

# Solar Ascension

## #Chapter 11: Eyes On Him - Read Solar Ascension Chapter 11: Eyes On Him

*Chapter 11: Eyes On Him*

*Out of place.*

That was exactly what Nox was feeling right now while standing in the middle of Solara Prime's central plaza, surrounded by buildings higher than he had ever seen before.

People, dressed in what he could only describe as an extreme show of wealth....well, when compared to what people in the slums wore anyway, walked on and about.

Compared to his five foot six height, these people might as well be giants. But he guessed that's what eating three meals a day caused.

Their skins looked healthy, and they had a lot more meat on their bones than anyone he had ever met back in the slums.

Hell, even their 'skinniest' seemed well-fed enough to look like nobles to him. They looked healthy and their eyes had no bags beneath them, an indication that they slept calmly without worrying about an Eclipsed wave reaching them.

The contrast was really large when compared to Zone 9. There was happiness everywhere he looked.

But as he observed them, so did they.

Well, not openly if course. No one would dare stare openly at someone walking beside a Solar Knight, but the looks they were giving him was painfully clear.

They looked at him like some kind of trash or some kind of refuse unfit for their eyes.

A mother subtly pulled her child closer as they passed. A pair of academy students in clean white uniforms whispered to each other and laughed as they took multiple glances at him.

Even the maintenance drones that hovered near the plaza fountains seemed to pause a little longer when scanning him.

*He hated it.*

Noxfelt like some kind of animal at a zoo, some rare and unpleasant animal that people only came close enough to gawk at before stepping back in disgust.

In just the minutes of being in Solara Prime, he had already regretted his dream of ever coming here, he wished he could go back to the slums.

At least there, everyone was equally miserable. No one pretended they were better than anyone else.

He shoved his hands into his pockets, lowering his head slightly as he followed Astra through the plaza.

They couldn't bring the Jeep around these parts, hence the reason they were walking.

Astra, meanwhile, although aware of the looks the kid was receiving, said nothing. Yes, the kid was now under her care but there were some things he needed to learn on his own.

If he was going to survive in Solara Prime, or anywhere in Aureum, he had to grow a thicker skin. She wasn't about to babysit him every time he was insulted or looked at in disgust....

That'd just set him up for failure in the real world.

Nox continued forward with Astra leading the way, he hated every moment that passed but he still kept moving.

But suddenly, he felt his skin crawl, a familiar sensation that he would never forget, after all, it was the same sensation he got when the Eclipsed looked at him.

Without realizing, his steps froze and all the sounds around him faded and his breath constricted. His instincts screamed at him to run, but he couldn't.

This....was a lot worse than what he felt from the Abyssal Hound, whatever was coming seemed a lot more dangerous than it.

As much as his head could allow, he slowly turned back with stiff movements.

The people were still there, talking and walking but to Nox, it was like they'd been muted.

His eyes scanned where the feeling came from only to realize, there was nothing there. But the feeling didn't disappear, he still felt the eyes of an Eclipsed locked on him.

Which should be impossible right?

They were in the middle of Solara Prime, one of the safest places in all of Aureum. Even the outer Light Field alone made it impossible for any Eclipsed to step a foot in, let alone look at him.

So why?

Why did this feeling refuse to go away?

His heartbeat was the only thing he could hear in his ears as his breathing came in short, uneven gasps.

His eyes went from face to face, scanning for the source of this feeling but all he could find were happy faces or even the few that looked at him in hidden disgust, none was of an Eclipsed.

The moment Nox seemed to be on the verge of a panic attack, a hand sudden rested on his shoulders, snapping him out of it.

Sound returned and the chatter of the plaza rushed back into his ears. He turned around, as he took in heavy breaths, and locked gaze with Astra.

She let out a sigh before saying, "let's get you out of here before you get a panic attack."

Astra had no idea why the kid was behaving like that, but she was sure that it wasn't because of the looks they were giving him, he didn't look that weak.

"Breathe," she said, "in through your nose and out through your mouth."

Following her words, Nox slowly gained control of his breathing again as the feeling of being watched slowly faded.

"I'm fine now," he said after a while.

"That's a lie," Astra responded before adding, "but first, let's get out of here."

There definitely was something wrong but here wasn't the place to talk, so she decided to ask later, for now, she had to get the kid out of here.

