

Descent 1001

Chapter 1001 Units

Leonel asked the question that had been on the tip of his tongue for the longest time instantly, not holding back at all.

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, yes.]

"How does it clone creatures?"

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, the creature clones by...]

"Stop, stop." Leonel shook his head.

The dictionary had begun going on a long rant about the biological process that the tentacle womb underwent. Clearly, Leonel's question wasn't specific enough.

"Let's try... What do I need to give this tentacle womb in order to clone... Little Blackstar?"

Leonel didn't really have intentions of cloning Little Blackstar because he felt it would be a bit weird. But, after hearing the response, he realized that it was naïve of him to an extreme to even believe he could.

[*Ping*]

[...]

[1 283 490 985 Units]

At first Leonel was confused. But, after several probing questions he came to understand the a 'Unit' in this context was the equivalent of one complete Beast Crystal. That meant that for this tentacle womb to clone Little Blackstar as it was presently constructed, it would need over a billion 'Units' of Little Blackstar.

Leonel soon came to understand that this was because of the Void Beast blood that Little Blackstar had ingested. But, even if this blood was ignored, according to the dictionary, it would still take 1 983 Units to clone Little Blackstar.

Leonel could only be left speechless by this.

For one, the value of Void Beast Blood had suddenly become very obvious to him. There was actually such a large gap between the value of Little Blackstar alone, even as a Shadow Sovereign, and just a vial of its Blood... Not even its Beast Crystal!

And secondly, he realized that just a beast as talented as Little Blackstar required almost 2000 Units alone.

"Hold on..." Leonel suddenly realized that he had forgot something important. "What's the amount of energy the tentacle womb would need to produce one Little Blackstar?"

Leonel almost didn't want to hear the answer, but when he did, he felt his body go numb. He had thought that the needs of the Silver Tablet were already ridiculous, but this tentacle womb made it look like child's play. Even if Leonel killed all the oceanic creatures Earth had to offer the amount wouldn't be enough.

Leonel shook his head. He hadn't considered one other thing as well.

This was all theoretical. Just because the dictionary calculated that the tentacle womb would need this amount, that didn't mean that the tentacle womb would survive swallowing such an amount. In fact, Leonel's next question confirmed this perfectly.

'So that's how it is. As of right now, the womb's limit is producing Fifth Dimensional creatures it needs to consume 13 Units to reproduce. If I tried to make it clone a creature worth 14 Units, it wouldn't be able to ingest it properly and would even end up hurting itself.

'It's no wonder the creatures it cloned were so small and weak comparatively speaking, that's its limit. The Swordfish was worth about 3 or 4 Units at most.

'The question becomes, then, how do you find creatures close enough in identity to count as Units of one another...'

This was the next problem Leonel ran into. These so-called 'Units' implied that you needed to swallow creatures that were nearly identical in species and ability. But, how was such a thing possible to find? Even among those sharing the same species, their abilities could vary wildly.

Even if this tentacle womb could handle cloning Blackstar and Leonel was willing to do it, the current Leonel only had one 'Unit' of Little Blackstar and didn't even know where else he would find another Shadow Sovereign Mink. How the hell would he even start this journey? It made no sense.

But, clearly, there was something he was missing, or else how had the tentacle womb created so many swordfish? Was there really a school of identical swordfish out there? What was he missing exactly...?

At that moment, Leonel's gaze suddenly sharpened as he thought of something.

After a series of pointed questions and inquiries, he landed on the response he wanted and his eyes glowed with understanding. The conclusion? Though this tentacle womb had a limit of 13 Units, the truth was that it could mostly only produce creatures worth between 3 to 5 Units.

The reason for this was simple.

Rather than absorbing multiple Units of the same creature, something that would be impossible, the tentacle womb instead swallowed up powerful creatures and then segmented their abilities into smaller Units to create these weaker level creatures.

So, say for example the tentacle womb swallowed up a creature worth 10 Units. It was impossible that it would find nine more exact types of this creature with the same genetic code and ability. So, instead of doing this, it would parse this creature into smaller parts.

Because the original creature was innately worth more to begin with, its smaller parts were able to cover all the Units these weaker creatures would need to be produced to begin with!

To put this in the simplest terms possible, the swordfish that Leonel had fought earlier likely came from a more powerful King Swordfish. Unable to reproduce this King Swordfish, the tentacle womb instead divided the King Swordfish up so that it would be worth multiple Units of the weaker creature it eventually came to represent.

'I understand... So, if this tentacle womb were to, hypothetically, absorb Little Blackstar, the creatures it would produce would be several weaker versions of Little Blackstar instead...'

Leonel's gaze glowed brighter and brighter as he thought of this, his thoughts spinning as one idea after another popped into his head. He thought of everything from using the blue whale dwarfing crocodile's corpse to create an army of living water guns all the way up to just what kind of monster this tentacle womb would be if he one day strengthened it enough that even giving birth to Void Beasts was no longer impossible.

Leonel understood now just how important this tentacle womb would have been to Simeon. If it was paired with the latter's genetic modification ability... It would be like giving wings to a tiger.

'I guess that favor can really be considered to be repaid...'

Leonel took a deep breath and didn't get ahead of himself. Just the birth of a single creature took a ridiculous amount of energy. Why else would the tentacle womb pair up with this golden scaled koi fish...?

That said... Wasn't that fish still right here?

Leonel's gaze shifted toward the frozen koi fish, still looking as beautiful as ever. He even almost fell into another trance.

"Dictionary, how many Units would cloning this guy take?"

Leonel was curious. Was Little Blackstar or this little guy better?

Chapter 1002 Energy Purification

[*Ping*]

[...]

[30 923 Units]

Leonel's eyes opened wide in shock. This little fish was 30 times more 'valuable' than Little Blackstar? At least the Little Blackstar before he ingested the Void Beast blood...

Leonel appeared around the halo of the golden scaled koi fish, his mind running in overdrive.

This fish was very unique. Even now, Leonel could feel the wild surges of Force that was coming from the ball of light that hung out from its mouth. However, to him, this was just the tip of the iceberg.

