

The Sun 171

Chapter 171 – New Home

A group of around 20 people stood in front of the tall building that had once belonged to Cycle.

Almost all the employees of Dark Dream had gathered here.

Nick and Wyntor were at the front, and the four Zephyx Extractors, Jenny, Jonathan, Kiara, and Trevor, were behind them.

Behind the Zephyx Extractors were six guards, three of whom had worked for Dark Dream before, with the other three being new hires.

Since their new building was no longer as open as the warehouse, they needed more guards to patrol the individual corridors.

Behind the guards were six clerks and assistants whose job it was to receive guests and deal with all the day-to-day matters, like cleaning and sending messages.

Right now, all of these people looked at the tall building with wonder and excitement.

This was where they were going to work from now on!

Finally, they could get out of that shitty old warehouse!

Now, they felt like they were working for an actual Zephyx Manufacturer.

"Let's go inside," Wyntor said as he gestured for everyone to follow.

Nick nodded and looked with a threatening expression behind him.

At the Dreamer.

Naturally, the Specters had to move into the new building as well.

Luckily, since Dark Dream only had two Specters, they didn't need to put a lot of effort into moving.

The Screaming Coffin was being carried by Jonathan and Trevor, and the Dreamer was standing in the middle of all the Extractors.

The Screaming Coffin didn't care about anything and was simply lazing around, still busy digesting the fat man's corpse, and if the Dreamer decided to escape, it would get shut down by five Extractors.

Usually, moving Specters from one building into another was a huge act that required a long time, but since they only had two, it wasn't a big deal.

Fortunately, the people who sold the Containment Units also offered a moving service.

They would build a Containment Unit identical to the old one in the new building.

Then, the Zephyx Manufacturer would move the Specter from one Containment Unit into the other.

Lastly, the old Containment Unit would be taken away by the sellers.

This service cost around 10% of what the Containment Unit was worth.

This meant that there were already two fitting Containment Units for the Screaming Coffin and the Dreamer in the new building.

A moment later, the group of people walked into the building.

"Mind showing us around?" Wyntor asked as he looked at Kiara and Jonathan. After all, they had worked in this building just days ago.

"Of course!" Jonathan said with a smirk.

By now, Jonathan and Kiara had warmed up to their new colleagues, and Jonathan's confident attitude had returned.

"Hmph," Kiara uttered from the side. "Look at how cocky you sound. Hard to believe that you nearly shat your pants when you saw boss for the first time."

Some of the people chuckled, while Jonathan became red in the face.

"This is the main hall," Jonathan said like he hadn't just been humiliated. "There are several staircases on each side. In case one of them collapses, we can still use the other ones."

"The building has seven floors, and the middle five are for the Containment Units. The first floor is for entertaining guests, and it acts as a safe meeting place."

"The seventh floor was always reserved for the business end of things. The seventh floor has meeting rooms and offices. On top of that, the central controls for the building are also there."

"The Dung Heap is on the-"

"That's enough. Thank you, Jonathan," Wyntor said, interrupting him.

Jonathan realized that he had nearly unveiled the identities of all the Specters in front of the normal employees and became ashamed.

Luckily, everyone knew the Dung Heap already since it had been Cycle's main Specter.

On the side, Kiara smirked in Schadenfreude.

She had never truly been a fan of Jonathan, and after Jonathan had surrendered without even putting up a fight, she hated him even more.

"I'll leave you to look around the building," Wyntor said as he looked at the non-Extractors. "For now, nothing but the Containment Units are off limits since we haven't officially moved in yet. Get familiar with your new workplace for today. Starting tomorrow, you will officially resume working."

The employees nodded and thanked Wyntor.

Then, Wyntor turned to the Extractors. "Let's deal with the Specters," he said before walking towards one of the staircases on the right.

The normal employees understood that they were not supposed to follow Wyntor and the others right now and decided to remain in the main hall for now.

The stairway was pretty wide, with a big open area in the middle.

It was specifically designed like that so that Zephyx Extractors could quickly go from one floor to the other.

For example, Nick could climb onto the fortified railing and jump from the seventh floor to the third floor by jumping through the large empty area in the middle.

Wyntor and Nick walked at the front, and Nick kept looking at the Dreamer.

The Dreamer just looked forward with dead eyes.

Right now, the Dreamer was not restrained at all, even though Dark Dream could have done so.

The reason was to reward the Dreamer for being cooperative.

It was also a little show of trust, even though it essentially wasn't since it wouldn't be able to escape from five Extractors anyway.

Naturally, Dark Dream didn't trust the Dreamer at all.

All of this was just an empty expression to make it more comfortable for the Dreamer so that it didn't try to escape.

Well, obviously, the Dreamer would try to escape, but it wouldn't try with desperation as long as it was somewhat happy.

The group of people climbed all the way to the fifth floor and entered the main hallway again.

The fifth floor looked very different from the first one.

There was one hallway that went from left to right and three hallways that went from forward to backward.

One hallway went through the middle of the floor, and the two others went through the sides.

This essentially split the floor into two parts, and each part had space for two Containment Units.

The employee entrances of the Containment Units were in the middle hallway, and the entrances for the Specters were in the side hallways.

The group of people led the Dreamer down one of the side hallways.

A moment later, one of the walls split open after giving off a loud alarm.

Without being ordered, the Dreamer walked into the Containment Unit.

Then, the Containment Unit closed.

The Dreamer had moved into its new home.

Chapter 172 – Floors

After putting the Dreamer into its new home, the group dumped the Screaming Coffin into its Containment Unit on the second floor.

Wyntor had also told everyone about how he planned on dividing the Specters.

Nearly every floor would be dedicated to a different kind of Specter.

The second floor was dedicated to Possession Specters, and it had the Screaming Coffin and the Dung Heap.

The Dung Heap wasn't really a Possession Specter, but it essentially acted like one.

The Dung Heap was a Physical Specter with an actual body, but it couldn't move very fast, which was why it essentially acted like a Possession Specter.

Wyntor decided to keep the Dung Heap on the second floor with the Screaming Coffin because of that.

Possession Specters very rarely escaped, and the second floor was the closest to the exit, which was why they were on that floor.

The third and fourth floors were for general Physical Specters.

Physical Specters were the most numerous, which was why Wyntor dedicated two floors to them.

Well, he actually dedicated three floors to them, but that would be explained later.

Right now, they only had one normal Physical Specter, which was the Bleeding Lady.

She was residing on the third floor.

The fifth floor was for Specters that fed on mentality.

Wyntor wanted to keep these kinds of Specters separate from all the others because of the normal employees.

Accidents always happened, and it was possible that some of the Specters might gain the ability to influence people beyond their Containment Unit.

