

Solar Ascension

Chapter 46: Spar

Nox still had no idea what was happening, one moment, he was about to select a sparring partner, the next, he was supposed to fight the red haired kid before him.

Well, calling Flint a kid wasn't exactly right since he was a year older than him but still.

The two were now standing opposite each other on the slightly elevated platform, in Nox's hand was his selected Solar tech, which he still had no idea what it was or even did.

Flint, meanwhile, was holding a staff which just worked to show how short he was, but he seemed completely focused on the opponent because him.

"Theres only one rule," Astra said, "don't kill each other, after all, that'll be too much paperwork for me....and I hate paper work."

The students shivered as they understood what she meant, Ascended Dawn didn't care if they died or not during their sparring session, she just didn't want the paper work that came with their deaths.

Ayla stood close to the platform observing Nox. She was curious to see if he would use the form he did during the test or maybe that was a one time thing?

"If you both understand," Astra continued, "then begin."

'Right,' Nox thought to himself, about to try and let his SE flow into his solar tech, but the next second, there was a staff aiming for the side of head at high speeds.

Guided by instincts, he raised the cylindrical metal and successfully blocked the incoming attack, only to be surprised by the strength behind it.

Nox was lifted off his feet and sent towards the edge of the platform, but before he could fall off, a golden light covered him and he teleported to safety.

"W-what the hell?" He let out, even Devon who was observing was surprised, the kid had a pair of boots, clearly solar tech, which allowed him to move faster than their eyes could track.

"Damn," he muttered as he looked at the recovering Nox. Even he doubted he could react that fast to the attack and the fight would've ended if Nox hadn't decided to put on the boots given to them during the combat test.

Astra hadn't stated that they couldn't use other solar techs, just that they shouldn't kill each other, so none of the two broke any rules.

"Is that all it takes to catch you by surprise," Flint said, his disappointment evident in his tone.

This just solidified his thoughts that Nox truly was only here because of favoritism.

Nox on the other hand just frowned, as he looked at his solar tech in hand, he had been pumping SE into it all this while, but as if the damn thing was a bottomless well, it refused to activate.

Could his luck get any worse?

He couldn't use the Gauntlets since they were busted and he hadn't gotten time to fix them, nor any of the other solar techs he horded from the test since he had fixed and sold them for a couple thousand credits.

As for the daggers, he had no idea what happened to them, he was sure he had left them in the simulation when he passed out, or maybe another candidate had taken them.

So he was stuck pouring an endless amount of SE into the cylinder. The worst part was, his SE within the solar tech was completely silent, so he had no idea what he was holding.

He just hoped it was something good.

That was the reason he wasn't paying much attention to his opponent's words, but Flint took his actions as him deliberately ignoring his words which made him even more annoyed.

Directing SE from his core to both the staff and his boots, the world seemed to down as he suddenly blasted forward, leaving a trail of golden light behind him.

Nox suddenly felt Flint's staff swinging towards his head again, not giving him enough time to power his boot for a dodge so he placed the useless metal in its path again, only to realize too late that it was a feint.

Flint quickly changed the staff's trajectory, bringing it lower and towards Nox's side.

The moment the solar tech made contact with his side, all the air was knocked out of his lungs and he was sent towards the edge of the platform again, stopped by a transparent barrier that was apparently keeping them within.

A ripple ran through the barrier as Nox crashed into before falling back to the ground.

He gripped his side in pain as he spat out a mouthful of blood. Some of his ribs were definitely not in their right place anymore as he could feel pain from even the slightest bit of movement he made.

"This is exactly why you don't belong here," Flint said as he slowly walked towards Nox who was on his knees and his forehead on floor his hand still gripping his side.

"You're just a weak ass waste of space who just got into the academy because you managed to gain the favor of someone important.

He stopped before the Nox placing his staff on the back of his head before adding, " do you think that makes you special?"

He lifted the staff high and slammed it into Nox's head, forcing his entire body to the floor and a crater appeared where his head is.

"Huh?"

Flint slammed the staff again, creating an even bigger crater on the floor.

"Answer me!" He shouted, slamming the staff on Nox's head again and again and again.

"Hey!" Devon suddenly tried approaching the platform, "ain't that fucking enough, you won already."

But he was pulled back by Astra, who had no expression on her face, "you're not allowed to interfere in the sparring session of others."

"Spar?" Devon looked at her with a dark look on his face, "you fucking call this a spar? The kid's about to die."