This koi fish had actually been able to disrupt Leonel's mind for a moment, there was no doubt about that. For Leonel, who was very much used to being nearly infallible when it came to matters of his mind, this was both a scary and intriguing truth.

The reality of the matter was that the boundaries of Leonel's mind had had Fifth Dimensional protection ever since he was in the Third Dimension. In fact, back when Leonel was in the Third Dimension, he had even been able to ignore the mental coercion of a Fourth Dimensional Variant Invalid! But, now that he, himself, was in the Fifth Dimension and was also beginning to meet opponents at that level, those protections would slowly become less and less impressive.

Unless Leonel took steps to create mental protections for himself, he would only become more vulnerable as time went on. So, in a lot of ways, he had to thank this koi fish for revealing this weakness to him. On the other hand, he was curious.

This koi fish seemed to have the ability to gather up Force. Its affinity for Force was so great that it could even overrule a Force's natural tendency to bend it to its will.

The question, though, was what did this have to do with the mental coercion Leonel had experienced?

'It's not that large of a logical leap. With all the types of Forces that this koi fish can control, who's to say that there isn't one particularly good at mental coercion? I can't use my Dream Force to force people into illusions, but there are those with different abilities to my own that do rely on Dream Force to do exactly that. It's possible, then, that this koi fish made use of this branch of Dream Force to place me in a trance... But that only makes it more embarrassing that I actually almost fell for it...'

Leonel shook his head.

Every time he felt he had a grasp on the Dimensional Verse, he would get blindsided with something new. For a person like him who liked to be prepared for every possible variable, it was a bit frustrating. In the past, he used to blame his recklessness for this, but he had weeded much of that out of his system long ago. After all, he had so many Dream Counters in place to deal with things, that was evidence of his caution.

The main issue, though, was that it felt almost inevitable that there'd come a day where his Dream Counters wouldn't have an appropriate countermeasure. By then, it would be too late to regret.

Leonel sighed. He knew that worrying about this was useless, just like his fear of missing out was also useless. Simply put, he didn't know what he didn't know. But, for Leonel who liked to be in control of things and build a logical structure to his life, he found this particularly hard to accept.

Leonel reached a hand forward and scooped at the water the golden scaled koi fish lay in. Thanks to Vice basically freezing everything, he just had to manipulate his own spatial Force to form barriers. The result was a sphere of hovering water holding a frozen fish.

The golden scaled koi fish regained the ability to move thanks to Leonel's barrier blocking it from Vice's ability, but there was nowhere it could go. It continuously rammed against the barriers, but it quickly became obvious that it was just harming itself.

"Calm down, I'm not going to eat you." Leonel chuckled before immediately frowning.

This koi fish had really caused too many problems. Who knew how many had died because of its actions? Under normal circumstances, Leonel would be pissed off about it. And yet, he had actually chuckled and laughed.

The charisma of this koi fish was really too much. Leonel felt like he almost forgave it entirely.

'This must be some sort of evolutionary protective mechanism. It's pseudo symbiotic relationship with the tentacle womb isn't natural so it had to survive in other ways before it formed this co-dependency. Its ability to be likeable is probably what protected it...

'Thirty times... Thirty times...'

Leonel really couldn't wrap his head around it. The only explanation was that this koi fish's ability was beyond what Little Blackstar could match.

But, the reality was that Leonel felt this koi fish was no better than his Segmented Cube. Couldn't his Segmented Cube also gather up energy? In fact, not only could it gather it up, but it could even form Crystals and Pure Crystals out of this Force, making it far more valuable than this koi fish.

Unable to figure it out, Leonel chose to cover all of his bases.

"What is the ability of this koi fish?"

[*Ping*]

[Energy Purification]

'Wait...'

Leonel's Dreamscape sparked, something within his mind churning.

A flood of questions came from his mouth, each more pointed than the last as he zeroed in on the answers he wanted. As he spoke, a plan of action continuously formed in his mind and his gaze grew brighter. By the end of it all, he looked toward the koi fish as though it was a priceless treasure, his heart thumping madly.

Leonel carefully placed the golden scaled koi fish into the large lake of Cleansing Waters and sent the tentacle womb to be slowly healed back to its peak condition.

Then, he picked up Vice and Candle before shooting off into the distance, his intent blazing.

Chapter 1003 Connecting the Ocean and the Sky

The Royal Blue Basin was a complete mess. Many of the cruisers were nothing more than scraps of metal, the lives and deaths of several were either unknown or never had a chance at the former, while those who survived were beaten and bloodied, finding it difficult even to breathe properly.

This wave was far worse than the previous ones and even now was still raging on. There had been a slight moment of reprieve when the koi fish released its dense ball of energy. But, after Vice appeared and that world was cut off from the Invalids, they had once again charged back toward the coast and the raining waters.

The only good news was that the heavy and dense clouds above were beginning to slowly disperse and the rain was weakening. Like this, they could be certain that this was the last wave. They just had to survive this... Just this...

...

"... I'd rather be running suicides."

Gil felt like his legs might fall off at any moment. He was supposed to be a Speedster proud of his speed. But, quite frankly, he wanted nothing to do with anything related to running any longer. All he could do was squeeze out currents of lightning in hopes of stopping these colossal creatures from assaulting the coast anymore.

By now, the military units had finally taken action. Large ballistae were firing and several cruisers had been sacrificed for the sake of battering ram maneuvers. However, it somehow felt that the road ahead was endless.

That said, there was good news too. They could finally claim the Force from the Invalids they were killing. The only unfortunate part was that while this helped with morale, it didn't do much for their stamina.

Invalids released a unique energy that strengthened a person, but this strengthening happened toward one's bottlenecks and progression, not necessarily toward one's immediate state. Even a breakthrough wouldn't bring their bodies back to tiptop shape as though nothing had happened. Unless, of course, they were breaking through a major Dimensional barrier.

There was another reason this rose morale, though. The eight brothers were certain that this change had something to do with Leonel. Not just the rain dispersing, but this control they regained over Invalids was definitely a sign that he had succeeded.

"Cap needs to hurry back, I'm dying over here." Raj groaned, sending another powerful fist forward.

