

Solar Ascension

#Chapter 1: Prologue: Solar Era - Read Solar Ascension Chapter 1: Prologue: Solar Era

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Aureum was once a world filled with light. The bright blue, cloudless skies always reflected the mood of the mortals below it, happy, fulfilled and safe.

For centuries, the gods guided Aureum, granting rain to the farmers, strength to the warriors, wisdom to the scholars.

Their presence was everywhere: in the rise and fall of the sun, in every gust of wind and in the hearts of those who prayed.

But nothing lasts forever.

One day, their prayers suddenly started going unanswered. Then another, and another. The gods had suddenly gone quiet.

The temples grew quiet, their flames dimming to ash. The divine markings that previously proudly graced the skins of the priests, started to dim and fade away.

At first, the mortals believed it a test, a trial of their faith. They built grander shrines, offered greater sacrifices and even begged for forgiveness.

But a reply was never heard from the heavens.

And as the years turned to decades, hope slowly turned to grief and grief turned to rage.

They felt abandoned and betrayed by their makers, but they soon learnt that the gods leaving them wasn't the only thing they should have feared.

From beneath Aureum, monsters the mortals never heard of started crawling out.

Created by the imbalance caused due to the absence of the gods, these monsters were abominations born from the fractures in the world's divine order.

They did not belong to any known realm. Neither beast nor spirit, they were creatures of corruption born from endless darkness molded into flesh.

The mortals called them **Eclipsed**, for wherever they walked, the light dimmed and the air turned cold.

Due to them, entire villages vanished overnight. Cities that once stood proudly with massive unbreakable structures crumbled overnight.

The people cried out once more to their absent gods. But no divine hand reached down, no miracle came.

It was truly humanity's end.

But humans were anything if not persistent. Driven to the absolute brink, with their numbers dwindling to barely a billion, the humans turned their desperation into defiance.

If the gods would not save them, they would become their own salvation.

It began with a spark an idea born from both madness and desperation.

A group of scholars, inventors, and heretics gathered beneath what remained of the old world, uniting under a single, blasphemous goal: to steal the sun.... No, not it's light, but the sun itself.

And against all odds, they succeeded.

They built colossal towers that reached for the heavens, equipped with engines capable of capturing and siphoning the very essence of the sun.

For seven years, those towers, later called **The Pillars of Dawn**, burned day and night, drawing down rivers of golden fire from the heavens.

Even the world itself trembled at this abominable act and the sky slowly grew darker but this didn't stop the mortals as they were determined to either gain unlimited power, spite the gods or die trying.

And when the light finally faded, the mortals looked up and saw what they had done.

The sun was completely gone.

In its place hung an artificial orb an enormous construct forged from divine residue¹ and mortal technology, powered by the very energy they had stolen.

With that, humanity now held the power of the sun in the palm of their hands¹ and that day marked the dawn of a new age: **The Solar Era**.

With the stolen sun, now known as the **Helion Core**, as their eternal power source, humanity began to rebuild.

They designed machines that harnessed Solar Energy (S.E.), channeling it through radiant weapons, armor, and even entire cities.

With such innovation, the humans were finally able to fight back against those creatures of abomination.

They formed defenses around their cities, ones that the monsters couldn't go past, they created weapons to push back the monsters and for the first time in centuries, humanity was gaining an upper hand in the war against the **Eclipsed**.

But such power always came with a price.

With the absence of a real sun came the evolution of the **Eclipsed**. They grew stronger, faster, and more intelligent, with their numbers seemingly increasing everyday as their relentless attacks on humans continued.

To survive and prepare future generations for the war, the **Solar Confederacy** founded **[The Radiant Academies]**, institutions dedicated to training **Solar Knights**, humans capable of withstanding a Helion Core planted in them and wielding Helion-powered weapons.

These knights were the new warriors of mankind, the front liners of the war and the deciders of victory or defeat.

They stood as humanity's new hope, the new light that drove away the darkness. They successfully pushed back the monsters, allowing humanity to reclaim most of its lost lands.

They rebuilt their cities again and Aureum was once more, a world that belonged to the mortals... It wasn't as colorful as during the age of the gods, but at least humanity had survived.