But Astra said nothing in response, she just tapped her belt and a circular orb floated out, split into three before turning into rings and wrapping themselves around Devon, completely restraining him.

Flint continued over and over, a smile of glee on his face before he suddenly said, "that's right, you should just die."

He lifted the staff higher than before, pouring as much SE into it as possible causing it to become a lot bigger than before before he let it descend towards Nox's head.

BOOM!

The staff dropped kicking up dust within the barrier, completely covering the two.

Chapter 47: An Undeserved Win

Astra watched the cloud of dust with a frown on her face.

'You just let the kid die,' the voices in her head condemned, 'he was our only chance to finding out what we are.'

She said nothing in reply as her eyes were still completely focused on the dissipating dust cloud.

Her thoughts were simple, maybe if the kid was in enough danger, he could awaken whatever he had previously during the test, but he didn't.

She was as much responsible for his death as the red haired kid was.

Devon watched the platform with widened eyes, still completely restrained, "I—" he wanted to say something but couldn't.

After all, one of the only two friends he had managed to make had just been killed right in front of him.

Devon just buried his forehead to the ground, refusing to look at the aftermath as the dust cleared up.

Ayla, on the other hand, had no change in her expression, there was still curiosity in her eyes as the dust finally cleared up.

The candidates suddenly let out a collective gasp, one of shock as they looked where Flint was standing.

"Hmm?" Flint let out in question as his staff shrunk and he looked back at where Nox was laying, only to see no one there, except a crater with some blood in it.

He turned to the side and noticed a figure standing there. He had head a bit down causing the blood rolling down from his head to pool at the tip of his nose and drop to the floor.

Nox's eyes were completely covered by his hair but that was not what unsettled, what did was the previous useless weapon in his hand now looked like a staff similar to the one in Flint's hand.

But apart from the middle that seemed to be made out of the metallic cylinder Nox previously held.

The other ends of the staff were made of what seemed like solid golden light?

Flint's pupils shrank.

"What...?" he muttered, taking an involuntary step back.

The pressure radiating from Nox wasn't like before. It was neither killing intent nor rage, but it was definitely something that made his instincts scream at him to put distance between himself and the boy he had just tried to crush to death.

Ayla looked at the standing Nox with even more interest. The scent that had previously been coming from him had intensified, so much so that she could clearly get it from all the way here.

There was only one thought flowing through Nox's mind as he stood there, 'I finally get it.'

Back in the simulation, he couldn't actively control his SE because he was forcing it to try and do something, when all he needed to do was guide it towards what he wanted it to.

He finally figured it out and all it took was his head almost being smashed in.

He lifted his head, revealing the blood that had dripped down his face, a normal human would definitely have passed out from losing that much blood and even Nox wanted to, but not before he properly thanked Flint.

Flint swallowed his nervousness, realizing how embarrassing it must've looked when he stepped back like that.

So what if Nox had activated his solar tech, nothing was different. He still believed Nox was only here due to Astra playing favorites and those were the type of people he very much hated.

"So what if you—"

CLANG!

He didn't even get the chance to complete his words when Nox suddenly disappeared and the next second, he was by his side.

Luckily, Flint's reaction was fast enough, allowing him to block the incoming staff, causing both weapons to clash just inches from his head.

He frowned in surprise.

He had reinforced his staff with SE, and he had braced for the hit... yet his knees still bent under the pressure of Nox's blow.

"What the—" he questioned, teeth clenching as he pushed back with all his strength.

Nox suddenly disappeared, causing him to lose his balance and almost fall forward, due to the sudden unexpected change in weight.

Before Flint could regain his footing, Nox vanished again and appeared behind him.

CLANG!

Flint barely spun in time, raising his staff to block the strike that would've definitely crushed his ribs.

Sparks flew between the two weapons as they came in contact.

"What the hell...!?" Flint hissed, his expression darkening even more. "You weren't this fast before!"

But Nox said nothing in response, instead he spun his staff, hoping to shift Flint's weight downward.

Unfortunately, Flint had gotten enough time to regain his bearings and quickly let his SE flow to his boots as he made space between them.

He skidded back across the platform, golden light wrapping around his boots as he steadied himself.

His chest rose and fell rapidly.

The kid he'd been beating into the floor just moments ago was now forcing him to defend with everything he had.

"Fine," Flint muttered, tightening his grip on his staff, "let's see how long you last."