The heavy metallic sand he controlled was only getting heavier by the minute. But this point, he couldn't even kill these creatures with a single blow any longer, he could only tear into their bodies and hope to rip them from the inside out.

"Some left tackle you are," Franco chided. "You're supposed to be protecting Cap's blindside, not the other way around."

"I protected him for ten years already, dammit. It's my turn to get protected. You think that just because I'm so big and muscular that I don't deserve love?"

Several gazes fell onto Raj at that moment, scanning him up and down.

It could be said that that only redeeming quality about Raj was his smooth brown skin. It was clear that it was soft and well taken care of. They all knew that Raj had an obsession with lotion. However, that was where it all stopped.

Raj was almost two meters tall but he seemed just as wide. His torso was so big that his long legs seemed small by comparison. And, his fat was so layered that it caused his clothing to fold in several layers along with it.

Muscular? Why was it that they couldn't tell this?

"You all need to stop ogling my immaculate physique. I'm a person, not an object for you to drool over. Have some common decency."

At that moment, the fluttering laughter of several beauties drifted over. Joyce, Aulina and the others couldn't stand Raj's jokes anymore. But, it was about the only thing that kept their heads straight amidst all the fatigue that was weighing down on their shoulders.

"Shit. It's another one." Joel's voice cut through the noise and roaring waves.

In the distance, a billowing pillar of water seemed to connect the ocean's surface and the skies above. The pressure was so fierce and the sound so loud that Joel's voice was quickly drowned out by it all before heavy, pelting drops of water began to rain down.

It was yet another enormous whale. They had been appearing one after another and were easily the most dangerous of the creatures yet.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The water rained down like bullets, growing harder and harder with each passing moment. In the distance, a soldier who didn't get out of the way in time was hit head on, his skull being driven into the deck of his cruiser. By the time the water dispersed and his face was revealed, a large dent was left in his head as his eyes stared vacantly into space... Dead.

"Milan!" Joel roared.

"Already on it."

Milan clapped his hands together, the last dregs of his Force being dragged up as he roared with everything he had.

His energy shield exploded in size growing from two meters to hundreds of meters in the blink of an eye. Veins popped up across Milan's forehead, blood seeping between his teeth as he tried to force his energy shield to grow in size.

However, as it grew, it also became thinner, causing the heavy droplets of water to crash through, shattering some sections into pieces.

Milan continued to hold on, his blood silently falling into the ocean beneath him. His own energy shield began to fuse with that of others with similar abilities, large sections of defensive formations glowing blinding lights as they lifted into the sky.

Right then, though, the worst case scenario occurred.

A second pillar of water connected the ocean to the skies. But, this one came from a completely different location than the first.

A second whale had appeared. And just behind it, there came a third.

Chapter 1004 Boiling Point

A heaviness took over the atmosphere, even more dark and pregnant than it had already been before. Just a single volley of this heavy rain had already taken so many lives, it was impossible to imagine a scenario where they could truly survive such an onslaught.

These whales came from the truest depths of the ocean. Their skin was so pale and sickly that it was impossible to conclude that they had ever seen even a drop of sunlight in their lives. But, this was also what gave them impossibly strong bodies.

Not only were their walls of tough, rubbery skin and thick blubber nearly impossible to penetrate, but their bones were used to the high pressure of the ocean's deep waters. On top of this, their bodies were also suited to dealing with rapid changes in this pressure and had adapted such that they could use this to their advantage. The scariest truth that came from this was the fact that their abilities had nothing to do with the water pillars that came from their blowholes and was rather just a release of this obscene pressure their bodies were prepared to adapt to.

This was the true fearsome nature of the Dimensional Verse. These whales had yet to even display their true lethality and were only taking a breath... And yet, this singular breath had already cost the lives of hundreds.

Right that very moment, a third water pillar shot into the air as the third whale also took its breath.

An apocalyptic disaster fell from the skies. Water droplets as large as half a human's body fell, keeping their shape and form beneath the globules of snot that came from the whale's blowhole. Despite the grotesque image, each held a lethal capability of a small grenade, pelting holes even into the tough exterior of the remaining cruise ships.

"We can't continue to be passive." Joel immediately took command.

It was one thing when they believed there had only been a single whale, but now that there were three they couldn't continue to sit back and drain Milan of whatever small amount of stamina he had left. If they didn't charge forward and end this quickly, there was no telling if these whales would take action again.

From experience, Joel knew that Invalids lacked intelligence but living oceanic beasts were no less crafty than humans were. Most of the Invalids had already been dealt with and it was clear at a glance that these three whales were normal beasts. If not for this, they wouldn't have been patient enough to both evade Leonel's detection and only attack at this crucial time. They had even staggered their appearances so they would be truly caught off guard.

Without Leonel here, it was a given that Joel would take the helm. Not a single one of them raised a word of protest.

"Arnold, how much do you have left in the tank?"

"However much is needed." Arnold replied plainly, neither his voice nor his expression having shifted a single iota since the very beginning.

"Milan, Drake. You two will be tasked with Raj and Allan's safety. Raj, you and Allan will need to synergize for this. Just follow everything Allan says and it'll be fine."

Clearly, Joel and Allan had a tacit understanding about something which didn't need to be said aloud. Without even communicating, Allan had already sprung into action, his ability kicking into high gear as he gave Raj command after command.

Even though Raj was a jokester, he knew how to follow instructions and he most definitely knew when he needed to be serious.

"Gil and Franco. You two will support the Moon people."

When Joel said this, his gaze turned over to meet Karolus' eyes.

"Can you do it?"

Seeing the confidence in Joel's gaze, Karolus was taken aback a bit. As far as he was concerned, he felt that Leonel was the leader of this group. What he hadn't expected was for them to suddenly pull it together in the face of danger as though Leonel wasn't needed at all.

But, this was exactly what the truth was. Leonel wasn't needed. These eight had been surviving in the Dimensional Verse without Leonel by their side for years already. They weren't the same as these Moon youths waiting for Karolus' action.

"I can take one." Karolus nodded.

Joel's gaze flashed. "Good. Then we'll take the other two."

Joel didn't wait for a response as he dashed forward, cutting a path across the water. To his side, Arnold followed, sticking to him like glue.