At Aureum's heart stood Solara Prime, the capital city and home of the first and greatest of the Radiant Academies — **[The Solar Academy]**

It was here that the brightest minds and strongest wills of the younger generations were molded into warriors of humanity.

Solar Knights, engineers, and scholars, each one trained to master the gift humanity had stolen from the heavens.

To the public, the Academies were symbols of hope, monuments that ensured the survival of Aureum, they were like gods among them, each capable of wielding the power of the sun itself through their weapons.

Though the victory against the Eclipsed was only temporary, as they kept evolving and rising in numbers, seemingly unending.

The Solar Confederacy, the ruling body of Aureum, hid this truth from the public. To the people, the war was progressing. The cities stood taller, the Academies flourished.

But beneath all that, the Eclipsed were getting closer and closer to evolving past what, even with their tech powered by the stolen sun, humanity could handle, soon enough, they would be brought back to their last leg and whether they would beg for their gods to return again or survive as they previously had, through desperation, remains to be seen.

- From the stolen sun itself
- I couldn't not pull up this reference 😊

Chapter 2: Prologue [2]: A Tier 2 Eclipsed

"I'm going to die here, aren't I?"

That much was obvious as he could see no way out of this situation.

His legs were currently pinned beneath the rubble of a fallen bridge. Every attempt he made to set himself free just sent a shiver of pain down his spine.

That, and he wasn't strong enough to lift the rubble off his legs. Even if he was, his legs were a mangled mess of blood and broken bone.

Even if by some miracle he managed to crawl out of this, he doubted he'd ever walk again.

He was sure they wouldn't allow him to crawl too far before that thing caught up to him.

Speaking of which, he could still hear distant screams which meant it was still out there.

Turning his head to scan his environment, he was once again met with one that looked like a graveyard, but that much was to be expected from a **Tier 2 Eclipsed**.

The creature had made sure that no building was left standing... Not like there was much to begin with, after all, this was the slums.

On every rubble that lay around was at least the body of a human... Dissected beyond belief, yes, but still undeniably the bodies of humans.

Everywhere he looked, there was death.

"Y-yeah," he muttered to himself again, "I really will die here."

He slowly let the thought sink in as he accepted that fact. Even if a Solar knight arrived and ended up saving him, he might as well be as good as dead.

He didn't have a single credit to his name, much less enough to fix his legs that were completely busted at this point.

And without his legs, his Helion tech scavenging trips would end which would mean no credits for food, which meant he'd just end up dying of starvation anyway, so why not let it just end here, right now.

No one in these slums was generous to share whatever little they had, even less so were the nobles, who would rather watch them rot than spare a coin.

It was funny really, for as long as he could remember, he had always been scared of dying but now that he was at death's door, he felt none of that fear.

He only felt a bit of regret at the fact that his dream of entering the academy would never come true.

"Meh—" he let out, followed by a mouthful of blood that he coughed out, "it's not like a junkyard rat like me would've ever make the cut anyway.... So I guess this saved me from embarrassing myself."

Every excuse seemed valid at this point, but the truth was, deep down, he didn't want to die.

He also wanted a chance at living a life like all other teenagers did, he wanted to eat something that wasn't stale or expired for once.

Something warm, like the food the Academy kids probably threw away without a second thought.

He wanted to sleep without worrying if his roof would collapse, or if the next Eclipsed wave would reach Zone 9 again.

He wanted to see what the artificial sun actually looked like, unobstructed by the haze of smoke and pollution that permanently blanketed the slums.

He wanted *more*.

He was soon snapped out of his thoughts by the sound of hurried steps, causing him to turn his head towards the side.

There he saw a man, one that looked middle aged, running towards him, the man's expression desperate as he ran without stopping or looking back a single time.

It was obvious enough what the man was running from but he didn't even bother calling out to the man for help.....

Why?

Well...

As the man continued forward something suddenly went past him so fast that the man couldn't even register until it was too late.

The next instant, the man's head was gone.

It didn't explode or fly off dramatically. It simply vanished, sliced clean from his shoulders, leaving a crimson mist hanging in the air.

The body, still driven by pure panic and momentum, kept running for a few more steps before it stumbled and collapsed beside him with a dull, wet thud.