"Hold on," she said.

Before Nox had the chance to say anything, Astra grabbed him by the neck of his jacket, with her boots powering up.

With a boom, the two disappeared leaving behind a blast of wind that caused several bystanders to stumble back, clutching their coats and bags so they don't fly away due to the wind Astra left behind.

A few let out a gasp while others swore....under their breaths of course, but most quickly went back to their business.

Solar Knights doing strange things in public wasn't exactly uncommon in Solara Prime.

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Meanwhile, just a bit beyond where Nox's eyes were looking, a pair of emotionless gray eyes were locked on him as Astra dragged him forward while she ran.

For a moment, an unreadable expression graced the person's face before it went back to normal.

"I guess it's time to go back," the words were said without the least bit of emotion as they looked up in the sky where the artificial sun hung, "it's getting late."

With that, they disappeared as if they were never there in the first place.

*Chapter 12: Welcome To Solara Academy*

*Blergh*

Nox puked his guts out the moment Astra finally stopped running.

He had been dragged across the city at the speed of sound, so his reaction was understandable.

After a while, he stood up straight, wiped his mouth and glared at Astra who was innocently looking back at him, as if she wasn't the cause of his current predicament.

"What?" She asked, feigning ignorance, "you looked like you wanted to leave that plaza fast."

"Not...like... this," Nox let out hoarsely, still trying to catch his breath and properly orient himself.

She chuckled and patted his back hard enough to nearly knock him forward again. "You'll get used to it. Consider it your pre-academy training, besides, I wasn't even going that fast."

Before Nox had the chance to say anything, Astra interrupted, "anyway, we're here."

Nox finally turned around and was face with a scene that caused his jaw to drop.

Before him was a golden gate so high that seeing the top was almost impossible. It even seemed to merge with the barrier covering Solara Prime.

Just a bit lower, where the eye could see, was the metallic logo of a half-sun crest, its lower arc hidden behind three rising rays.

A symbol Nox clearly recognized.... Who wouldn't? After all, it was the symbol of the famous Solar Academy.

Just beyond the gates, he spotted multiple massive glass structures, connected by what seemed like bridges of glass.

The artificial sun's ray reflected off the glass structures, making the scene look.... breathtaking.

It all felt like a dream, one where he'd soon wake up from and find out that he was still trapped in that rubble and his brain was just looking for a way to escape his impending death.

"Come on," Astra's voice snapped him out of those thoughts, motioning him forward. "Admissions is this way."

Nox looked at her before looking back at himself and Astra immediately realized what he was thinking.

"Right, your clothes."

They hadn't gotten the chance to buy new ones at the plaza since that's when he started getting the feeling of being watched and in turn, the panic attack.

"Well... it's not that bad."

Yes it was, he might as well be wearing just his boxers than the burnt mess hanging off him.

"Fine fine, we'll get him some new clothes," Astra grumbled, "no need to exaggerate that much."

Who was she talking to?

Nox had no idea, but at least he'd get to change clothes before walking into the academy in such embarrassing condition.

She took out the glass like device again tapped a few times on it before putting it back and waited.

A few minutes later, a drone approached them, scanning Astra for a second before dropping a small black capsule into her open palm. The drone gave a short beep, then flew back toward the academy's airspace, disappearing among the countless others.

Astra turned the capsule over once in her hand before tossing it to Nox. "Here, it's the standard initiate uniform. Medium size."

He caught it awkwardly, a bit confused at the smooth surface. "How do I—"

"Press the middle."

The capsule let out a hiss and unfolded kind of like a flower did, revealing neatly folded clothes inside.

There was a gray-and-gold jacket with the Solar Academy's emblem on the chest, black combat-grade pants, and boots that looked both light and durable.

The fabric looked a whole lot expensive than anything he had ever laid his hands on, back in the slums.

"This is mine?" Nox asked.

"Only temporarily," Astra answered, "if you fail your entrance evaluation, I'm taking it back and selling it."

He frowned. "You're joking, right?"

"Let's hope you never find out," she said with a grin before pointing behind a pillar at the academy's gate, "there should be a washroom where you can change there."

Nodding, Nox headed behind the pillar, leaving Astra waiting close to the gate.

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A few minutes later, he stepped out, his previous jacket and faded clothes discarded as he now had on the uniform given to him.