To the two of them, nothing had changed. Joel was the captain of the defense, the head hunter at the linebacker position. As for Arnold, he was the anchor of the defensive line, the defensive tackle. It was his stability that allowed Joel to run wild.

When they came together, the world would feel their power.

The scene of two youth men streaking through the no man's land between the three whales and what remained of their coastal defenses was imprinted onto the minds of all that were there. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they came to accept that there was still a chance to survive.

At that moment, the center whale opened its mouth, rows of brownish yellow bristles appearing. They looked absolutely harmless at first before they all turned rigid at once, lighting on fire in unison.

In a sight that was one for the ages, the bristles separated from the whale's mouth, shooting out like arrows that rose the temperature of the surrounding oceans by dozens of degrees.

Under the astonished gazes of those watching on, and much to their horror, Joel and Arnold were swallowed by this follow of flaming bristles, a huge billow fog of steam rising from the air as the waters reached a boiling point.

At that moment, as the steam rose into the skies above, the slowly dispersing clouds suddenly regained their life, growing more and more powerful. The light drizzle of rain seemed to recover, a heavy precipitation weighing on all their souls once more.

Chapter 1005 Ready?

"Not good." Karolus' pupils constricted.

He had thought that they would charge together, but Joel and Arnold had actually gone ahead on their own. But that wasn't even the main problem.

Even if the two managed to come out unscathed the battlefield had completely changed with the billowing steam. Let alone the fact they would need to protect themselves from the boiling steam, but their vision would also be obstructed, making it more difficult to coordinate their movements.

Within the Third Dimension, hot steam from freshly boiled water could already cause severe burns. Fire hot enough to boil Fifth Dimensional waters were even more exaggerated. It was like Joel and Arnold were under a perpetual deadly assault from all sides.

"Dammit. Stay here." Karolus made a decision, about to dash forward.

"Don't go."

Franco and Gil stopped Karolus. The two were practically mortal enemies usually, however at the moment, they had a tacit understanding. Joel had told them to help Karolus and the other Moon people, but there was a clear hidden meaning behind his words which was quite simple...

Don't let them mess anything up.

At that moment, two shadows suddenly surged out from the fog. No, it wasn't that they had surged out of it, the steam had grown far too tall and covered a space far too wide for that. Instead, they had dispersed the steam around them, their Force billowing like a raging torrent.

Arnold took the helm, Universal Force the likes of which made the very ocean surface itself tremble for several kilometers rising out from him.

Images of a trembling asteroid belt rotating about a golden moon hung high above his head, illuminating the endless fog in his image.

His large palms shook, the energy around them growing in size to the point it dwarfed the head of the whale beneath his. His expression went from indifferent to ferocious. It was the kind of look that had always been hidden beneath his football helmet on the field but was now displayed prominently for all to see.

It struck fear in their hearts. It made blood run cold. It made the wind itself turn still, hanging in the air as though purposely waiting for Arnold's next action just so that it could escape.

BANG!

Right then, the palm descended, deforming the head of the blue whale into the form of a hand and five fingers. The sound alone was loud that it drowned out the thunderous booms of the clouds above and the devastation was so potent that the left and right whales were sent sprawling just by the ocean waves alone.

However, Arnold himself wasn't satisfied with his strike. He could tell that the whale's skull hadn't given way beneath his power. In fact, though its head had deformed, much of that was just its thick skin and fat being displaced irregularly.

That said, Arnold's strike wasn't useless. It stopped the fire bristle whale from being able to send out another strike immediately. Not only had it been sent several hundred meters into the water below, but whale's had brains as well. It most definitely wasn't immune to being disoriented and concussed. That left just enough time for Joel to prepare his own strike.

Like clockwork, Joel appeared by Arnold's side, both of them riding atop the massive wave the latter's attack had caused.

Joel's dark skin danced with light as he concentrated strength within his halberd. Space trembled and cracked as his forearm flexed, keeping a tight control.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and smiled in Arnold's direction.

"Just like old times, huh buddy?"

Arnold expression, having returned to an eerie calm. But, his words came out smoothly.

"I pin them down."

Joel's smile turned to a grin. "And I'll take their heads."

It was at exactly that moment that the fire bristle whale rebounded out of the ocean, the waters surging forward to quickly fill in the empty space. halberd descended in a devastating arc, aiming for the thinnest and most vulnerable location within the injury Arnold had caused it. As far as Joel was concerned... This whale was nothing more than tenderized meat.

SHUUUU!

A blinding light of blade qi drew and line through the sky, piercing through the whale's skin and through its skull. An ear tearing roar shook the skies filled with a mournful plea, but it was already too late.

Gasping for breath, Joel fell back to the ocean's surface as the wave they stood upon faltered. He was completely spent. Even before this attack, he had already been running on nearly empty but now it was far worse. His lungs felt like he was breathing in the very steam fog that had threatened to char him to ash just moments earlier.

Arnold caught Joel by the arm, helping him to stabilize himself as they retreated.

As the coarse and foul blood of the fire bristle whale began to pool in the dark waters, the two young men suddenly found themselves having their auras locked onto by two extraordinarily enraged whales.

What they hadn't been aware originally was that these three whales were actually brothers. And, unlike many beasts of the Third Dimension, these Fifth Dimension beasts actually had concepts of kinship and comradery.

Arnold's own Force reserves had long since run on empty, he could only use what Universal Force had had left to fuel himself. But, he was quickly running out the Focus he needed to sustain it.

As for Joel, he was only able to remain upright with Arnold's support. It was clear that taking out a single whale had already been their upper limit. The two could only run with everything they had left, rushing to get away from the two enormous whales that were out to seek revenge.

However... neither had an ounce of panic on their faces. As for why, that much was obvious. They had six other brothers.

In the distance, Allan gave Raj a final command as his magnetic ability began to take action, his Force surging in large, rolling waves. Even as he worked, his gaze was locked onto the two in the distance.

Around Allan and Raj, Drake continuously fired at the large droplets of water falling the skies, bursting the mucous membranes and rendering their lethality useless.

"Ready?"

"Ready!"