Naturally, Zephyx Extractors had a great resistance to these kinds of things, but normal people didn't.

Because of that, Wyntor wanted to keep these kinds of Specters off-limit from all the normal employees.

Only Zephyx Extractors were allowed on the fifth floor.

No clerks or guards were allowed to enter it.

In fact, after today, Wyntor would also include himself in that list.

While Wyntor was a Mid Newbie, he didn't want to get into the bad habit of ignoring his own regulations.

At some point, Dark Dream would have stronger Specters.

Then, Wyntor's mental resistance would barely be better than the resistance of a normal person.

And as the CEO, it would be really bad if a Specter were to control him.

Finally, the sixth floor was for Force Specters.

Dark Dream didn't have any right now.

This was how all the floors were set up.

Naturally, the normal employees would feel nervous when entering any of the floors with Containment Units on them, but they would be especially scared of the fifth floor.

Normal employees didn't know what kind of Specters Dark Dream owned, which was why they didn't know why they were not allowed to enter the fifth floor.

That made the fifth floor extremely scary to them.

What kind of Specter was stored on the fifth floor that they were not even allowed to clean that place?!

But that wasn't the only concerning floor.

The second floor was also concerning, but not for a reason such as danger.

It was just annoyance and disgust.

The Dung Heap's smell couldn't perfectly be contained in its Containment Unit, which meant that its odor permeated throughout the second floor.

The second floor smelled like rotten garbage all the time, and the employees hated going there.

Luckily, it wasn't dangerous.

It was just disgusting.

"I'm going to set up the seventh floor," Wyntor told Nick. "You should get everyone familiar with the new Specters before work tomorrow."

Nick nodded. "What about the new employees?"

"They will come next week," Wyntor said. "I already signed the contract with them and Ghosty's Lab."

Ghosty's Lab had the most Newbies, and surprisingly, they were not against other Manufacturers taking their Newbies.

The reason was the release fee.

Ghosty's Lab hired more Newbies than they actually needed since they knew that other Manufacturers were going to poach them.

The release fee for a Newbie was more than the Newbie brought in within a year.

This was essentially free money for Ghosty's Lab.

Since Dark Dream needed more Extractors, Wyntor had taken out a loan and bought three more Extractors.

The three Extractors were just Early Newbies, but they were already far better than normal people.

They had been tested by Ghosty's Lab.

They had already worked with Specters.

They already had some experience.

And most of all, they had the standard ability that most of the Extractors from Ghosty's Lab had.

The Adult Specter Metalmorphosis.

Metalmorphosis was a floating ball of liquid metal, and it gained power by causing terror and fear.

Extractors that work with it got its ability, which was useful for almost everything.

The ability allowed Extractors to reshape metal into all kinds of shapes.

Weapons, tools, walls, whatever.

While the base ability was not amazing for fighting, it could be mutated in many different ways.

For example, if one of these people evolved this ability with the Dung Heap, they might be able to create a thin wave of metal with poisonous properties.

It would essentially be like a wave of acid.

The three Newbies that Wyntor had bought all had the base ability of the Metalmorphosis.

After hearing that the three new employees would come next week, Nick nodded. "Good. I will teach them about all the Specters when they're here."

Wyntor chuckled. "I would assume so. It's your job, after all."

Nick laughed a bit in embarrassment.

"Anyway, be careful with the new Specters. I heard the Lover and the Bleeding Lady are scarier than the Dreamer," Wyntor said.

Kiara and Jonathan nodded, showing their agreement.

In their opinion, the Bleeding Lady was the scariest Specter, followed by the Lover.

"No worries," Nick said.

"I don't have any," Wyntor answered before he went into the stairway to go to the seventh floor.

After Wyntor left, Nick looked at his four employees.

Kiara and Jonathan were a bit excited, while Trevor and Jenny were a bit worried.

"I would say, let's get the hard part out of the way first," Nick said.

"Wanna start with the Bleeding Lady?"

Chapter 173 – The Bleeding Lady

The five people went to the third floor.

Right now, only the Bleeding Lady was on the third floor.

Kiara led everyone to the Containment Unit containing the Bleeding Lady and showed them how to operate it.

The Containment Unit that Ardum had bought for the Bleeding Lady was even better than the one that currently housed the Dreamer, and it had a couple more functions.

After that, Kiara looked at Jonathan. "You show him."

Jonathan knew what Kiara meant and nodded.

"Boss, I'll bring you to the Bleeding Lady. She's very unstable and gets aggressive very quickly, which is why Stephen and Futuma always told us that we should go into the Containment Unit with at most two people. Any more, and she might become violent."

"Well, more violent than normal."

Nick nodded.

Then, Nick and Jonathan went through the door.

Compared to the warehouse, this building had small rooms between the hallway and the Containment Unit.

After going through the door, Nick found himself in a small locker room with a shower.

"Boss, if you don't want your uniform to get ruined, you have to take it off," Jonathan said as he started to take off his clothes.

Nick raised an eyebrow but did what Jonathan said.

"Keep your underpants on, boss," Jonathan added. "The Bleeding Lady has a very strong reaction to male genitalia."

Nick nodded without saying anything.

"Next, we cleanse our bodies," Jonathan said as he walked into the shower.

A moment later, blue liquid came out of the shower head, and Jonathan left the shower after around ten seconds.

The good thing about Cleansing Liquid was that it didn't stick to someone, which meant that they didn't get wet.

Nick also took a quick shower.

"I presume you're comfortable with blood, boss?" Jonathan asked.

Nick just nodded.

Jonathan nodded back and put his hand on the actual entrance to the Containment Unit.

Then, he sighed. "She's probably quite upset right now. Be prepared to get cut a lot."

"Are the cuts dangerous?" Nick asked.

"Depends," Jonathan answered. "She has two kinds of cuts. She has the good ones and the bad ones."

"The bad ones will actually kill you, but she only uses them when she feels threatened. The good ones will draw blood and are very painful but will close very quickly."

"The good thing about her is that it is very clear when she is about to actually attack you. If it happens, I will warn you."

"For now, please just follow my commands, boss," Jonathan said.

Nick nodded. "Sure. You know her better than me."

"Alright," Jonathan said with a sigh before turning to the door. "Here we go."

Then, he pushed open the door, and the two of them slowly walked in.

The door closed behind them, and Nick found himself in a crimson-red room.

This surprised Nick a bit since Containment Units usually didn't come in that color since it was quite ominous.

The Containment Unit was lit by a reflective light shaft that captured the sunlight from outside and brought it in here.

In the corner of the room, Nick saw a person quietly sitting.

By her looks, she was a young woman, probably about 18 to 20 years old.

She was completely naked, and there were numerous healing cuts all over her body.

Long black hair fell from her head and almost encompassed her body.