The uniform fit better than she'd expected. The gray-and-gold jacket hugged his frame neatly. His black hair was still a bit messy, but somehow... it worked.

"Huh," Astra said finally. "Not bad, not bad at all, you almost don't look like a kid from the slums anymore."

"Y'know," he started, tugging awkwardly at the jacket's collar. "You could just say I look good, you know."

"I could," she said, her grin getting a bit wider, "but I'd rather not lie."

Before Nox had the chance to think of a rebuttal, Astra was already approaching the gate, "now come on, she'd have already heard that I'm here so, she'll be expecting me."

"Who?" He asked.

"You'll find out soon enough," she replied, taking her ID out and placing it against a golden panel by the gate.

The panel scanned the badge, releasing a soft chime before the massive gates split open with a low hum.

Light poured through the opening as the gate fully parted, revealing the Solar Academy in all its glory.

If the view from before was breath taking, then this was a whole different world. Nox was presented the full view of the buildings and the activities going on in the Academy's premise.

Inside, students dressed in different colored uniforms walked about, either in groups or alone.

Each had a unique air to them, one that was hardly seen in the slums. They really did stand out from the rest, whether in looks or the aura they emitted.

With one glance, you'd immediately realized that they were elites, their lives were worlds apart from what Nox or anyone from zone 9 could ever dream of reaching.

The two slowly walked in and for the second time today, a group of unpleasant gazes fell on Nox.

It was almost like they could detect someone that didn't belong and their eyes would automatically lock on him.

He really did hate it.

"Welcome to Solar Academy," Astra said pulling him out of his thoughts, yet again . "The pride of Aureum, and the place where you'll either become something great... or get crushed trying."

### *Chapter 13: Stairs*

"Welcome back Ascended Dawn."

The words came from a woman wearing a similar uniform to the students but hers seem like a lighter shade of green, with gold running along the cuffs and neck of the jacket, the academy's logo was on the left side of it.

She had blonde hair and green eyes covered with round glasses, but the feature that would immediately pull attention to her was her elf like ears.

A feature that was new to Nox so he couldn't help but stare for a while longer. She seemed to notice but said nothing, after all, this was nothing new to her.

All she was worried about was the one standing before her, Astra Dawn, the hardest part of her job as a secretary in the administration building.

She quickly stood up to attend to Astra.

"Is the old hag in her office?" Astra asked instead of responding to her welcome.

"Y-yes," the woman responded, "but I advise you take the stairs since the elevator is out of order right now."

"I see," Astra nodded, turning towards the direction of the stairs, "thank you, Luna."

With that, she walked away leaving a stunned Luna.

Yes, she had been working here for a while now, but she never expected THE Astra Dawn to know her name..... maybe all the headache was worth it after all?

Nope, not in the least bit.

Nox was behind Astra as they walked towards the stairs. He finally had the chance to take a clear look around.

First thing he noticed was how unnecessarily high the ceiling was.

The floor they were on, looked like some kind of cathedral...one made of glass, with golden light dropping from above.

Even the floors they were walking on had golden lights running along it.

"How much power does this place even need?" Nox couldn't help but comment.

Astra just shrugged, she has never been curious enough to find out so she had no idea.

All she knew was that it used a whole lot.

The two soon arrived at the stairs and Nox froze, were they going up a building or a mountain because what the hell was up with the....number of steps?

The stairs stretched endlessly upward, spiraling along the inside of the massive glass structure

It wasn't just tall, it was absurdly so.

Nox tilted his head back, trying to see the top, and immediately regretted it. His neck hurt, and the top was nowhere in sight.

"What the hell—" he muttered under his breath. "Are they trying to kill people before they even make it to admissions?"

Astra, already two steps ahead, gave him an evil grin, "cardio's important."

"Yeah, well, so is not dying," Nox shot back, eyeing the stairs like it was a personal enemy.

"Don't be dramatic," she said already taking multiple other steps forward, she clearly was someone who'd done this a hundred times. "You're going to be facing Eclipsed, I'm sure you can handle a few hundred stairs."

With that, she seemed unwilling to hear any of his complaints anymore as she walked upwards quickly, skipping a couple hundred steps on her way.

"Damn it," Nox muttered before taking the first step up, else he risked falling behind.