Under Allan and Raj's prowess, a crude rail gun rose up from ocean's surface, its menacing tip aiming for the whale closest to the running pair.

Chapter 1006 Sound Wave

Beads of sweat fell down Raj's brows. He had to put in his everything just to get this thing finished in time and he still wasn't even sure of what it did. However, if it could be said that that Joel was the best leader they had after Leonel, then it could also be said that Allan had the greatest mind after him as well. In fact, before Leonel awakened to his ability, it was Allan who was ranked first over both him and Aina in Class A.

The rail gun was pieced together with Raj's metallic sand and squeezed until it formed a crystalline structure stronger than anything diamond could match up against. Its barrel had a top half and a bottom half separated by a gap just perfect to fit in a ballista Allan had long since slotted in.

From a certain angle, it almost looked like the maw of a dragon, Force pulsing about the tip of its barrel as Allan poured everything he had into it.

"Drake!"

Drake didn't need to be told twice. As the Pure Marksman of the group, he had already known exactly who would be tasked with shooting this shot.

"This is everything I've got." Allan said solemnly.

"Leave it to me." Drake's gaze glowed, a confidence that exuded from his bones pervading his surroundings.

The Metamorphosis had descended long before Drake got the chance to do so, but it had to be remembered that Drake was the heir apparent chosen to replace Leonel after he graduated by Coach Owen himself. He might have been a rookie four years ago, but now he had grown into his own man and had the broad back to prove it.

He grabbed onto the railgun's two anchor points, his gaze locking onto the distance. He could see Joel and Arnold running for their life, the fatigue painted on their faces being as clear as day. It looked as though they just might collapse at any time, their stamina running out before they could do anything.

However, Drake's gaze could also see the look in their eyes. Over the several kilometers that separated them, their gazes met. That look of confidence was one that he would never forget.

'Such a big, slow-moving target...' Drake grinned. '... As if I could miss.'

BANG!

The sound of the railgun firing resounded like a cacophonous boom, but it was quickly drowned out by a whistle so loud it felt as though it could be heard around the world. The recoil was devastating, the ocean waves around them being no less violent than when Arnold palmed the fire bristle whale into the ocean.

Drake could feel his arms fracturing even beneath Raj's control. The latter had done everything he could do to mitigate the recoil, but even then, both of Drake's arms became useless in the end.

However, Drake didn't even seem to notice, his gaze focused on the projectile that was currently splitting the ocean in two.

It was so fast that it seemed to teleport. A single blink would cause it to vanish across hundreds of meters. In fact, it had already appeared by the second whale by the time the first wave of pain was registered by Drake's mind.

The whale's tough exterior was like a wet piece of paper. It didn't even seem to register what had happened to it until it swam forward half a kilometer more, bearing down on the Joel-Arnold pair with every intention of swallowing them whole.

As expected, for the intelligent whale's to try to obstruct their vision with steam, one of them had to have an auxiliary ability capable of helping them to maneuver such an environment. Joel and Arnold just happened to be lucky enough that the whale that recovered the quickest to rush after them was exactly this whale, leaving it with no other option of attack.

It was then that a second mournful cry in just as many minutes resounded. This one, though, was particularly somber as though it was well aware it was leaving its last brother alone. And... Maybe that was why it was instantly followed by a roar the likes of which shook the battlefield.

The sound wave of the roar alone sent wave after wave of dark waters spreading outward. Cruisers that got caught in the mess were upended and flipped. Even Joel and Arnold who were in the process of running away was hit by a wall of this sound, their bones threatening to fracture beneath the pressure as they were sent flying.

"Joel! Arnold!"

Gil's gaze flashed. He took a deep breath, his chest expanding as he dug deep.

With a bang, he shot forward. Arcs of lightning followed his steps as he sliced through the sound wave. It felt almost like he was trying to run in water, his limbs pushing as hard as they could for less than half the usual result. But, he knew that he was the only one who could get to those two in time.

Joel and Arnold had already expended what Force they had left. Being so close to that sound wave, they had definitely taken the brunt of the pressure. With Force to protect them and under such a fatigued state, they had already lost consciousness. If no one went after them, they'd be finished.

Karolus' gaze flashed. Space fractured around him as he anchored himself. The moment he did this, it was as though he was standing in a world different from everyone else and the sound wall vanished.

He rushed after Gil. At this point, it was a free for all. If he didn't take action now, when would he?

The devastation the shook the coast only seemed to be getting worse with every passing moment. However, it was then that the final whale stopped roaring, its bloodred gaze rising from the ocean and bearing down on everyone before it as though the world itself was its enemy.

At that moment, a pressure crushed down from above, compressing the water and forcing many to pour more Force toward their feet so that they could stay afloat.

The whale raised its tail, bloody murder marring its gaze.

Chapter 1007 Halt

The sudden shift in the gravity caught many completely off guard. Those that were unable to react in time found themselves forced beneath the ocean's surface, struggling to swim back up to no avail.

Panic took hold of the coastal defenses once again. This kind of cruel use of a gravitational ability was far more devastating on the open waters than it ever could be on land. The horrible sight of numerous valiant soldiers being drowned one after another was a sight that shook those that managed to stay above water to their cores.

Fourth Dimensional existences could hold their breaths for far longer than most Third Dimensional existences could, but this didn't mean they could do so indefinitely. The gravity whale had suddenly placed a timer on all their lives, a cruel light pervading its gaze.

"Dammit!"

Gil roared, his steps having slowed considerably. He poured everything he had into his forward momentum, but he was still a step too late.

Joel and Arnold crashed into the waters. They already hadn't had any Force remaining, how could they possibly scrounge up enough to resist the pull of the waters?

"Joel! Arnold!"

Gil's gaze turned bloodshot. He hadn't made it in time. The worst part was that he knew if he dove into the waters after them now, there was no way that whale would allow him to resurface. Fighting against such gravity in the water felt almost impossible.

"Fuck!" Franco's gaze was just as red as Gil's. In fact, the same went for all of them. Those two were their brothers, how could they not react this way?

Franco swept his gaze through the Moon people before he landed on Aulina. He knew that of them all, Aulina most definitely had the best chance at saving them, only she could manipulate these waters even if it would be more difficult beneath the gravity field.