For a moment, everything went silent again, except for the faint metallic clink as blood dripped through the cracks of the concrete unto the metal.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Blood from the man's neck pooled on the cracked concrete, mixing with the dirt and soot until it became a dark, sticky mess.

He stared blankly at the corpse beside him, his breath hitching.

He wanted to scream, curse, or even cry, but all that came out was a hollow laugh.

"Guess... you got out of here first, huh?" he muttered to the dead man, voice trembling.
"Lucky you."

Raising his head, he was faced with the culprit of the man's death and the cause of the death and destruction around him right now.

The creature's shape was vaguely lupine—four legs, a hunched back, and a long, tail that dragged along the ground—but that was where any similarity to a wolf ended.

The creature seems to blend perfectly with darkness, no....rather, it was darkness itself as whatever light seemed to pierce through the pollution filled clouds refused to reach the creature.

It's maw was widely open as he could see drool mixed with blood dropping from it to the ground and it's red eyes shone within its own darkness, completing its already terrifying look with an even more terrifying finish.

This was a **[Tier 2 Eclipsed]** known as an Abyssal Hound. A monster capable of leveling entire cities and definitely one that wasn't supposed to be around these parts, and yet it was.

As he spotted the creature, so did it.

As if aware that its prey was trapped, the Abyssal Hound slowly moved towards him, almost in a mocking manner.

It could've moved with speeds that his eyes would barely be able to track and end him, but the creature decided to have some fun.

The twin burning crimson orbs locked onto him with something that almost looked like amusement.

It was toying with him.

When it got close enough, it stopped for a while, its maws still open wide and suddenly, without any warning, it lunged towards him.

His hand frantically brushed against the ground in search of something to save him... Anything. It suddenly landed on a warm metal.

His eyes darted to it: a broken Helion capacitor, small and unstable, though it was still glowing faintly with Solar Energy.

He'd scavenged it earlier that day, thinking he could sell it for a few credits as a way to survive a few more days in this shit hole.

But now, guess he'd just have to use it for survival in a different way.

"If I'm going to die... I'm taking you with me."

He tore the pin from the capacitor and, with every ounce of strength left in his body, hurled it into the creature's mouth while it was still midair.

Before the creature could even register what had happened —

BOOM!

Chapter 3: Nox: A Nightmare

{5 hours ago}

"Don't run too fast, Nox, your father can't keep up," a soft, melodic voice called out to him as he ran up a meadow filled hill.

He turned around chuckling at how far behind he had left the two, before he slowed down and allowed them to catch up.

His mother was the first to reach him, her long dress brushing through the tall grass as she laughed breathlessly.

Behind her came his father, panting exaggeratedly, one hand clutching his side. "By the stars, Nox," he groaned, pretending to collapse dramatically. "Are you sure you're not half wind spirit?"

Nox giggled, "you're just getting old, Dad!"

"Oh really?" His father shot him a mock glare before sweeping him up and tossing him into the air, "can an old man do this?"

Nox's giggles could be heard even below the hill as his father spun him around in the air.

The air, the blue sky, the meadows, the lack of pollution all pointed to one thing, this was during the age of the gods.

During the time when the sun, the real one, burnt brightly in the sky.

And for a boy like Nox, it was a time when the world felt endless.

His father set him down gently, kneeling to ruffle his hair. "See that?" he said, pointing toward the distant skyline — where rows of white stones that reached for the heavens stood, their tips glowing faintly with divine energy. "That's Solis. One day, you'll stand there and see what real beauty looks like."

Nox's eyes widened. "Will we go there together?"

His father smiled, but there was hesitation in his eyes as a flicker of something young Nox couldn't recognize passed in them. "Someday. When the time is right."

His mother stepped closer, resting a hand on his shoulder. "Don't rush to grow up, little one," she murmured. "The world changes faster than you think."

But before he could turn around and say anything else, his parents had suddenly disappeared.

Nox blinked in surprise, looking around the empty meadow. The spot where his mother had stood just a second ago now held only swaying grass.

The warmth of his father's hand on his head was gone too, replaced by a chill that crawled down his spine.

"Mom?" he called softly, glancing around. "Dad?"

But there was no answer.