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*Twenty minutes*

That's howlong it took Nox to walk up....no, crawl up the torture of an excuse for stairs.

He slumped against the wall beside the final landing, panting heavily. "Whose idea... was this...?" he managed to let out between breaths. "Do they... hate people... that much?"

Saying he was out of breath would be an understatement. His lungs were desperately holding on to whatever little oxygen they had left in them.

Astra on the other was just standing there waiting for him, she didn't seem the least bit out of breath and she looked like she hadn't even climbed the same stairs Nox just had.

Looking to the side, he saw the elevator come up and with a ding, it let out the same secretary from before...Luna.

She looked at them with apologetic eyes...well more at Nox than Astra since she seemed completely unbothered.

There was a moment of silence for a long while as he looked between the elevator and the stairs.

"...It's working?" he finally asked, his voice filled with disbelief.

Luna adjusted her glasses, giving an awkward smile. "Ah... it seems maintenance fixed it faster than expected."

Astra didn't even blink. "Oh, good to know."

"Good to—?" Nox's voice cracked. "Good to know? You made me climb that entire—" He gestured weakly toward the spiral of stairs behind them. "—that entire monstrosity!"

"Relax," Astra said, "it's just the antics of the old lady, I'm sure she'd have 'seen' you already."

A moment after her words, Nox suddenly felt his body recovering and his exhaustion immediately melted away.

"Hmm?" Luna let out curiously looking at the recovering Nox, "he already has a core?"

The reason for her question was due to how fast he was recovering.

Astra turned to him, her eyes taking a slight glow and she saw exactly why, the kid was doing it again.

He was absorbing SE again and this time, it seemed his body was being greedy as it was taking it in, in insane amounts.

At this rate, it'd only take a few minutes before everything powered by SE started getting affected.

"Is this a mechanism of this floor?" Nox asked as he felt his tiredness melt away, for some weird reason, he was also feeling stronger than before but he had no idea what actually was going on.

Luckily, before anything could go wrong, his body stopped absorbing, seemingly satisfied.

"No," Astra shook her head, "that's all you ...again."

"Me?" Nox asked.

"Yup," Astra nodded, "let's meet the old lady first, she might be able to explain what you are."

"This way," Luna said as she led them down the corridor towards the only door on this floor.

The three stopped at a door that had 'Director' written on it. Luna knocked once before opening and leading them in.

The moment they walked in, a voice welcomed them...or rather, spoke directly to Nox,

"Welcome Little light, I've been expecting you."

#### *Chapter 14: The Headmistress*

The first thing Nox noticed was that this was in no way an office.

It felt..no, looked as if he just stepped out of the building and out into the open field the moment they walked through the door.

The place seemed to be on the top of a hill, with a meadow of green as far as Nox could see.

But for some reason, this place seemed extremely familiar, almost as if he had been here.

"The old lady is at it again," Astra let out a sigh and Luna could only give a strained smile in response.

The strongest people in this academy were.... strange, to say the least.

Each had their own unique quirk, quirks you wouldn't expect from a Solar knight of their ranks.

Anyway, that was none of her concern, being around them would just add to her headache, so she was very much ready to go back to the ground floor.

At the highest point of the hill was a white pavilion, in which Nox could see a woman with white dress sitting, seemingly drinking tea...or whatever was in the cup in her hands.

She lifted her head from the cup and directly locked 'eyes' with Nox, who's eyes suddenly started glowing a lot brighter than before.

Without realizing, he suddenly stopped walking forward as he seemed to enter some type of trance.

The pavilion disappeared right before his eyes, so did the meadows, replaced by an endless expanse of darkness.

"Welcome Little light, I've been expecting you."

Standing before him, was the woman he had previously seen in the pavilion, drinking tea.

He could now properly make out her features. The woman had a head full of white hair just like the dress she had on, but his eyes were on hers...well, the white cloth with golden patterns that covered her eyes.

*Was she blind?*

"No, I see as much as you do, maybe even more, little light." She denied Nox's thoughts.

Nox immediately froze.

He was sure he hadn't said that out loud so how did she hear it?

"Don't worry, little light," she said with a smile on her face, "I can't read thoughts or anything like that, your thoughts are just very visible on your face."

Well, that explains that, but Nox still had questions.

"Who are you?" He finally asked, "and where are we?"