Franco didn't waste any time and grabbed Aulina's waist, hoisting her over his shoulder and shooting forward.

"Hey!"

Franco knew what he was doing was wrong. He had no right to force someone else to risk their life for his own brother but he couldn't just sit by and do nothing. He was the only one who felt like he hadn't contributed anything.

Of all of Leonel's brothers, Franco's ability was the least flashy. All he had was the strength of his body, but he had worked it to the bone. If he couldn't blast through this curtain of gravity, then what good was his strength to begin with?

"I'm sorry." Franco said as he shot ahead. "But I can promise you that if one of us is going to die, it will be me. If the both of us are going to die, it will be me first."

Aulina, who had been caught off guard by Franco's actions and couldn't muster up the strength to fight back against his power—obviously not expecting one of their own to suddenly scoop her up like this—stopped resisting when she heard this.

The words resonated with her heart.

"Don't worry about me." Aulina called out to her teammates, letting Franco carry her instead the distance.

"If anything happens to her—!" Joyce couldn't push through the curtain of gravity as easily as Franco could. Without anyone to turn her rage on, she turned a red gaze toward Milan and the others. But, what she found there was shocking to an extreme.

All of them who remained... Milan, Drake, Allan, Raj... Each and every one of them lowered their heads in the direction of the Moon people. Even without saying a word, their sincerest apologies were as crystal clear as a blue sky.

Despite not seeing their gazes, Joyce, who had been stunned into silence, could imagine them. She could sense a resolve that came even without them saying a single thing.

Though Franco's words hadn't managed to reach her ears as they had been for Aulina and Aulina alone, Joyce could tell that these four who remained had the resolve to take their own lives should anything happen to her.

Whatever rage Aulina had had deflated like a leaking balloon. She couldn't find it within herself to be pissed off any longer.

...

Franco's muscles pumped and pulsed. His somewhat fair skin was filled with blotches of bruised fibers as he pushed his body to its limits, but he didn't seem to notice in the slightest.

From over two kilometers away, he crossed the distance, cutting it in half then cutting it by another half.

Gil, who had already noticed Franco's approach rushed back as fast as he could. But, despite the fact that the gravity curtain became weaker the further he went, that didn't change the fact it was there.

In the time it took Franco to cross almost two kilometers, Gil had cross just a hundred meters. But, it was still enough for them to meet.

Franco's face was covered in sweat, his cheeks even becoming somewhat hallow. All the nutrients in his body seemed to have gone to his limbs, pushing him forward one stride at a time.

Without a single word, Gil clasped a hand to Franco's shoulder, pouring Speedster Lightning Force into him. Franco tossed Gil over his other shoulder and shot forward again, his speed more than doubling what it had been before. However, the strain on his muscles only grew worse.

His muscle fibers tore, his bones threatened to fracture and his knees grinded against one another, thinning his cartilage one layer at a time.

"Aulina!" Franco gasped out.

He entered the general area of where Joel and Arnold had been forced beneath the water.

"I've sensed them already! I got it!" Aulina replied, not trying to move from Franco's shoulder. She was under no illusions that she could survive beneath this gravity curtain without Franco's support. "I got them! I got them!"

In the distance, the looming gaze of the gravity whale hung like two crimson orbs. After it had activated its ability, it seemed to have lost the ability to move, its rising tail having long since come to a halt.

Chapter 1008 Fuck You

Vein's pulsed through Aulina's delicate brow, her face reddening beneath the strain as she released a low shout.

Joel and Arnold were ripped out of the waters, their consciousnesses still not having been regained. Panic took hold of Franco's heart as he wondered just how much water they had swallowed, but he didn't have the luxury of finding out now, he needed to bring everyone back.

Franco dug deep, pulling out everything he had. He stacked two people to each one of his shoulders, taking heavy steps back toward the coast. Every time his leg rose and fell, violent rippled of water would surge through, forming tall waves that drenched him through from head to toe.

Blood leaked between his teeth as he stomped back. He knew that the gravity whale was behind him, but he also knew that it had a choice to make.

If it moved, the curtain of gravity would vanish as Franco had enough distance to shoot away. However, if it didn't move, then Franco would just continue adding to the distance between them. Even if he had to turn his bones into dust, he would bring them out of here.

Unfortunately... What actually happened was far out of their expectations.

The curtain of gravity suddenly shifted as the whale's tail twitched. As though it was playing a cruel game with them all, the range of the curtain shrunk and began to concentrate on Franco.

BANG!

Unable to control what was happening, Franco fell to a single knee, feeling as though his bones had splintered. The pain was so excruciating that the blood vessels in his eyes popped, filling his whites with a crimson hue.

Franco roared, pushing himself back up inch by inch. But...

BANG!

The gravity curtain multiplied again, slamming Franco's knee back onto the waters.

It was a cruel fate. Franco had no choice but to coat his knee with Force to stop himself from sinking. But, it was also exactly this rigidity that was harming him, yet he had no choice but to accept it.

At that moment, Karolus, who had been trying to force his way over as well but had been stalled by the gravity curtain, watched on with bloodshot eyes. Gravity was a perfect counter to his spatial affinity as they were inextricably linked to one another. This gravity curtain made it almost impossible for him to crack space like he usually did, especially since this whale was in the Fifth Dimension while he was not.

BANG!

Franco couldn't stop his second knee from hitting the water. He tried to keep his back as straight as possible, but even that was beginning to bend.

Aulina gasped for breath, his stamina having been drained to its limits. Every time she tried to control the waters, it would gurgle and ignore her. This was the first time she had ever experienced such a thing in her life, but it was also because she knew she had pushed herself too far to pull Joel and Arnold out.

"FUCK!" Franco's teeth cracked beneath the power of his clenched jaw. He pushed himself as far as he could. But, no matter what he tried, he couldn't seem to rise back up.

He could feel his vision swimming, but his will was raging like an endless torrent.

His mind was repeating just a single thought: He wouldn't stop until he died. Until his nerves gave out, until his brain shut down, until his heart burst from pumping too hard.. He wouldn't stop pushing.