He vanished in a burst of light and the next second, his staff was swinging towards Nox.

CLANG!

The two staffs collided in mid-air, with the impact ringing through the entire room.

Flint twisted changing direction and striking from the side.

Nox blocked his attack again.

CLANG!

And again.

CLANG!

And again.

Flint's aim was to completely overwhelm the visibly less trained Nox, but as they could all see, it wasn't working.

Each hit sent shockwaves through the platform, causing the barrier around them to ripple violently as it spread the impact through itself.

The students watching took several steps back, fearing the barrier might actually break from the force of their clashes.

Flint, still wondering how Nox was keeping up was momentarily distracted and he was almost punished for that mistake.

A golden arc sliced through the air, barely missing Flint's neck by a hair's breadth.

His heart dropped as he had felt the heat from that strike.

"You crazy bastard!" Flint yelled as he jumped back, sweat rolling down his temple.
"You trying to kill me!?"

That was actually the goal, since Nox couldn't thank him properly if Flint's head wasn't also smashed through the floor or in this case, separated from his neck.

Not giving him breathing room, Nox teleported towards Flint, using the same plan he previously had been, clash weapons until one of his strikes lands on his opponent's head

Flint gritted his teeth, completely panicking, "back off!"

He activated his boots again and sped away at the last second, causing Nox's staff to slam into the ground.

BOOM!

A crater was created where Flint had been standing.

Gasps echoed throughout the room.

"What..." Flint whispered, horrified, "what kind of monster are you...?"

No answer came, instead, all he got was Nox who had teleported in front of him again.

With the panic of his opponent getting so close to him, Flint failed to realize that there was a crater behind him, until he stepped into it and lost balance, falling to his ass.

He watched in horror as Nox slowly approach and raised his staff high in the air, "wait," he tried to plead as the opponent was far from listening to him.

He turned towards Ascended Dawn, hoping for her to stop the match, but she just stood there looking without moving a single muscle.

Nox's staff started its descent and Flint raised both hands in the air and close his eyes waiting for the pain.

But it never came.

After a while, he slowly opened his eyes only to see Nox's hands by his side.

The golden ends of his staff slowly died out, leaving only the metallic cylinder part before he dropped it to the floor and fell forward.

Luckily he was a bit far from Flint so he crashed into the floor face first completely knocked out.....well maybe that wasn't so lucky.

Astra then walked towards the platform as the barrier came down, "due to Nox passing out, the hobbit wins."

Flint, still on the floor and heavily breathing due to his fear, looked at Ascended Dawn and then at the passed out Nox.

He had won, but this definitely didn't feel like his win.

Chapter 48: Morphos

"Again?" were the first words that left Nox's mouth the moment his eyes opened and realized he was back in the medbay.

Everything that happened during the training was a blur, but his brain slowly arranged the events for him.

He remembered almost being killed by the red-haired kid and then finally being able to actively control his SE.

He also remembered being determined to thank the kid... by returning the favor of smashing his skull in.

"Yo," Devon's voice came from his left, causing him to turn, "you good?"

He was sitting on a chair beside Nox's bed as he looked at him.

It was hidden, but Nox could see a bit of worry in Devon's eyes, which was a bit strange for someone like him.

But he simply responded, "yeah, but my head's killing me."

"Yeah," Devon nodded, "you got wrecked pretty bad, man."

Nox just chuckled and placed a hand on his head, only to realize that it was still bandaged, though he didn't feel pain from touching it.

Zzzz!

A sound from the other end of his bed caused him to turn again, and this time, he was faced with a sleeping Cass.

He was still in his white uniform and gripped a book on Solar Resonance tightly in his hands.

"Right," Devon let out, "he's also here. Dude refused to leave till you woke up."

Well, that was also the case for him but he wasn't the focus for now.

"Thanks," Nox muttered, a bit embarrassed as he said it.

He definitely wasn't used to people worrying about him, but even he had to admit, this felt nice.

"Man, don't get all mushy on me," Devon said, waving a hand as if physically batting away the gratitude but there was the undeniable blush on his face.

He abruptly stood up and said, "I'mma go get the nurse real quick."

Without waiting for Nox's confirmation, he quickly left, leaving the two behind.

Devon couldn't risk the two finding out that he almost cried when he thought his friend had died right before him.

A moment after he left, someone else suddenly walked in.

"How're you feeling?" The person asked as he stood over Nox's bed, looking directly at him.