"You may call me Aurielle," she said. "Headmistress of Solar Academy."

He had noticed this earlier, but her voice really was serene.....wait did she say the headmistress of the solar academy?

"You don't seem surprised," She said, her face still maintaining its smile.

He really was, he was just having a hard time processing the fact that he had moved from the slums to standing in front of the headmistress of the Solar Academy... THE Solar Academy.

One of the greatest Radiant Academies in all of Aureum.

Nox's mind finally caught up, as he realized that he hadn't responded. "I'm... processing," he admitted quietly, rubbing the back of his neck. "You're the

Headmistress? As in, one of the only five Transcendent rank Solar knights in Aureum? That headmistress?"

"I see you've heard of me," Aurielle's smile got a bit wider, "anyway, I should probably do what I intend to before that kid interrupts."

Slowly, she approached him causing him to tense up a bit, which she immediately noticed as she said, "try to relax, this won't hurt."

Before Nox could ask what she meant by that, Aurielle calmly lifted her hand, and her palm rested right where his heart was, reminding him of what that being of light had done to him in that 'dream'.

He readied himself for the pain, but nothing happened. The only thing he could feel was the slight heat between her palm and his chest, besides that, there was nothing else....not the least bit of pain

"Hmm?" She looked a bit confused for a second before she nodded, "I see it's already activated... Then my part's done for now, let's get back to the office before the kid starts panicking."

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Nox's eyes slowly opened, coming face to face with Astra, whose face was pretty close to his, causing him to quickly pull back.

"You're back," she said, "I hope the old lady didn't do anything strange to you."

It seemed whatever the headmistress just did wasn't anything new since both Astra and Luna seem to have an idea of what just happened or at least, who was responsible for him just staying in place.

Nox just shook his head in response to Astra's questions before looking back towards the pavilion.

Aurielle was sat there again, the cup still in her hand as she elegantly took a sip from it.

She set her cup down with deliberate care before finally speaking, her voice carrying effortlessly across the space between them. "You do know I can hear you, right?"

"Of course, old hag," Astra responded turning to her, "that's why I asked in the first place."

This earned a chuckle from Aurielle.

The three approached and entered the pavilion where she pointed to the empty chairs and said, "sit."

And they did.

Well, except Astra, who hadn't waited for invitation before sitting down, and Luna, who remained standing.

Nox still quietly continued observing her, she hadn't given any explanation before or after she did whatever she had done to him and she didn't seem interested in giving one.

"So Astra," She started with a smile on her face, "what's your reason for paying this old lady a visit."

"Don't give me that bullshit, you blind bat," Astra responded, "I know you've already seen why I'm here."

"You're contradicting yourself little girl," Arielle said, "first you call me blind and now you're claiming I've somehow seen your reason for being here?"

As harsh as Astra's words were, Arielle didn't seem the least bit bothered by them, in fact, she seemed pretty used to it.

"Bit—" before Astra's words could be completed, she froze just as Nox previously had.

"You always were terrible at keeping your tongue in check," the Headmistress said softly, tilting her head. "One would think an Ascended Knight would have learned a modicum of decorum by now."

Nox looked at Astra and then at the headmistress before asking, "what did you do to her?"

"Hmm?" She turned to him before smiling, "don't worry little light, she's just in time out."

"I see," he nodded before turning to Luna who just gave him a shrug.

This was always the scene whenever Ascended Astra and the headmistress met, a behavior that really was unfit for people of their ranks.

But what could she say?

Both were capable of turning her to ash with just a look and she'd rather that not happen, so she never tried to say anything.

"Now then, little light," Arielle spoke again, "let's get your destiny underway, shall we?"

*Chapter 15: Solar Tech: Oracle*

A grumpy Astra.

That was exactly what Nox was staring at right now. Considering the personality he'd seen from her so far, he didn't think being grumpy was even possible for her.

Yet, she was and it was all because of the headmistress.

"Don't sulk," Arielle said as she looked her, "I wouldn't have been able to talk to the kid in peace otherwise."

She had sent Astra to the same place she previously was with Nox, except she had made it so that the passage of time would be faster there than here as a form of punishment for the brat.

"And what did you talk to him about?" Astra asked, finally picking up the cup before her.

"That's a secret," Arielle responded with a smile on her face.