"She's the reason for the red color in here," Jonathan whispered to Nick. "She gets agitated when she's somewhere that isn't red."

"She painted the room red with her own blood."

Nick felt his heart rate increase, but he still had control over himself.

His body was ready to jump into a fight any minute.

The Bleeding Lady must have already noticed the two new people in her Containment Unit, but she didn't show any sign of doing anything.

She was just looking at the ground, her face hidden behind her hair.

Jonathan gestured for Nick to slowly follow him and walked forward.

"Hello, long time no see," Jonathan said with a quiet and calming voice.

The Bleeding Lady showed no reaction.

"Do you want to have a bit of blood?" Jonathan asked carefully.

She didn't say anything.

"You can have a bit of blood, but only if you want," Jonathan said carefully as he bent down to be at her eye level.

Then, Jonathan stopped advancing.

There was still about a meter between them.

After some seconds, she lifted her head.

Nick felt a cold shiver run down his back when he saw the bleeding holes where her eyes should be.

For a bit, she just looked at Jonathan.

Then, she slowly turned to look at Nick.

Nick stood a meter behind Jonathan.

"Hello, I'm Nick," Nick said with a calming voice.

Nick looked deeply into the Bleeding Lady's "eyes".

"He's my new boss," Jonathan said. "He's just here to meet you."

After about five seconds of silence, the Bleeding Lady slowly lifted one of her fingers, her long nails extending upward.

"I will kill you," she spoke quietly with a cute voice.

Nick didn't do anything and just watched.

"Yes, you will kill me," Jonathan said with a nervous smile before he extended his right arm.

The Bleeding Lady's long fingernail went to Jonathan's wrist and moved upward.

A deep cut appeared on Jonathan's wrist, and he started to bleed heavily.

Nick watched with worry.

Surprisingly, not even ten seconds later, the blood stopped flowing out, and a deep red crevice was left in Jonathan's wrist.

Jonathan did his best to seem calm, but Nick could tell that he was in severe pain.

"I will kill you," she said again as she moved her long nail over Jonathan's chest.

A huge cut went across Jonathan's torso, but just like the last one, it quickly stopped bleeding.

"I will kill you."

Another cut went across Jonathan's entire arm.

"I will kill you."

A huge one appeared on Jonathan's leg.

About two minutes later, the Bleeding Lady stopped cutting up Jonathan's body.

There were over ten cuts going across his body.

Yet, surprisingly, the first ones were already starting to vanish, and Jonathan didn't seem like he had been weakened by the blood loss in any way.

A moment later, the Bleeding Lady turned to look at Nick and extended one of her nails.

"I will kill you."

Chapter 174 – Blood

Nick looked at the Bleeding Lady.

"Come closer," Jonathan said from the side.

Nick slowly took a couple of steps forward and went on his knees, just like Jonathan.

Then, he extended his left arm.

The Bleeding Lady slowly moved her nail across Nick's wrist.

CRRRK!

Yet, it didn't bleed.

There was a cut there, but it didn't draw any blood.

At that moment, Jonathan started to sweat profusely.

"It's okay. It's okay," he quickly said in a calming tone. "My boss is a bit stronger than me. You can play a bit rougher with him."

"Come, try again," Jonathan said.

Nick noticed that the Bleeding Lady's body was shaking with intensity.

"Move back," Jonathan whispered with a veiled, urgent voice.

Nick slowly stood up and took three steps back.

Jonathan moved his hand behind his back and gestured for Nick to ready his weapon.

Nick understood but didn't move.

He didn't want to act suspicious right now.

But inside, he was ready for a fight.

"You can try again," Jonathan said with a calming voice. "If you use more power, he can also bleed."

"If you want, we can try again."

The Bleeding Lady's nail continued shaking.

Some seconds passed.

Eventually, her nail lowered to the ground, and Jonathan took a deep breath.

A nail from her other hand rose, and she pointed at Nick.

"I will kill you," she said.

Jonathan gestured for Nick to come closer again.

Nick did just that and arrived beside Jonathan.

He held his arm in front of him, and the Bleeding Lady pointed her nail at it.

Nick felt some kind of power gathering on the nail, but he didn't move.

SHING!

A deep cut appeared on Nick's wrist.

Nick took a deep breath.

That hurt like hell!

Nick had come into contact with the Nightmare many times, and he had gone through worse pain, but this cut was still far more painful than a normal one.

It was almost like Nick's nerves were screaming at him with far more intensity than normal.

The next moment, the Bleeding Lady's nail moved away from Nick, and she slowly moved her flat hand to Nick's bleeding arm.

Jonathan slowly put his arm on Nick's shoulders, signaling to him that there was nothing to worry about.

The Bleeding Lady slowly touched the blood coming out of Nick's arm, and the blood magically gathered in her hand, forming a ball.

After ten seconds, Nick stopped bleeding, and the Bleeding Lady held a big ball of blood in her hands.

Surprisingly, Nick didn't feel any pain or weakness.

It was almost like he hadn't been cut just now.

The next moment, the Bleeding Lady moved the ball of blood onto one of her own cuts.

Nick's blood clung to the Bleeding Lady's cuts, making them seem like they were bleeding again.

She did that with all of the cuts across her body, using up the ball of blood.

Then, she put her hands around her legs and stopped moving.

"Alright, it was fun. See you soon," Jonathan said carefully before standing up.

"It was fun," Nick said carefully before he also stood up.

Then, the two of them slowly walked to the exit of the Containment Unit and left.

Jonathan carefully closed the door behind him.

And then, he collapsed onto the ground and started breathing heavily.

Nick looked with surprise at Jonathan. "What's going on?" he asked.

Right now, Jonathan looked like he had been scared for his life, and he only looked forward in shock.

"I've never seen her this mad before!" he shouted.

"She was mad?" Nick asked.

Jonathan rapidly nodded.

"When I saw her after going in, I would have run out immediately if you weren't with me. I'm just a Mid Newbie, for fuck's sake! I can't fight her!"

Nick blinked a couple of times. "She seemed pretty calm to me."

"Are you kidding?!" Jonathan shouted. "She was absolutely furious when we showed up! I thought she was about to jump us at any second!"

"Also, did you see how many cuts she made?! It took that many cuts to calm her down! I've never been cut this much!"

Nick raised an eyebrow. "What's the normal number of cuts?"

"Like one across the wrist, like you tried to kill yourself, and maybe one more somewhere else. After that, she's content," Jonathan said. "That bitch cut up almost my entire fucking torso! Do you have any idea how hard it was not to cry out in pain?!"

"What if you cry out in pain?" Nick asked.

"Never do that!" Jonathan shouted with urgency. "That will only entice her to continue! Her cutting you is like an addiction. She has to do it from time to time, or she won't calm down."