Nox frowned, his current situation was also part of her fault, after all, no teacher would allow a spar go that far.

But then again, he couldn't blame her...well, not entirely anyway, during their trip to the city, she had clearly told him that joining the academy was basically becoming a cadet in the military.

This meant that he was supposed to be strong enough to handle anything they decided to throw at him.

But that didn't mean he wasn't pissed. If he hadn't gained control of his SE at the past minute, his head would've been a decoration on the combat room's floor.

"I'm pretty sure you know the answer to that already," Nox replied to Astra, who stood over him.

"Good," she muttered, before a familiar object appeared in her hand and she handed it to him.

Nox took the object before sitting up straight on his bed, it was the cylindrical metal that was seemingly useless during the start of the battle.

"You dropped it," Astra explained.

'That's not how you apologize, idiot," the voices in her head said, but she refused to acknowledge them right now.

"Thanks," Nox muttered as he flipped the solar tech around, he then turned to Astra, fully expecting her to leave, but she didn't.

"That was the first time someone successfully activated that solar tech," she suddenly said, pointing to the weapon in hand.

"Hmm?" He let out, looking looking back down at the Solar tech in his hand.

"It was considered a dud for a long while," she continued, "just a stupidly ambitious dream of its creator."

"Why's that?" Nox asked, a bit confused, since the tech had worked just fine in his hand.

"Because the Creator wanted to create multiple solar tech in just one," Astra explained, "according to him, it was supposed to be the perfect solar tech, one that could become anything the wielder needed."

He had felt it, even now as his SE was still within, the solar tech didn't seem to have one use, all it was asking him was what he wanted it to be.

That was how he created the staff during the spar, he just responded to that question with his SE and the weapon had become exactly what he needed.

"Then why was it considered a dud, if it works?" He asked even more confused, wasn't this the ideal weapon for any solar knight? One that became anything the user needed?

"Well, because it didn't," Astra explained, "after its completion, various Solar Knights tried activating it and their SE always ran out without it doing anything."

That explained why he seemed to have been pouring his SE into an endless abyss with no results.

It wasn't that the weapon was a dud, it was just that it needed an insanely huge amount of SE to be activated.

But still, if they thought it was a dud,

"Then why was it amongst the other solar tech meant for the students to choose?"

"The blind bat's orders," Astra said with a shrug.

"I see," Nox nodded in understanding.

Astra then proceeded to tap her belt and a spherical orb floated from it, "but the blacksmith has long since perfected his craft."

The orb started taking multiple shapes, from rings to spears and they even split into multiple orbs, each taking a different form.

"Instead of trying to make the SE within take different shapes as he did with that," she explained pointing to the Solar tech in Nox's hand, "he used a different approach, this time, morphing the metal instead, as with Aurora here."

Nox nodded, though he hadn't asked for a history class on his solar tech, the information turned out pretty useful, besides, he suspected that this was the closest to an apology he would get from her.

So he silently took what he got.

"You name your solar techs?" He suddenly asked.

"Yes," Astra nodded, "makes it feel less like I'm swinging around a lump of metal,"

"I see," he muttered, looking down at the metal cylinder in his hands.

Nox exhaled slowly. Naming it felt a bit strange, especially now that he had realized they didn't have actual emotions, just his SE

He wasn't exactly sentimental with objects, but if even Astra Dawn, an ascended rank solar knight, named hers, then maybe it wasn't such a weird idea after all.

And considering this thing had literally kept him from becoming floor decoration...

"I should... give it a name too," he whispered.

Astra nodded silently. She watched as Nox thought for a long while about what to call the Solar tech before speaking up,

"Morphos."

Chapter 49: Training Montage

Two weeks quickly flew by.

As it turns out, even first years were expected to enter rifts and thanks to Astra , Nox's batch had to enter theirs in just seven days.

So he had been absorbing as much as he could in such short amount of time, luckily, he was a fast learner...a fact that he was just finding out himself.

With professor Sirius' help, he had learnt as much as possible about rifts, what were the rules in them, the no go zones and the 'get-the-fuck' out of there signs.

Luckily though, most of those signs would not appear in the dungeon they were going to venture, but it still wouldn't hurt to know.

As for his Engineering classes, let's just say Professor Illyra was a bit too enthusiastic to have him and he had ended up standing out, which was far from what he wanted.

Though, he was still known as the insane kid from the test, a rumor that seemed to have spread really fast.

