Shia and the others entered a massive, sealed training ground, which was separated into dozens of smaller areas.

Each area had its own door and needed a permission slip to rent it for some training, testing abilities, or even sparring between Daywalkers.

However, Shia ignored those closed-occupied doors and went straight to the end of the corridor.

She walked to a big stainless steel door with a small keypad on its side. Then, she scanned it with her Neuralens, and access was granted immediately.

Just as the door was about to slide open, Levi alerted Shia, "Someone is already occupying the room..."

"Hmm? It can't be?" Shia raised an eyebrow in confusion.

She knew that this room was exclusive to her father, and only his children had access to it. Her big brother was out on a mission while her father was in the capital. Or at least, that's what she believed.

As the door slid fully open, Shia's pupils narrowed at the sight of a giant specimen swinging a great sword in a monotonous and repeated motion.

The man was well above two meters in height, and his bronze, sweaty muscles were big enough to make even Arthur reconsider if he was truly putting in the work in the gym.

Every time he took a step, it left a faint imprint on the ground, his sheer mass making the steel floorboards groan beneath his weight.

When he noticed their presence, he stopped mid-swing and slowly turned his head to face them.

Everyone gulped a mouthful after his piercing, dark hunter eyes landed on them. His face was chiseled and decorated with a thick scarlet mustache and a long scar running from his forehead to his left cheek. Adding his short red buzz-cut made him ooze with uncontrollable barbaric masculinity.

One look was enough for anyone to reach this judgment: He was The Man.

"Greetings, Lord Idriss!"

Sergio and Jamal immediately bowed their heads in respect, feeling a sense of awe at the notion of meeting their leader face-to-face.

Although they hung around Shia a lot, they were still mere Combatant Members at the bottom of the ladder in their agency...This limited their meeting with Lord Idriss greatly.

"Dad, what are you doing here?"

Meanwhile, Shia asked coldly with her arms crossed on her chest, not bothering to greet him.

"Do I need a reason to be in my training room?" Lord Idriss asked calmly.