Franco roared to the point his throat was torn to shreds. However, this pain seemed to be like an escape from everything else he was feeling.

Under astonished gazes, he rose back up to a knee, his toes bending and his ankles arching as he pushed his body forward. Even if he couldn't stand to his feet anymore, so what? He could still push himself forward like this.

Franco could feel an endless torrent of Force coming to him from Gil. He knew that Gil was also at the end of his rope, scrounging up whatever small bit of will he had left to try and support his supposed enemy. It was only Franco that was well aware that he would have run out of Force long ago if not for Gil sacrificing as well.

The whale's gaze flashed, a furious light entering its eyes as though it couldn't believe the audacity of these ants to still continue struggling. But... if they could barely survive against this, what would they do against its true strength?

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Franco could no longer lift his knee, nor could he keep his back straight. His face crashed into the waters, feeling like a resounding slap to the face.

'I can't...'

Franco held the four up on his back, coating his forehead with Force and using it to push himself forward. It was the kind of scene that made one's blood boil with rage and indignance.

The rage of the whale was no less, though. It felt as though its ploy to play these humans to death continuously slapped his face, making it absolutely furious. It wanted nothing more than to crush these humans beneath its enormous weight.

It opened its mouth and roared again. But, beneath the suppression of its gravity curtain, the waves couldn't even rise up. A sonic boom of sound shattered their ear drums one after another, threatening to rip Franco to pieces.

Without being able to be sent flying, the strength of the sound wave couldn't be dissipated and Franco was forced to take on the brunt of it, his mouth coughing up several mouthfuls of blood.

He felt his vision swimming as something within him snapped. The last dregs of energy Gil had was already sapped clean. What Franco hadn't noticed was that it was also Gil's lightning that kept his mind awake. But the moment it ran out...

Franco collapsed, the weight on his back pushing him into the waters below.

However, just when it seemed that their heroic tale would truly end here, a hand reached down and touched his shoulder, shrouding him in an energy shield that seemed to render the gravity curtain completely useless.

Karolus' pupils constricted. 'Who is that...?'

The young man lifted Franco and the others up and out of the water, his gaze filled with a furious light as he gazed toward the gravity whale.

From top to bottom, the young man was coated in a beautiful blue light. It surrounded him like a halo, making him seem like a Deity descended from some world above.

"Fuck you." The young man said coldly.

He reached out a hand, causing the whale to suddenly become enveloped by an energy shield of blue that was eerily similar to the halo that surrounded him.

Caught off guard, the whale couldn't react in time. It found that its gravity curtain was suddenly concentrated in its immediate surroundings, its own power being turned against it.

Its flesh collapsed and a pained howl left it. Unfortunately, even the sound wave rebounded against the barrier, causing its own voice to tear at its skin.

The young man's hand rose up high, lifting the whale that must have been almost a kilometer long as though it was nothing more than feather. Then... He squeezed.

The energy shield of blue morphed, forming spikes that pierced the whale's body through. Its harsh cried turned to gurgles that eventually died out completely. All that was left was an energy shield hovering in the air like a sack of flesh and blood.

At that moment, a blazing light appeared from the distance like a streak of gold cutting across the skies. When that light came to a grinding halt, another young man appeared, this one far more recognizable to the masses.

Leonel looked around the battlefield, his pupils constricting. But, when he saw the young man with his hand raised in the air, his expression evened out to the point it neared placid.

'James.'

Chapter 1009 Veil

James Bennett.

Much like the rest of the talents of Earth, he too had taken advantage of Earth connecting with the wider Dimensional Verse to explore what lay beyond their world as well. He hadn't ended up going to the same location as the rest of his former teammates and instead ended up elsewhere, the result was him only recently returning.

He had, of course, chosen to come to the coast much like all of Earth's talent had and he happened to run into this situation the moment he had. Regardless of how he had fallen out with Leonel, the fact remained that these were his brothers as well. They had all grown up together from the time they put their first football pads on to the day they won their last championship. How could James sit idly by and watch them die?

Let alone sitting idly, James was actually infuriated and he took it all out on the whale instantly. What he hadn't expected, though, was for his appearance to coincide with Leonel's own so perfectly. Leonel was just a half minute later than him or else maybe their roles would have been completely reversed.

James was quite used to seeing those eyes of Leonel by now. As Leonel's best friend for over a decade, he had long since come to know Leonel's personality as well as his own. In fact, he wasn't even sure if Leonel understood himself as well as he understood him.

Everyone thought that Leonel was a nice guy who had a bright smile for everyone, but James knew better. He knew that Leonel was a man who was measured in the way he acted and would only make a move when it benefited him the greatest while costing him the least. This was how he moved through life, constantly weighing and balancing things to optimize everything for himself.

That gaze Leonel was giving him now was the very same one he gave to anyone he knew nothing about. It wasn't coldness, it wasn't rage, or anger, it wasn't even indifference. It was just a placid, vast and endless abyss with a depth impossible to see and a steadiness impossible to match.

He would use those eyes to mark down every little detail he could about a target. Only when he was confident in his assessment would he make a move...

But the trouble was that Leonel should already understand James well. Giving this sort of look to a young man who should have been the greatest friend you had ever had hit differently. It was worse than experiencing a cold glare, one filled with rage or even indifference... It was as though Leonel was pretending like he had never known the person before him.

Flashes of what happened the last time the two met took hold of James' mind.

His father had asked him to stall Leonel so that he would end up caught. In truth, James knew that he had lied to himself, convincing himself that Leonel wouldn't be harmed and that he would just be captured. With Leonel's talent, he would be too useful to the Fort to maim or kill, so he would eventually be released on his own merits...

But deep inside James knew that was a lie. With how much the Junior Governor Duke hated Leonel and how even Simeon had come for him, how could anyone ever conclude that Leonel would be just fine?

The plain and simple truth was that he almost drove Leonel to his death... But those words he said in those moments reverberated the loudest.

"I'm disappointed... I really... took you to be my closest friend..."

~

James remembered absolutely snapping when he heard those words. His mind spun and his eyes saw red to the point he released something he had held deep within him for the longest time. Before he could even properly suppress and think about what he had been going to say, it all spilled out.