Suddenly, a sound too loud to ignore was heard directly above him.

The young Nox slowly looked up the sky, only to be faced with a scene that made him tremble even more.

The sky, as if just a fabric was tearing open above him, and beyond the tear was just... endless darkness.

As if spilling into their world, the blue skies suddenly turned darker and soon after, the sun followed suit.

The darkness slowly spilled into it as if ink in clear water. The golden glow of the sun slowly dimmed before it was fully consumed by darkness.

The warmth from it that had bathed the meadow moments ago vanished in an instant, replaced by a biting chill that made Nox's breath visible in the air. The soft rustle of grass due to the wind grew still.

"M-mom...? Dad....?" Nox called out, his voice trembling as fear gripped him, but there was still no answer.

But that was still not the worst yet....

Soon enough, from the tear in the sky, something began to fall.

At first, Nox thought it was rain. Dark droplets descending slowly from the rift.

But as they neared the ground, he realized they weren't drops of water. They were shapes.

'Run,' his mind told him but before he could move a step, the ground suddenly opened up beneath him.

His arms moved forward, trying to grab anything, but it was useless.

Before he knew it, he had already started descending down the Abyss, and the last thing he saw was a bright human shaped golden light standing at the edge of the hole looking down at him as he descended.

Down he went, faster and faster, as if gravity itself couldn't wait for him to reach the bottom but just before he could land, his eyes snapped open.

A pair of golden eyes were revealed as his lids moved out of the way.

The first thing that came to view was the ceiling that was barely holding together. It seemed as if it would fall at any moment, but Nox knew better,

That thing has been holding up for as long as he could remember.

"It's that dream again," he muttered with a sigh, passing a hand through his black hair.

The dream had been recurring ever since he turned twelve, with every single detail being the same.

So much so that every single time he had the dream, it felt so real...

But he knew it couldn't be, the age of the gods was centuries ago and from what he remembered, his parents had abandoned him here in the slums when he was little, leaving him with nothing but a necklace.

It hung around his neck even now with a simple piece of black cord with a small, circular pendant attached to it.

He lifted it between his fingers, staring at the faint symbol carved into it — a sun partially covered by shadow.

Why did they leave it with him?

He had no idea. They hadn't cared enough to not abandon him, so why care enough to leave him with this ?

"No use thinking about it," he muttered as he got off his makeshift bed and into the bathroom.

For a couple of credits per month, this place was better than most in the slums, though that wasn't saying much.

The bathroom was barely wide enough for him to stretch both arms, and if he was lucky enough there'd be water running... How clean would be questionable but that didn't matter much.

He passed by the cracked mirror, catching his reflection on it. For a seventeen years old living in the slums, he looked pretty good..

Short, yes, but at least he has more flesh on his bones than most.

His golden eyes gleamed faintly in the dim light, an odd color for someone born in the slums. People noticed them sometimes, but he'd learned to look away before they could ask questions.

After a quick shower, he stepped out of the bathroom and towards the chair at a corner of his room where his clothes lay.

He pulled a faded black shirt first among the small pile, followed by black pants and a dark gray jacket, one that you wouldn't know if that was its color or it was just black faded beyond recognition.

Whatever it was, it didn't matter.

All that mattered was that it was clean and wearable.

Putting them on, he picked up a pair of black boots that completed the look.

Standing up he wanted to walk towards the door, but paused, as if expecting something, and soon enough, a knock came.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

"I know you're in there, Nox" an angry voice came from the other end, "get the hell out here and give me my creds."

'There it is,' Nox thought to himself with a smile, his morning wouldn't properly start without that angry shout at his door.

"Well, gotta run." He whispered before hopping up a window and jumping out, leaving whoever was knocking completely fuming.

The moment his boots hit the metal ledge outside his window, Nox was already moving.

The cold morning air brushed against his skin as he leapt across the narrow gap between buildings, the familiar adrenaline waking him better than any cup of stim-coffee could.

"NOX!" A voice roared from below, echoing through the stacked maze of shacks and rusted platforms that made up the lower slums. "You little rat! You think you can keep skipping rent?!"

"I'll pay you back when I have enough creds to survive on old man," he shouted in response.