"But if you scream in pain, it will be like your drug of choice suddenly becoming far stronger, and she needs more. If you remain calm and quiet, she will quickly stop, but if you become loud, she will keep going until you stop crying."

"One way or another," Jonathan added before looking away.

Nick looked at Jonathan.

"You know, you actually did exemplary work just now," Nick said.

Jonathan looked at Nick.

"I can see how terrified you are," Nick said. "But while we were in there, you acted calmly and rationally. In front of a Specter that's more powerful than you, you managed to remain focused and even calmed her down."

"You did very well," Nick said with a smile.

Jonathan looked forward for a bit before smiling.

Then, he started to smirk arrogantly. "Of course! That's to be expected!" he said with confidence.

Nick just nodded with his own smile.

"Anyway," Jonathan said as he stood up. "That's one session of work. She gets one session a day, and based on how much blood she drew during the session, a certain amount of Zephyx will be produced."

"Usually, she produces about 15 grams of Zephyx a day, but today, we might have even made 50."

"But don't expect things to continue like this. It will most likely be back to 15 grams a day starting tomorrow."

"You just go in, talk to her, slowly approach her, let her cut you a bit, and leave. It takes less than ten minutes per day and nets you something like 15 grams of Zephyx."

"The work is painful and scary, but it doesn't take a lot of time and gives a lot of Zephyx."

"That's about everything you need to know about her," Jonathan said.

Nick nodded.

"Thanks. You were a great help."

Chapter 175 – The Lover

Nick and Jonathan cleaned themselves and put their uniforms back on before they came out.

The others were already waiting for them.

"How bad was it?" Kiara asked.

"Bad," Jonathan said. "She was really cranky, but she's calmed down now."

"What's the Bleeding Lady like?" Jenny asked, looking at Nick.

"Well, there are a lot of things you have to look out for," Nick said. "Working with her is a bit more dangerous and complicated than working with the Dreamer."

"Compared to the Dreamer, she also seems much more unstable, which makes it difficult to assure our safety."

"I want you and Trevor to get familiar with the Bleeding Lady over the next two days. I think it is important that every Extractor knows how to work with every Specter in case someone can't come to work."

"But most likely, due to the danger, I am going to be working with her regularly," Nick said.

The others were a bit surprised.

Nick was going to take care of the Bleeding Lady?

Naturally, Nick needed to work with at least one Specter so that his level could increase, but they had thought that he would take care of some other Specters.

Although, it also made sense.

The Bleeding Lady was a Physical Specter with an ability that could be used in battle, making her very dangerous.

Even more, the Bleeding Lady was already a Late Hatchling.

If she actually decided to attack an Extractor, they might die.

Nick would have the greatest chance of survival since they would be fighting in a small room, and he was extremely dangerous in close proximity to his target.

He didn't say it, but Nick actually had another reason for working with the Bleeding Lady.

The time required.

The Bleeding Lady gave about as much Zephyx as the Dreamer, and when she inevitably advanced a level, she would give even more.

As the Chief Zephyx Extractor, Nick had many things to do, and the less time he was busy working with Specters, the better.

When Jonathan and Kiara heard that Nick would take care of the Bleeding Lady, they released sighs of relief.

They really didn't want to work with her.

First of all, she was insanely dangerous.

Second, working with her was painful.

"Let's check up on the Lover next."

Kiara and Jonathan didn't seem comfortable when they heard that.

Nick noticed and raised an eyebrow. "I guess it's not a lot of fun to work with it?"

Jonathan and Kiara looked at each other.

"I'll tell you when we're there," Kiara said before she walked to the staircase.

Nick, Jenny, and Trevor felt intrigued and followed after her.

When everyone reached the fifth floor, they stopped in front of a door.

Kiara took a deep breath and readied herself to explain the Lover.

Yet, she only became red in the face.

"You do it!" she ordered Jonathan.

"Me again?" Jonathan asked with annoyance.

Kiara just glared at him.

In the end, Jonathan could only sigh.

"The Lover is a worm with tentacles and is about as big as a chicken," Jonathan said.

Nick, Trevor, and Jenny were a bit surprised.

They had expected that something that was called the Lover would have a more human appearance.

"The Lover gains power by perverting and changing someone's sexual desires," Jonathan said awkwardly.

At that point, the three Extractors who didn't know the Lover started to feel uncomfortable.

"In order to work with it, you need to allow it to... well... you know..." Jonathan said awkwardly, moving his hands around.

"Please explain," Nick said. "I want you to be clear."

Jonathan scratched the back of his head in discomfort.

"You kinda have to let it... have its way with you, if you know what I mean," Jonathan said awkwardly.

Jenny immediately became disgusted.

Trevor looked uncomfortable.

Nick furrowed his brows.

"Please be more specific," Nick said.

Jonathan really seemed uncomfortable.

"Well, first, you take your pants off," he slowly explained. "Then, you sit down. It will slowly come closer to you and go for your... thing... and also your butthole."

The three of them became more disgusted and uncomfortable by the minute.

"It starts to do its thing, and while it is happening, you will feel surprisingly... good..."

"While that is happening, it will release a lot of gas that makes you see hallucinations."

"The hallucinations will be of... uncomfortable things."

"Corpses, blood, feces, urine, violence, tragedy, and many different things."

"Yet, even though you really don't like these things, the Lover somehow manages to make you feel really, really good."

"Stephen and Ardum talked with several doctors about this, and while it hasn't happened yet, the doctors said that repeated exposure can make it so that your mind associates these things with pleasure."

"So, in the long run, your... preferences... might get changed into something completely different."

Jonathan scratched the back of his head.

"And after you... you know... finish... it will leave you alone, and you can leave again."

Silence.

Nick, Jenny, and Trevor were really uncomfortable.

They were supposed to let some worm thing jerk them off while it was showing them images of decapitated bodies and stuff?

Nick could deal with the nightmares and the cuts, but he wouldn't want to force any of his employees to work with the Lover.

"How often does it have to be worked with?" Nick asked.

"Theoretically, you can work with it about ten times a day, which will produce a lot of Zephyx."

"But that also seems to encourage it and increases the pleasure it gives the Extractor, making the perversion even stronger."

"We worked with it once a day, which seemed to be a good rate."

"Compared to the Bleeding Lady and the Dreamer, the Lover is only an Early Hatchling, and it only produces about five grams of Zephyx per session, but that should increase when it becomes stronger."

Nick frowned.

He really didn't want to, but as the Chief Zephyx Extractor, he had to know how to work with every Specter of Dark Dream.

So, Nick took a deep breath.

"I'll check it out."

And walked in.

Chapter 176 – Not a Problem

Nick walked out of the Containment Unit into the small locker room.