"Bullshit! You pretend to care about so many things, you pretend to be kind hearted, but all you really care about are things ending up exactly like you want them! You don't like killing only because you don't want to deal with the guilt! You don't like playing football only because you didn't get to choose it! You only want to do things your way and nothing else matters!

"You're a fucking sociopathic hypocrite!"

No one knew Leonel better than James did aside from maybe Leonel's own father. Maybe his words had a tinge of jealousy to them, maybe they were spoken in the heat of the moment, but in all such things there was always a kernel of truth to be found. James' feelings most definitely didn't come from thin air...

However, whether or not he had the right to feel this way was a different matter entirely.

It was hard to tell just how much had changed in the last few years, if anything at all. James was still tied to his Bennett family, working hard so that they might once more regain their former glory. At least when it came to James, nothing much had changes aside from his maturing face having gained a bit of stubble to it.

As for Leonel, he had probably changed the most between the two. He didn't have such obvious signs of maturity on his face, but unlike his previously aimless self, he now had a goal that he was chasing after just as fervently as James was...

It could be said that the greatest difference between them now was that Leonel was fighting for himself while James was fighting for his father and his ancestors before him...

In what could only be considered a twist of ironic fate, then... Leonel hadn't really changed at all in James' estimation, still doing things that benefited himself the most...

The veil that separated two men that had once been as inseparable as brothers only seemed even more impossible to penetrate now.

Chapter 1010 Irony and Exchange

Leonel descended from the skies, landing before James. He checked the condition of Franco, Gil, Joel and Arnold with a frown. When his gaze finally landed on Aulina he realized that she must have been a person of the Moon and he felt a tinge of gratefulness in his heart.

Finally, he looked up and met James' gaze. He could still remember that Coach Owen had told him that he should forgive and reconcile with him, but as easy as it was for Leonel to turn his emotions off when it came to a person, turning them back on was a tall mountain to climb. It was almost like his natural resting state was unbothered and unmoved while rising up from this level took effort...

As for this effort, those he had deemed unworthy of it would never get it again.

"Thank you for saving them." Leonel finally said.

"You don't have to thank me for saving my own brothers." James replied, a bit surprised that Leonel's eye level was now even with his own. James had always been taller than Leonel, but it seemed that this would no longer be the case.

"Fair enough." Leonel replied.

Someone else might have accused James at this point. If he really cared so much for brothers, why would he have taken the actions he had during the past several years? However, Leonel couldn't be bothered with such emotion. He could already simulate what would happen if he said such a thing and it would ultimately just be a waste of his time.

Leonel waved a hand as Earth Force surged, forming a platform he laid them on one by one.

James' gaze narrowed. The Water Force in the surroundings was so potent that it was hard to imagine anyone managing to gather up so much Earth Force, let alone in such a short time.

"Shouldn't you heal them?" James asked.

"No. This is the perfect state for them take something I prepared for them. If I heal them now, all their hard work will be meaningless."

James frowned when he heard this, but he didn't say anything as Leonel placed a hand over Aulina's forehead.

"[Twinkling Lily: Bell's Blessing]."

A gentle chime began to resound. Whether by coincidence or maybe due to the strength of Leonel's spell, the dense clouds above instantly began to disperse as strong surges of Light Elemental Force descended.

From an injured state, Aulina's cheeks suddenly became rosy and her breathing became even. In the blink of an eye, it was as though she hadn't fought a single battle all day.

There was no doubt that let alone James, this was the most powerful healing spell anyone present had ever seen in their lives.

"Bring the injured to me. I'll heal them." Leonel didn't seem to be trying very hard, but his voice boomed across the battlefield.

After he finished speaking, he reached out a hand toward the energy shield of flesh and blood. Pure white vines coated in a cotton like fabric shot out, sucking out the vitality of the blood one pint after another.

"Please hold it up." Leonel spoke to James who only gave him a nod in the end.

**

Admiral Ellie watched with numbness as Leonel flipped the devastation on its head. He had used a few hours to heal tens of thousands and he simply walked away with his brothers in tow as though it was nothing special at all.

Of course, Leonel had relied on the large amounts of vitality the whale's flesh and blood had to accomplish this, but who else could do such a thing? The healers they had were quite talented, as one might expect from citizens of Earth, but even they couldn't hold Leonel's shoes in this regard. The difference was too shocking.

"Admiral, we need to make a report."

"Oh! Right..." Admiral Ellie shook his head, looking at the wreckage of his cruiser and shaking his head.

"The two Princes are really something, hm Admiral? I heard that Prince Noah was the sole reason Unit 3 was able to survive."

"Yes..." Admiral Ellie said slowly, sighing as he looked up into the skies.

Were the days of his militaristic pride numbered? What happened to strength in numbers and the power of order and duty? What happened to following rank and dutifully fulfilling your orders? These days, all the battles seemed to whittle down to who had the largest fist while those of them that were less talented found themselves in the role of canon fodder.

Shaking his head, Admiral Ellie went off to make his report. He had a feeling that things would only become more exaggerated in this way as time went on... He also felt that it probably wouldn't be long before they were on a battlefield even grander than this quite soon.

...

James took a deep breath as he watched his former walk away. Well... Walk was a strong word. The only eight people Leonel hadn't healed were them. So, aside from Drake, Milan, Allan and Raj who could just barely shuffle their feet, Joel, Arnold, Gil and Franco were all being carried along by Leonel's island of Earth Force.

It was all quite sobering. Of the nine of them, the only one who had spoken to him was the one of them that should have hated him the most, Leonel. As for the other eight, they had met his gaze but hadn't said a word.

James knew how important Leonel was to them and that a slight toward Leonel was just as great of a slight toward them. So, even though James knew that he had done his best to protect them during the Metamorphosis, he also knew it wasn't enough.

'This is quite a lonely path...' James thought to himself.

He had already chosen family over friends. If he hadn't, he wouldn't have betrayed Leonel like he had. But, it was easy to put his head down and ignore the loneliness when no one was around him... He had ironically become the hard worker he never had been in school, giving him strength that dwarfed many of his acquaintances...

And in exchange, he lost his brothers.