The landlord, a broad, bald man named Vargo, leaned out the window just below Nox's room, red-faced and sputtering. "You're dead next time I see you, you hear me?!"

"Well, you gotta catch me first," he said with a chuckle, "and with a body like that, I highly doubt you can."

Luckily, he was too far for the landlord to hear else, he'd have been tempted to break down Nox's door and throw all his things out.

"Alright then," Nox said as he landed on one of the roof tops, "What will we scavenge today?"

Unknown to him, in just a few hours, his life was going to change a whole lot more than he ever expected.

Chapter 4: The Helion Capacitor

"Junk, junk, junk... hmmm... nope, still junk."

Nox tossed another piece of twisted metal over his shoulder, the clatter echoing through the rusted yard but he paid it no mind since he was the only one here anyway.

He wiped the sweat off his brow with his sleeve and sighed. "Four hours and not even a single busted Helion chip. Guess luck's on vacation today."

He crouched again, hands digging into the heap of old solar tech. Among the pile were drones, torches, and pieces of armor plating, none of which would bring him a single credit.

But he did stuff some of the drones into his bag though, Incase he managed to stumble on some type of power source, then he could fix them and sell for a lot more credits than he could earn from just selling the power source alone.

He was just about to give up when his hand brushed against something smooth beneath the debris.

It didn't feel like the usual scrap or junk he threw away so that got him curious, so he continued digging beneath the pile.

Soon enough, he was greeted by a dim golden glow causing him to pause.

Identifying a target, he started moving away the scraps that lay on it until a small object came into view.

Picking it up, he read what was written on it.

[HELION INDUSTRIES — Experimental Power Cell | CAPACITOR TYPE-07-BETA]

"Holy shit," Nox let out in surprise, which was a normal reaction for anyone in the slums that stumbled upon such a treasure, maybe, it was an understated reaction even.

HI

was the company responsible for 80% of solar tech, ranging from house tech to even the weapons that solar knights used in battles against the Eclipsed.

So a Helion Capacitor from them wouldn't be just any power core, but one of the top-tier energy modules.

Though, beneath its ID there was a warning that stated that it was unstable but he just ignored it.

"Unstable, my ass," Nox muttered, a grin spreading across his face as he spun the capacitor around. "You could power half the slums for a week with one of these."

He wondered how much he could earn from this.... definitely a lot. He could almost see the credits pile up before him.

He imagined himself slapping the landlord's rent in his face, buy real food for once and maybe even fix that damn ceiling.

Or even better, get enough credits to move out of this shit hole and into Solara Prime where his chances of attending the academy and becoming a Solar knight would be a lot higher.

Nox was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't even realize he had on a disturbing grin, luckily, no one was around to witness such sight, else they'd be beyond spooked.

A couple of minutes later he was snapped out of day dream by the sudden clatter of scrap.

Quickly, he hid the capacitor inside his scavenging bag and turned around to investigate.

Turns out, it was just more people entering the scrap yard, also in search of anything that would earn them a few credits.

"Well, that's my cue," Nox muttered to himself as he tightened the single strap of the crossed body bag and slid down the pile, causing a lot of rattling and clanking on his way down, but no one paid him mind.

He soon reached the entrance of the scrap yard, since he didn't walk too far, and exited it.

All that was running through his mind right now, was how he'd find the right buyer. The merchant Caravan that usually passes around these parts was the safest option but they wouldn't return anytime soon, not for another month.

His second option was to the gangs that existed in the slums, a special group that usually bought most of his scraps and repaired drones.

Problem was, they weren't exactly the most trust worthy, with the solar tech in his hand, they'd either pay him way below what was fair or even just seize it from him without giving a single dime.

And although he was pretty agile, even he wasn't confident in escaping them with the tech in hand, that'd just be a death wish.

That brought him to option three, the collectors. Like the merchants they also visited this place once in a while, but unlike the merchants they came at frequent intervals, either to buy valuable scavenged scraps or help the lucky few move to the city for a better life.

But all that was a load of bullshit to Nox.

He knew that no body was that nice. No one in the entire Aureum would do something for free, not if they were not benefiting from it in some way.

But still, they were his only option at getting a 'fair price' out of the Helion capacitor so all he had to do was find one.... Which should be simple, right?