His four employees were waiting outside the locker room.

Right now, Nick was alone.

As soon as Nick entered the locker room, he sat down near a wall and looked at the ground.

The mix of emotions he was currently feeling was intense.

Physically, he felt amazing, but that was exactly what made him feel terrible mentally.

It felt disgusting to have such strong feelings for something this horrible.

While the Lover had been doing its thing, Nick had seen visions of a group of men cutting holes into a limbless torso and fucking them.

The vision drew Nick in, and he almost felt like he had been one of the men.

He had been so incredibly disgusted.

But it had felt so good.

It was horrible.

Working with the Lover was absolutely horrible.

Of all the Specters that Dark Dream owned, Nick wanted to work with the Lover the least.

As Nick sat on the ground, he only looked forward with a lifeless expression.

He felt like shit.

After a while, Nick started to think about how to deal with the Lover.

He couldn't possibly force any of his employees to work with it.

It was just that bad.

However, hiring normal people would also be impossible.

First of all, normal humans didn't have the mental fortitude to resist something like the Lover, and most likely, after just working with it once, the normal person would find their sexual desires irrevocably and permanently changed.

Even more, the normal people would then know about the Lover, making it easier for other Extractors and Manufacturers to plan something.

Additionally, Nick would feel horrible about the damage the normal people would receive.

Just for a couple of grams of Zephyx, a life would be destroyed.

One had to remember that this was different from feeding the Screaming Coffin corpses.

After all, they purchased the corpses from the city, and the corpses weren't created because Dark Dream asked for them.

These were simply the corpses of people who died of whatever.

Dark Dream buying corpses did not result in new corpses being produced.

But with the Lover, it would be different.

Dark Dream would actively ruin the lives of many people.

Extractors had the mental fortitude to resist the Lover, but they would need breaks.

Working with it every day was bad.

'I can't make anyone work with it,' Nick thought. 'I just can't.'

After a bit more thinking, Nick released a sigh and left the locker room.

When he left, everyone was looking at him with worry and interest.

Nick took a deep breath.

"It's bad," he said.

Trevor and Jenny looked with discomfort and fear at Nick.

"You don't have to work with it," Nick told the two of them, which surprised them.

"It's so bad that I can't ask any of you to make this sacrifice. I wouldn't be able to live with myself," Nick said with a sigh.

"If you are desperate for money and really want to take care of it, you may do so, but I will never ask any of you to go in there."

"It only produces five grams of Zephyx per day. I would rather not have those instead of asking you to go through something like this."

Kiara and Jonathan were quite surprised.

Back in Cycle, Stephen had said that working with the Lover was a necessary evil and a part of the job.

But now, Nick was saying that it wasn't necessary.

Jenny and Trevor looked with concern at Nick, but they also seemed relieved.

What they had heard about the Lover seemed terrifying.

"The Lover is actually not a problem," Kiara said.

Jonathan raised an eyebrow as he looked at Kiara.

It seemed like he hadn't expected her to come forward.

"What do you mean?" Nick asked.

"Well," Kiara slowly said before she took a deep breath.

"I was specifically hired to work with the Lover back then."

Trevor, Jenny, and Nick looked with surprise and shock at Kiara.

"During my job interview, Stephen asked me many personal questions. Back then, I was quite angry, but I needed the job, which was why I answered."

"Then, he told me what would happen to me if I accepted the job."

Kiara looked to the side.

"I wanted to make something of myself, which was why I accepted."

"I've been working with the Lover almost every day for about two months."

The other four looked with sympathy at Kiara.

"You don't have to do this," Nick said. "I felt firsthand what something like this can do to you."

Kiara shook her head. "It doesn't matter anymore."

"It's too late anyway," she said with a quiet and uncomfortable voice.

The others realized what Kiara meant, and they felt horrible for her.

"I'm already used to it," Kiara said. "The bad part is already there. By now, it's just switching from one bad part to another."

Kiara took a deep breath.

"But the good thing is that my job is essentially secure. I'm the only one that can work with it, which gives me a unique position. So, it's not all bad," she said with a more positive voice.

Silence.

"But do you want to work with it?" Nick asked with furrowed brows.

"What's the alternative?" Kiara asked with a shrug.

"Not working with it," Nick said.

"That's not a choice," she said.

"Yes, it is," Nick said.

"No, it isn't," Kiara answered. "With the three new recruits coming, we will be seven Extractors, excluding you. The Screaming Coffin, the Dung Heap, and the Bleeding Lady barely need any work, leaving only the Dreamer and the Lover for us."

"If I don't work with the Lover, nobody will. Then what? Am I supposed to fight over the Dreamer with six other Extractors?"

"I would rather work with the Lover," she said with annoyance.

Nick looked with concern at Kiara, who refused to look at Nick.

In the end, Nick released a sigh.

"If that is truly what you want, you are free to do so."

"But if you need a break or anything similar, you have to tell me, okay?" he urged.

Kiara furrowed her brows but still didn't look at Nick.

"Sure."

Chapter 177 – First Day

Nick wasn't happy with it, but Kiara had solved the problem with the Lover.

He just didn't know how to feel about it.

Working with the Lover was horrible and would permanently change people into something that they would probably perceive to be disgusting.

And yet, Kiara was willing to work with it.

Additionally, it wasn't difficult to tell that Kiara didn't feel great about that.

But her explanation also made sense.

She was in a unique position to work with the Lover, which made her special and important to Dark Dream.

Sadly, there was no way to change the current dynamic without literally forcing Kiara not to work with the Lover, which was also not something that Nick wanted to do.

"That only leaves the Dung Heap," Nick said.

Jonathan nodded. "That one isn't troublesome. It's just disgusting."

"Show us," Nick said.

Everyone walked towards the second floor, and they could already smell the Dung Heap when they arrived.

The entire floor smelled like a garbage dump on a midsummer day.

Luckily, all of the present people could deal with that smell.

Jonathan and Kiara could deal with it since they had been around the Dung Heap for a long time already, and the other three came from the Dregs.

The pungent smell of the sewers blanketed the Dregs, and the other three had spent years in the Dregs.

The Dung Heap only smelled slightly worse.

"Oh, by the way, do we have food?" Jonathan asked.

"The delivery of the food for the Dung Heap hasn't been set up yet," Nick said.

"That might be bad," Jonathan said. "Just like the Bleeding Lady, the Dung Heap needs to be worked with regularly. If it doesn't get its food, it starts getting aggressive."

"The Containment Unit is strong enough to keep it contained, but anyone that enters would get attacked."

Nick nodded in understanding.

It was important to remember that the Dung Heap wasn't truly a Possession Specter.

If it wanted, it could probably attack someone.