"I know she was not going to tell us, but it was worth a try anyway." Astra spoke to herself again, but neither Arielle, nor Luna, who was still standing there, gave any reaction.

Which told Nox that this was probably nothing new.

"Anyway, forget it," she spoke up again, "I want the kid to take the admission test."

"Hmm," Arielle placed a finger to her lips, as if she was considering, before she finally said, "are you sure you don't want me to give him a direct admission into the academy?"

That was a trick question and Astra knew it.

"No," she answered, turning to Nox, "if he can't pass the entrance test, then he doesn't deserve to be here."

Her words were completely blunt and maybe a bit harsh, but Nox didn't seem bothered by it.

There was a smile on the headmistress's face, as she had already seen that answer coming.

"Very well," she said as she set her cup down. "We will go by the rules. He takes the test."

With a small tap on the table, the pavilion and meadowy Hill started transforming.

Nox watched in surprise as a golden light cover everything and a few seconds later, the grassy hill and pavilion were no more.

Instead, it was all replaced by what seemed like an actual office. The meadow and pavilion vanished entirely, and in their place was a vast space.

A wooden desk now separated them, and the three of them found themselves seated on comfortable chairs rather than the ones they sat on in the pavilion.

Behind Arielle was a glass window that spanned from floor to ceiling and the view presented to them was of the clouds.

Literally...

They were so high up that Nox could see the artificial clouds within the barrier. No wonder, the climb had been so long.

"Impressive, isn't it?" Arielle's voice pulled him out of the awe he currently was in.

"It is," he replied honestly which caused her to smile in response.

She tapped on the desk again and this time the top drawer opened and she took a couple of papers from it and handed it to Luna.

"Luna, child," Arielle started, knowing completely well how hard they had made her job, "would you be a darling and get him registered for the entrance test."

"Yes ma'am," Luna replied taking the papers.

"Oh, and let him stay at the temporary hostel for now," The headmistress added, "I wouldn't want him staying with this crazy child."

By 'crazy child', she meant Astra. Usually, Astra would fire back instantly, but after one humiliation already, she decided it was safer to maintain her dignity—especially in front of her future lab r—erm, student.

Instead, she switched the topic. "Why was I reported dead?"

"Hm?" The Headmistress tilted her head, feigning innocence.

"Don't 'hm' me, you old bat," Astra snapped, momentarily forgetting her decision to avoid further humiliation. "You knew I was alive."

"The kids were having fun believing that you were and I didn't intend on ruining it," she casually said.

"W—" Astra wanted to say something else but was immediately cut off as Aurielle waved a hand dismissively. "Regardless, the matter is settled. You're alive. Try not to die again, will you? It's very inconvenient for the paperwork."

"Di—" again, she was cut off, "or I could just put you in there again for a year maybe?"

Well that successfully caused her to back down before standing up, with the intention to leave, Nox standing up with her.

Luna led the way towards the door but before they could reach it, Arielle spoke up.

"Little Light," she gently said, "your path will not be an easy one. Even should you pass this trial, you will walk a road paved with hardships."

Nox paused for a while, swallowing a bit before turning to her and answering with a smile, "I'll survive."

"Good," Arielle said, giving him a wide smile, "I'll be watching you."

With that, they exited, leaving the headmistress alone in her office. There was a small smile on her face as she said, "This year's really going to be an interesting one."

Before she tapped on the desk again, and like before, the office transformed again, this time into a place that was golden as far as the eyes could see.

Slowly, she stood up, walked forward a bit and took off her white blindfold, revealing a beautiful sight for one to behold.

Her eyes that were completely golden, just like Nox's, but unlike his, she had something that looked like gears within.

This was her Solar tech, Oracle.

And as its name suggests, it allows her to take glimpses of the future and a lot more at the cost of her sight...hence the reason Astra calls her a bat.

But like she told Nox, she could see as much as anyone could, maybe even better thanks to these lenses.

She smiled as she looked around herself, noticing multiple threads around her. She touched one of them and the gears in her solar tech immediately started spinning and letting out a glow.

She froze as a vision unfolded before her eyes and for a few minutes, she stood unmoving.

Snapping out of it, Arielle wiped the blood, that had dripped down, off her nose before letting out a sigh.

"I guess it's still grim," there was a small frown on her face as she muttered, "I hope you're ready for the challenges ahead little light."