Nope.

It wasn't the least bit simple. It felt like they were all hidden just when he was actively looking for them.

On normal days, he just had to visit the port or the train station and he'd find quite a few there but today, there was none.

"I give up," Nox said with a sigh, guess he'd just have to meet the gangs and hope they don't try and just take it from him.

But as he moved forward with his head down he didn't realize that a man moving ahead of him had suddenly stopped, not until he suddenly bumped into the man.

"Hey, watch where you're—" but the words died in his throat as he looked forward.

The man was frozen, his eyes forward and his body was trembling.

Nox's eyes also widened as they landed on what the man was gazing at. Just ahead of them, the space had torn open as if some kind of fabric and from within spilled a white fog.

"S-shit," Nox stuttered out as he recognized exactly what that was.

A rift.

And wherever there was a rift, there'd be an Eclipsed. Judging by the size of the rift, the Eclipsed definitely wasn't a tier 0 or 1..

Without waiting for whatever Eclipsed to walk out, Nox turned around, tightly clutched his bag and ran in the opposite direction with all the strength his legs could muster.

"W-why hadn't the news told us anything about a rift around these parts?" He said as he ran faster without stopping or looking back, "isn't their shitty Solar tech satellite capable of anticipating the appearance of rifts? Then why the hell."

But he knew no answer would come so he just continued running, aiming to reach whatever safety he could before that thing caught up.

Soon enough, the screams of people could be heard from afar, informing him that the monster had stepped out of the rift and its rampage had started.

Still, he didn't stop.

He didn't give a damn about anyone that wasn't him, besides it wasn't like he had any friends or people he cared about here, they had either all died or abandoned him.

Besides, even if he turned back what could he do? Offer himself as snack to the creature and buying time for whoever to escape?

There was no way he'd do that.

So he just kept running. He turned a sharp corner, nearly slipping as his boots scraped across the uneven metal plating of the street.

The screams and sound of people running, or being crushed sounded a lot closer now.

"Just keep running," he muttered between breaths. "Just keep—"

The ground suddenly shook violently, cutting him off. A wave of debris blasted outward as something massive slammed into a nearby building.

Nox was thrown off his feet, rolling across the pavement. The capacitor nearly slipped from his bag, but he caught it instinctively, refusing to let go.

He forced himself up, his legs trembling from the fall. Ahead, the narrow streets split in two directions one leading toward the market tunnels, the other toward the transit bridge.

He didn't think...well, not that he had the chance to; he chose the bridge. If he could reach the old overpass, maybe he could cut across the rail line and disappear into the east sector.

So he continued running.

Each step sent jolts of pain up his legs, but fear kept him moving. His lungs burned, and his heart pounded so fast it hurt.

He didn't dare glance behind, not even when another deafening crash sounded, followed by a ripple that caused the ground to tremble as if an earthquake had just happened.

But his luck soon ran out as the moment he stepped on the bridge, the earth trembled again and the structure that was barely holding together gave way.

"Shi—" he barely had the chance to complete his words before the ground disappeared beneath him.

His arms flailed in the air as he tried to grab something, but it was too late, gravity had already taken over and he was soon plunging downwards.

Everything went white the moment his body crashed into the ground, his breath leaving his lungs, but that wasn't the end.

Soon enough, rubbles from above started raining down, landing directly on his legs, pinning them to the ground and giving him no way of escape.

Chapter 5: Astra Dawn

"Why the hell am I the one they sent?"

A Lady with short silver-white hair muttered as she continued forward. Her pale violet eyes seemed completely unfocused as if she was lost in her own reality while she continued forward, into Zone 9.

But what would really draw attention to her was the uniform she wore, one which Nox would immediately recognize had he been around.

She had on midnight gray pants coupled with black boots and a white shirt tucked into the pants.

Hanging lazily on her shoulders was a jacket with the same color as her pants, the jacket also had golden cuffs.

On the left chest area was a half-sun crest, its lower arc hidden behind three rising rays, this was the famous insignia of Solar Academy.

The moment anyone saw that emblem, they'd know what she was an Academy Instructor. One of the elite few licensed to wield high-grade Solar tech and also proof that she was a really high ranking **Solar Knight**.