It might not be the most powerful Specter on its level, but it could probably still overwhelm a Newbie since it was already an Adolescent.

"Maybe it's better we wait until the food delivery has been set up then," Nick said.

"That's probably for the better," Jonathan answered.

The others agreed as well.

"Then, let me set up the schedule for who is going to work with what," Nick said.

The others nodded.

"Kiara, you're going to work with the Lover daily. I will leave the frequency of how much you work with it up to you, but it has to be once a day," Nick said as he looked at Kiara.

"Yes, boss," she answered.

"The Dreamer is being worked with by Jenny, Trevor, and Jonathan. The order in which you work will be left to you, but I want three shifts of eight hours per day."

"Sure thing, boss," Jenny said with a smile.

"I will be delivering the food to the Dung Heap, the corpses to the Screaming Coffing, and I will also be working with the Bleeding Lady."

"From now on, I might only occasionally be in the building since I also have to set up a team of Investigators and search for more Specters myself."

"If there are any urgent matters and I'm not here, you can tell Wyntor, but try not to disturb him with matters that can wait until the next day."

The others nodded again.

"Then, that should be everything for today. Starting tomorrow, that's how we are going to proceed," Nick said.

After a bit more talking, the group split apart, and Nick went to Wyntor to talk about some matters regarding Dark Dream.

Wyntor told Nick that the food thing had actually already been set up, but the deliveries would only start the next day.

Nick told him about how he had set up his employees' shifts, and Wyntor nodded.

But then, he added something.

"Nick, I think you got this," Wyntor said. "You don't need to tell me about the shifts of the Extractors anymore. You have shown that you can manage them."

"I trust your skills."

"Just write it down somewhere and give me the schedule in case I am in need of an Extractor. With more people and more Specters, I also can't keep these things in my head anymore."

Nick smiled when he heard that and nodded.

"Of course."

Some minutes later, Nick left Wyntor's new office and looked through the building again, getting more familiar with it.

Eventually, it was time to leave and train with Reynold.

The next day, Nick went into Dark Dream's new building and saw one of Dark Dream's clerks at the front desk.

The receptionist greeted Nick politely and wished him a good morning.

Nick talked with her for a bit before he checked up on the people and the Specters.

First, Nick went to the second floor.

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

As soon as Nick arrived, he heard the sound of something heavy hitting one of the walls.

It came from the Dung Heap's Containment Unit.

'Guess it really wants some food,' Nick thought. 'The delivery will come at nine a.m. There shouldn't be an issue.'

Then, Nick checked up on the Screaming Coffin.

'Still digesting the fat man,' Nick thought as he looked at the unmoving Specter.

Nick went out of the Containment Unit and accessed the Zephyx storage of the Screaming Coffin.

He took the Zephyx container with him and put in a new one.

Then, Nick checked on the Dung Heap's Zephyx container.

'Nothing, as expected.'

After that, Nick went to the third floor and checked the Bleeding Lady's Zephyx container.

'65 grams!' Nick thought with surprise. 'All that cutting yesterday was worth it!'

Nick also took that Zephyx container and entered the fifth floor.

The Lover's Containment Unit had six grams of Zephyx, which was what Nick produced yesterday.

Nick also checked if someone was in the Containment Unit, which he could easily do by looking at a sign at the entrance.

'She's not here yet.'

Then, Nick went to the Dreamer's Containment Unit.

The sign said that someone was working with it, which was to be expected.

Nick didn't know who was working with it, but it also didn't really matter.

'About 12 grams of Zephyx,' Nick thought.

Nick changed the containers of that Containment Unit as well and went to the top floor.

There, Nick put the containers in a special location that only he and Wyntor had access to.

After that, Nick wrote down how much Zephyx each Specter had produced and put the sheet of paper in Wyntor's office.

Lastly, Nick went to the third floor and worked with the Bleeding Lady.

There were no issues.

For the next couple of hours, Nick thought about how to create and manage a team of Inspectors.

And finally, the food delivery arrived for the Dung Heap.

Chapter 178 – The Dung Heap

"Sir, the food delivery is here," the cute girl from the front desk said after entering Nick's office.

Naturally, as the Chief Zephyx Extractor, Nick had his own office on the top floor.

"I'll come," Nick said after standing up from his chair.

The two of them walked down the stairs and entered the first floor.

On the first floor, Nick saw a guy dressed in a sharp suit.

'He doesn't look like a food delivery man,' Nick thought.

"Hello, nice to meet you," the guy said, offering his hand to Nick. "My name is Braun, and I have a delivery of a bit more than 240 kilos of food waste."

Nick nodded and shook Braun's hand. "Nice to meet you. I'm Nick, the Chief Zephyx Extractor. No offense, but you don't look like someone who delivers food."

Braun laughed. "I completely understand," he said. "That's because I am the middleman. I gather all the food waste from many different food providers and sell it."

'So, he's a merchant,' Nick thought. 'That's more in line with how he dresses.'

A bit later, Braun led Nick outside and showed him a cart.

Two men were standing in front of the cart, and compared to Braun, they looked dirty and muscular.

On the cart, Nick saw a steaming and stinking pile of garbage.

Eggshells, rotten eggs, bones, insects, rancid meat, rancid cheese.

Yet, there were no maggots crawling in the pile, which meant that it was fresh garbage.

Nick nodded after looking at the pile.

"Thank you. Can I use the cart to transport it?" he asked.

"You can keep the cart," Braun said. "When I come with the next delivery tomorrow, you can give me the cart from today."

Nick nodded. "Sounds great. Thank you."

"Of course," Braun said.

After a bit more talking, Braun handed Nick a sheet of paper with all the food waste and the amount written on it.

Nick read through it and signed.

Then, Braun quickly said his goodbyes and left.

Nick didn't need to pay him since Wyntor had a contractual agreement with Braun.

Braun would simply take the sheet of paper and get his money from Dark Dream's bank account.

Nick pulled the stinking pile of garbage into Dark Dream and walked to the stairs.

That was when he realized that he had an issue.

How would he get 240 kilos of waste up the stairs?

Nick could lift that, but the cart was so big and cumbersome, making it difficult.

Eventually, Nick managed to get the cart onto the staircase and closed the door behind him.

His ability activated.

Then, Nick easily lifted it over his head and ran up the stairs.

He put it down on the second floor and opened the door.

'Well, that works,' Nick thought.

BANG!

BANG!

The walls of the Dung Heap's Containment Unit were still shaking.

Nick walked into the locker room in front of the Dung Heap's Containment Unit and readied himself.

Slowly, Nick opened the employee door.

WHOOOM! WHOOOM! WHOOOM!

Immediately, the alarm rang.