The only silver lining to this was that there were two people in the class he knew, he wouldn't have to be a loner... Not that he would've, even if he wanted to, the professor wouldn't let him.

Illyra had taught him how to properly channel SE through pre-existing conduits in Solar Tech.

Apparently, most Solar Knights relied purely on instinct, forcing energy where it didn't belong and praying the tech responded. Illyra called that 'the dumb brute method.'

A method that sounded extremely familiar to a certain someone.

She had taught them how to select materials for you Solar tech, how to make sure they didn't explode when activated.

Basically how to make solar tech useful, though, most of it was just the basics, since they were first years but at least Nox could now say that he had officially learnt the basics of fixing Solar Tech.

And that was basically how the two weeks went, from general classes to combat to engineering classes.

Speaking of combat classes.

Nox slammed hard into the ground.

Again.

Astra stood over him with her arms crossed, eyes narrowed, expression unimpressed.

"You're thinking too much," she said. "Your body knows what to do, let it move."

"I am trying to let it move," Nox groaned as he got off the floor.

"Try harder."

The goal of this training was simple, Astra's solar tech, Aurora, will come at him in different forms, his goal was to switch the forms of his solar tech fast enough to counter the incoming attack while also trying to get close to her.

And that was exactly what he had been trying to do every evening of the past week, after his classes.

She seemed to have changed her mind about him becoming her lab rat, instead, he was now a training dummy to be tossed around as much as she wanted.

Which was not a better alternative.

Nox picked up his solar, splitting it in the middle and transforming it into two daggers, similar to the ones he used during the test.

"Again," he said as he took a battle stance.

Astra looked at him before commanding her orbs to move towards him.

They split into multiple smaller ones before turning to staff, aiming directly at him with speeds that were definitely unsafe.

But Nox did not panic, instead he gently let the SE flow through him, and moments before the the staffs could touch him, he teleported away.

He reappeared just behind her and before his attack could connect, he suddenly teleported back, just in time to avoid one of the incoming spears.

Astra wasn't going to move from that position and all Nox had to do was leave a cut on her and he wins, something that had proven a challenge.

The moment he rematerialized, one of the staffs slammed into him, knocking the wind out of him and sending him barreling.

Astra had somehow anticipated where he would reappear and took advantage of the fact that he wasn't able to move his SE fast enough yet.

"That's it for today," Astra suddenly said, calling Aurora towards her and the tech merged together again and clipped itself directly on her belt.

"Pay up," Linda extended her hand towards Devon.

"Damn it," Devon muttered before tapping his watch with hers as it let out a ding, "I really thought he had it this time."

The trio had been allowed to stay and watch since they were Nox's friends, with Cass even sometimes being forced to join the hell of a training, since he couldn't fight with a solar tech to save his life.

"And that's 200 credits," Linda said with a small smile as she checked the notifications on her watch.

The had been making bets of Nox being finally able to leave a scratch on Ascended Dawn for the past few days, and each time, Devon lost.

Yes, Nox's growth had been insane but he seemed to have forgotten that the difference between Adept and Ascended wasn't just three ranks.

It was also a difference of skill, knowledge and experience, all of which Astra had overwhelmingly in her favor.

"Yo Cass," Devon muttered, "watchu lookin' at?"

Cassian's attention moved from the elevated platform where the two had been fighting and towards Devon.

"Yes?" He asked.

"Do you think Nox has a chance of ever completing this challenge?" Linda was the one who asked.

Cass turned back to Nox who was now standing and Astra who still maintained her position.

"The next training," he answered.

"He'll complete it by the next training?" Linda asked, confused as to the reason for Cass's thoughts.

"Yes," Cass nodded, "considering how close he was to completing the goal of the training, I'll say tomorrow."

Devon shook his head, a grin tugging at the corner of his mouth, "man, I don't know 'bout that, I'm tired of losing my creds to her."

Linda just chuckled at his words, she knew that he didn't truly believe that Nox would put a cut on an Ascended rank, he was just betting just because...

"Alright then," Linda stood up, "I have to go prepare for the rift next week, see you guys."

Chapter 50: A Dilemma

"Hmm," Nox placed a hand on his chin as he stared intensely. He was completely caught at an impasse as he stared.

He thought there was nothing harder than training with Astra, but he had been proven wrong just a day after.

"Why don't you just go ahead and choose them both?" The person by his side muttered, there was a nervous sweat on her forehead.

She had never seen someone be this indecisive about pastries... It was just about sweets, not a life-altering decision.