This was Astra Dawn, an Ascendant rank Solar knight and—

"Of course I know I was closer," she grumbled, replying to no one in particular, "but I'm supposed to be on vacation right now."

Honestly, someone that wasn't right in the head evident by how much she spoke to herself.

"My vacation," she muttered again, kicking a piece of rubble out of her way as if it had personally offended her, "I'm definitely asking for extra creds for this."

There was, of course, no one around. Yet Astra kept talking, as if there was.

"Oh, don't give me that look," she said to absolutely no one, gesturing vaguely beside her as though a companion was walking there. "I'm not the crazy one here. I'm just, vocally aware of my frustrations."

There was a short pause, before she added,

"...Yes, that's a thing."

She sighed, brushing a strand of silver hair behind her ear, her violet eyes scanning lazily across the devastation that was Zone 9.

Everywhere she looked was filled with dissected corpses of humans, but her expression didn't change in the least bit.

From afar, she could hear screams, only for them to be abruptly cut off and go completely silent.

"Guess it's still out here," Astra muttered as she let out a small yawn, "let's deal with it and get back to our vacation."

But before she could take another step, a deafening sound caused her to stop in her tracks.

BOOM!

"Hmm?" Astra tilted her head in confusion, "did the academy send another knight?"

"You're right, that's highly unlikely," she said after a short pause, "no one else would agree to come here.....wait, does that mean I'm being bullied into doing this?"

"Right, right, the explosion." She said as one of 'the voices' in her head reminded.

Crouching, she placed her gloved hand on the ground, closed her eyes and the next moment they opened, they had changed from pale violet to a golden glow.

"Solar Energy?" she muttered as her sight allowed her vision to see the explosion site.

She could see the particles of solar energy in the air, which was normal since she already expected that when the explosion went off, but the strange part was that it was quickly receding.

Her eyes follow where it was receding to until the landed on a figure sprawled on the ground.

"How strange," Astra muttered, which was surprising coming from someone like her...the definition of strangeness, "well, I better go check it out."

She stood up straight again, let out a small breath and before one could see her fully move forward, she was gone, leaving behind only a golden trail and a scorched ground.

A few minutes before the explosion went off, Nox, already coming to the realization that there was no no way out, did the only thing he could.

"If I'm going to die... I'm taking you with me."

Time seemed to slow down as the unstable capacitor flew into the creature's open maw.

It didn't even get a second to react before the Helion capacitor exploded, letting out a blinding golden light.

The shockwave immediately hit the trapped Nox, freeing him and at the same time throwing him backwards, knocking the wind out of him.

His face and arms were completely scorched, the skin on them completely blackening, making him unrecognizable.

The last thing Nox saw was the aftermath of the explosion. The edges of his vision were blurry but he could see a huge crater caused by it.

The buildings left standing had all disappeared to ash...not that there was much to begin with anyway.

But within the crater, something began moving. The Abyssal Hound has somehow survived blowing up from inside.

Nox let out a hollow laugh, though even that felt painful right now as he let out, "I guess it was useless, after all."

With that, darkness took him.

A massive crater, a regenerating Eclipsed and a body burnt beyond recognition was the scene Astra arrived to.

"How interesting," she muttered.

The damage caused by the explosion was one thing, but what really caught her attention was the Solar Energy in the air..

More specifically, the fact that the particles were currently moving around, leading directly into the burnt body that lay on the floor.

Whenever Solar tech is used in an area, residue of Solar Energy always remained only to be dispersed in a few minutes, but that's not what was happening right now.

The burnt body was currently pulling all the solar energy in the air, towards it and absorbing it like a sponge.

Soon enough, a golden glow enveloped it and with the golden glow in her eyes, Astra could see as the body started healing.

But she wasn't given the chance to observe the process of whatever was happening till it completed, as a low growl was heard behind her.

Turning around, she noticed that the Eclipsed had fully regenerated as if it hadn't previously exploded from the inside.

The hound was crouching low, growling at the new arrival. Its instincts screamed at it to run away, that a bigger monster had just appeared.

but at the same time, it could see that there was no way out.

It was cornered prey — and cornered prey only did one thing.

Fight back.

And that's exactly what it was going to do.