While the Containment Unit could isolate Specters from going through the opened employee entrance, it used up Zephyx to do that, which was the reason for the alarm.

Nick watched through a blue forcefield as the Dung Heap tried to get through the opened employee entrance.

The Dung Heap completely covered the ground of the five-by-five-meter Containment Unit, and it was nearly two meters high at its peak.

And it looked strange.

It looked like a rancid and decaying pile of garbage, but Nick couldn't even identify a single specific piece of garbage.

It was like looking at a mass of people and not being able to point out a single face.

Right now, the Dung Heap was swaying back and forth like a viscous liquid.

With each sway, it gathered strength and rammed the force field of the opened employee door.

Surprisingly, even though Nick was looking at the Dung Heap, his ability was still active.

Apparently, the Dung Heap couldn't see or hear.

Nick quickly grabbed some handfuls of garbage and chucked them into the Containment Unit.

BANG!

The garbage ball exploded on the other side of the Containment Unit and fell onto the Dung Heap.

"Stop complaining! I got your food right here!" Nick shouted before throwing in another handful of "food".

RUUUUUUUH!

At that point, a low rumbling noise came from the Dung Heap, and it started to shake a bit.

It slowly stopped moving, and the alarm of the Containment Unit stopped.

Nick chucked a couple more balls of garbage into the Containment Unit before he grabbed the cart and lifted it.

Earlier, the Dung Heap had essentially blocked the majority of the employee entrance, and if Nick had dumped the entire cart there, the Dung Heap would have tried even more to get out since the garbage would have been just past the barrier.

The next moment, Nick pulled the cart back before shoving it forward.

SPLASH!

A huge pile of garbage fell from the cart.

RUUUUUUU!

The pile shook again while releasing its deep vibrating sound.

'I guess it's happy,' Nick thought.

Next, the surface of the Dung Heap started to move, and the pile of garbage was spread across the entire Containment Unit.

'It seemed to have calmed down,' Nick thought.

Then, Nick lifted the cart and walked into the Containment Unit.

As his feet stepped onto the Dung Heap, he felt like he was walking on a humongous and fat person.

There was a lot of give, but he didn't really sink.

The Dung Heap was one entity.

It just looked like a huge pile of trash.

When he was inside the Containment Unit, Nick dumped the cart onto the Dung Heap.

Naturally, after Nick had stepped onto the Dung Heap, his ability deactivated, but the cart had become much lighter by that point.

In just a couple of seconds, Nick emptied the cart and walked out again.

The Dung Heap released a couple more deep murmurs while moving the trash around.

After exiting, Nick closed the door and put the cart at one end of the locker room.

Then, he released a sigh.

'It seems easy enough to manage,' Nick thought. 'It hadn't been fed for several days, which made it problematic, but I think it won't be an issue starting from tomorrow.'

Chapter 179 – Six Months Later

Nick stood in front of a door on the third floor of Dark Dream and sighed.

He was not looking forward to this.

Nick's big, muscular hand pushed open the door to the locker room, and he entered.

It had been six months since Dark Dream had moved to this building, and Nick had just recently become 17 years old.

Over the last couple of months, not a lot had happened.

Nick had taught his three new colleagues and focused on day-to-day matters.

One of the matters had been the establishment of an Investigator team and the search for the next Specter.

The Investigation team had been fully formed about four months ago, and the profits of Dark Dream shrank a lot in consequence.

Dark Dream hired over 20 Investigators, and these 20 Investigators focused mostly on the Dregs.

Paying so many highly skilled people was not cheap.

But it had been worth it.

The Investigators had found the trace of a Specter, and the people of Dark Dream had captured it.

Surprisingly, capturing the Specter had been rather easy due to its nature, but it had still been incredibly painful.

Mainly for Nick.

And now, it was time for Nick to find out how to work with the Specter.

He already had a good idea about how to work with it, but he still needed to confirm it and check how much Zephyx it produced.

The good thing was that the Specter was already a Peak Hatchling since its identity had been a secret for a long time.

Many people knew and had met the Specter, but none had suspected that it actually was one.

The Investigators had only noticed that something might be wrong when they didn't know what to look for and just randomly started to combine information and clues.

One of these clues had been the abundance of feelings of weakness and sickness in the Dregs.

Naturally, due to the Dregs' dirty and unclean environment, getting sick wasn't anything unusual, and the blood tax made sure that nearly no one didn't feel weak.

Because of that, nobody had thought about cross-referencing the sick and weak people.

Nevertheless, the Investigators did that.

After a lot of information gathering, they found something.

While the sickness was evenly spread across the Dregs, the weak people mostly concentrated around one block of houses.

For several days, the Investigators kept a watch over the block of houses and kept interviewing people.

Yet, it was impossible to find the Specter.

And then, the Investigators who were stationed there started to feel weak.

At that point, the Investigators were certain that they were onto a Specter.

That was when Nick also got involved and looked for the Specter as well.

But nobody could find the Specter.

And then, Nick started to feel extremely weak.

But bizarrely enough, the Investigators regained their strength.

On top of that, the normal people also regained their strength.

And finally, they found out what had been going on.

Animals were common in the Dregs.

Rats, wild dogs, cats, raccoons, plenty of insects, and so on.

And this particular group of houses had one of these as a pet.

It was a dirty but cute puppy.

It didn't belong to anyone in particular and was just being taken care of by the community.

When the Investigators arrived, they also played with the puppy from time to time.

And when Nick appeared, the puppy immediately took a liking to him and begged him to hug it.

Nick did so and basically carried the puppy around while he was there.

When Nick finally got sick, many people realized that it was the puppy.

After all, it had been with Nick for several days by then.

Nick had quickly taken the puppy away with him after contacting the other Extractors.

Yet, when the puppy noticed that several strong people were surrounding it, its behavior changed.

It started to whine pitifully.

At that point, Nick immediately felt like chunks of his insides were being torn out.

The group put a Zephyx Suppressor on the puppy, but it still managed to hurt people through the Zephyx Suppressor, albeit with less intensity.

After dumping the puppy into the Containment Unit, Nick went home to recover.

It was bad.

Real bad.

Nick felt like his heart was beating without a rhythm, and he kept going in and out of consciousness.

He kept sweating bullets while feeling extremely cold and hot.

Even more, Nick had puked blood a couple of times.

It took almost two entire days for Nick to recover.

Of course, Nick wanted to go to the hospital, but he couldn't risk unveiling the nature of their newest Specter.

He was quite sure that he would survive due to his high level of regeneration.

And he did.

But now, it was time to work with the puppy.

Fittingly, Nick decided to call the Specter the Puppy.

'I'm pretty sure the Puppy gains power by converting the vitality of people into Zephyx, which is quite different from getting injured or exerting myself.'