She was starting to regret the creation of these delicious delicacies. She wanted to strangle the head chef for coming up with these recipes.

This customer had calmly walked in with his friends and she had made the mistake of recommending pastries to them.

The other two didn't seem that much surprised much affected by them, with the blonde handsome one being the calmest.

Probably because he had tasted them before, but the black haired one, on the other hand seemed to have the complete opposite reaction.

He had refused to leave without taking one of the pastries with him, but now, he couldn't seem to make a decision.

"I can't choose both," Nox muttered, still staring at the trays of pastries, "that would be irresponsible."

"How?" She asked, confused at his logic, she looked at his two friends, who still remained seated, and asked for a bit of help.

But they had no intention to, they enjoyed watching Nox think this hard just because of a couple of pastries.

Devon, especially, seemed to enjoy both Nox's and the waitress's mystery.

"Because then I'll have two desserts."

"...Yes," a voice from behind said, "that is how choosing two works."

The two turned toward the door and found Astra approaching.

"A-Ascended Dawn?" the waitress let out a stutter the moment she recognized who was walking in.

"He'll take both," Astra said as she got close enough, tapping on her watch a few times before raising her head to look at the waiter.

"I-I'll pack them up right away!" the woman said quickly as she immediately scurried off to grab the sweets and bag them up.

"What about stomach ache?" Nox muttered, turning to Astra.

"You regrew an arm," she said, completely deadpan. "I'm sure you can cleanse your insides with your SE. If not, then you'll just have to suffer for a few hours on the toilet."

"Right," he muttered before looking at the duo behind her, they had refused to help with his pastry decision, so he had no intention of sharing.

"What? The kid's capable of getting a perfectly flawless skin after being burnt to crisp, he should be able to handle a little stomach ache," she had started talking to herself again and this time, Nox didn't even look confused or try to question.

He had already gotten used to that particular antic of hers, so he just stood and waited for the pastries to arrive.

Cass and Devon then approached, though neither of them looked the least bit apologetic for refusing to help earlier.

Nox narrowed his eyes at the two of them. "I'm not sharing."

Devon gasped dramatically, "bro, after all we've been through?"

Astra ignored all three of them completely as she walked toward the counter, still having a conversation with the voices in her head under her breath.

The waitress soon returned with a bag in hand as he confirmed Astra's payment, only because she needed to give Ascended Dawn a receipt.

"H-here you go," she said, bowing her head slightly to Astra... then to Nox, who was still the cause of her mental exhaustion.

"Thank you," Nox replied as he took the bags.

"Let's go," Astra ordered before any of them could say another word. She tapped her watch again, "you three still have to pick up supplies."

"Right," Cass and the other two muttered as they walked behind her, and out the cafe, letting the waitress finally let out a sigh of relief.

It would be a long while before she ever recommended their pastries to any other customer, they were too delicious for their own good.

Nox, Devon, Astra and Cass walked out of the cafe with Nox holding the bag of pastries tightly.

"Um, Ascended Dawn?" Cass suddenly hesitantly called out, causing her to turn to him, "w-what type of rift will we be facing in six days?"

Astra seemed to think about it for a while before replying, "you all will be split into groups, and each group will be sent into a different rift."

"The type of rift will be completely random," She added, "but it would be nothing above tier two."

"Well, except something goes wrong again, just as it had in your entrance test," she paused, looking at their reaction before waving her hand, "which I'm sure won't happen."

"I see," Cass nodded, he very much preferred to completely skip this activity and hole himself up in the academy either reading, sleeping or creating solar tech, nothing in-between.

But he had no choice, after all, this activity was not optional. Besides, if he refused to participate, Cass was sure his brother would somehow find out and in turn so would his family.

"So uh... can I get paired up with these two, or we not doin' that?" Devon asked, a bit hopeful that he'd be paired up with people he knew.

"No," Astra simply shook her head, "the pairings will be completely random, and you'll be a group of four with each from a different division."

This was basically an activity that helped them get used to working together even at this stage since they'll be doing that a whole lot.

"What about instructors?" Nox asked as they continued walking forward.

"Hmm?" Astra looked at him with a bit of confusion....until the voices in her head suddenly explained what the kid meant, "ah right."

"You will enter the rifts alone," she answered, "your watches will inform us if you're in danger."

"And you can get there in time?" Nox asked again.

"...." Astra looked at him before turning to the building before them, "We're here."