'It is much more difficult to repair this kind of damage, and it is much more chaotic since the damage is all over my body.'

'I am also not sure whether or not there is a manipulative factor since nobody seems to be able to resist the Puppy's charm. Everyone there wanted to hug it and hold it.'

'Although, it could also just be that it is very cute.'

'But even if there is a manipulation aspect to the Puppy, I want to make sure and leave it here. If any of the employees start asking me or the other Extractors about the new Specter, I know for sure.'

Next, Nick thought about how to go about finding out how to work with the Puppy.

Should he just stay by its side or provoke the crying?

He didn't know, and it was his job to find out.

That was what a Chief Zephyx Extractor was supposed to do.

Nick took a deep breath and entered the Containment Unit.

Chapter 180 – The Puppy

After opening the door, Nick looked at the other end of the Containment Unit with an uncertain expression.

In one of the corners of the room was a perfectly white and fluffy little dog.

Funnily enough, the dog had been pretty dirty all the time while it had been in the Dregs, but as soon as it arrived here, all the dirt vanished.

'Most likely a camouflaging ability,' Nick thought as he took another deep breath.

The Puppy was lying on the ground and whimpering silently.

The sound made Nick feel like his heart was being torn apart.

The poor thing.

Was it in pain?

However, Nick kept his mind under control and kept telling himself that this was a Specter.

The Puppy might be fluffy, white, cute, adorable...

He had to stay in control.

Nick wanted to do nothing but walk over to hug and comfort it.

He just wanted to tell it that everything was going to be okay.

But Nick kept himself in check.

The Puppy slowly turned its big and wet eyes to look at Nick.

Nick took yet another deep breath and remained stationary.

The Puppy whimpered a bit and slowly started to walk closer.

Then, it stumbled over its feet and fell over with an adorable little yelp.

But it quickly stood up again and moved towards Nick while its tail was wagging slowly and carefully.

There was hope, begging, and loneliness in its eyes.

Nick took another deep breath.

'For now, I should see how much Zephyx it produces the normal way,' Nick thought.

As soon as Nick thought about spending time with the Puppy, he started to feel excited and giddy.

Yet, he kept telling himself that this was a Specter and that he had to be careful.

Nick kneeled down and slowly extended his hand.

The Puppy came closer and sniffed it.

Finally, it rubbed its head on Nick's hand in happiness.

Nick felt like his heart was melting.

It was just so adorable!

Nick slowly picked it up and held it in his arms.

Then, Nick walked to one of the walls, sat down, and combed the Puppy's fur with his fingers.

The Puppy gave off some sounds of happiness and closed its eyes in pleasure.

Nick felt calm inside.

It was so difficult for him to feel calm in his life.

The entire finality and pointlessness of his future still weighed heavily on Nick, and whenever he had a quiet moment, his mind automatically went back to thinking about these things.

There generally was no such thing as calm for Nick.

Either he was doing something, or he was worrying about something.

But here, with the Puppy, Nick felt calm.

He felt content.

It was so nice to be with it.

At that moment, the door opened, and Nick looked over with surprise.

"Boss?" Jenny asked after she opened the door.

"Yes?" Nick asked.

"You asked me to get you after eight hours," she said.

"Yes, I did," Nick said, still petting the Puppy.

Silence.

"Eight hours are over," she said.

Nick's eyes widened in shock.

What?

Hadn't he just sat down?

"Are you serious?" Nick asked.

"Yes, boss, I'm serious," she said with an urgent voice. "It's been eight hours."

Nick took a deep breath and looked at the Puppy.

The Puppy looked at Jenny with curiosity and happiness.

"I gotta go," Nick told the Puppy before he slowly put it to the ground.

The Puppy begged for Nick to stay with its whimpers.

Nick felt terrible for leaving the Puppy alone, but he knew that it was just a Specter.

After some promises to come back, Nick left the Containment Unit, and Jenny closed the door behind him.

When Nick was in the locker room, he took a deep breath.

And that was when he felt his insides shake.

Nick was all too familiar with this feeling.

He had felt this feeling many times while he had been living in the Dregs.

It was the feeling of not having eaten anything for a long time.

It was a feeling of weakness and loss of control as his limbs started to shake.

On top of that, Nick felt a headache coming on.

Luckily, it wasn't nearly as strong as when the Puppy had whimpered.

"Boss? Everything okay?" Jenny asked.

"It's fine," Nick said. "I just feel weak. It's the effect of the Specter."

"If anyone on your team works with it, another person MUST force them to leave. While I was in there, it felt like only ten minutes had passed."

"You have to instruct your people and make absolutely certain that they don't spend more than the allotted time with it," Nick urged.

"I will tell them, Boss," Jenny said.

About four months ago, Nick had made Jenny the team leader of the one and only team of Zephyx Extractors.

Nick wanted to make Trevor the team leader, but Wyntor said that Trevor had to be on the down-low since he would one day become their spy and underground agent.

A team leader was too conspicuous.

Because of that, Nick made Jenny the team leader.

And she had done an excellent job until now.

Her team liked her, and there had been no incidents.

"Let's check how much Zephyx we produced," Nick said as he walked out of the locker room with uncertain steps.

Jenny followed Nick.

After retrieving the container, Nick raised an eyebrow.

"About nine grams," he said. "Not bad. I think we got a good one this time."

"That's quite a lot," Jenny said.

Nick nodded. "I want to test something. Larry is still a Mid Newbie, right?"

Jenny nodded.

"I want him to work eight hours with the Puppy tomorrow. I will instruct him on what to do."

"I suspect that the amount of Zephyx produced is not dependent on the Puppy's level but on the Extractor's level. I want someone on a lower level than me to work with it. Of course, I will stay beside him for the entire duration," Nick said.

Jenny nodded. "I will tell him to go to your office tomorrow."

The next day, Larry worked with the Puppy for eight hours, and just as expected, it only produced about four grams of Zephyx.

The day after that, Nick tested how much the whimpering Puppy produced.

The result was abysmal.

After getting quite injured, Nick didn't even find a single gram of Zephyx in the container.

Some days of experimenting later, Nick finalized the method of working with the Puppy.

The Extractor just had to spend a couple of hours petting it.

The maximum amount of time was set to six hours. Otherwise, the Extractor wouldn't recover by the next work day.

Additionally, only Peak Newbies were allowed to work with the Puppy.

Lastly, the next person scheduled to work with it had to force the person inside to leave punctually at all costs. If they refused, the team leader or Chief Zephyx Extractor had to be informed immediately.

This was the first time that Nick had figured out how to work with a Specter truly on his own without any help.

And it worked.

By now, Nick had become fully used to being the Chief Zephyx Extractor of Dark Dream.

And Dark Dream was making a shitload of credits.