

Descent 1021

Chapter 1021 River Network

The truth was that Leonel wasn't the only one who felt that keeping the ecosystem of this world intact was important. Even on Earth, much of the concrete jungle had been replaced with large swaths of forest and natural ecosystems.

If they destroyed the natural environment of Earth, much of what it meant for them to come from talented worlds would be destroyed. After all, only by allowing Earth to grow in its natural state would the resources they were so looking forward to grow into maturity.

The same could be said for EarthX1. It was just that they had barely gotten Earth to its current balanced state, they hadn't had time to worry about other worlds, not to mention the fact that EarthX1 had only recently entered Earth's Fold of Reality so there wasn't anything they could have done earlier.

On such a time crunch, they could only take the most forceful approach. But, Leonel had other ideas.

"This is a unique environment. If we want to take advantage of it, whatever we build must first take it into consideration so we can maximize this effect. Do you know what the advantage of this planet is, Minister Hamon?"

Minister Hamon blinked before shaking his head. "Please enlighten me, Prince."

"It's its rivers. The river networks of EarthX1 connect to every location on this planet. At its slowest, these river networks still move at hundreds of kilometers an hour. Its fastest rivers move within the thousands of kilometers an hour range..."

Leonel did a rough estimate of speed based on the discharge rate of the rivers. The speed he provided wasn't actually the speed of the river, but was rather what he estimated the speed of a boat on said river would be.

"This is what our advantage is. If this network of rivers is used efficiently, even in an infancy state, it would only take at most two or three hours to send reinforcements to a particular location. Once the network is mature, half an hour to an hour would be all that's necessary for reinforcements to reach any location."

Leonel wasn't a fool. Earth simply didn't have the Force Crafters necessary to make a wide network of teleportation stations. In fact, Leonel didn't believe that the enemy would either. Space Affinities were extremely rare and Force Crafters that understood how to apply such principles to Force Arts were even rarer.

This particular teleportation station was likely bought from a Force Crafter Guild and was definitely the best the Milky Way had to offer, and yet it could only move 100 people at a time. This wasn't nearly enough for a large scale war.

In addition, the fact that Earth could only buy one even for an important A-Order planet like this one, despite the wealth it had currently, spoke volumes.

On top of this, even though Leonel could build this network, he simply didn't have the time. And, even if he forced himself to find the time anyway, what would happen while he was away? What would happen

when the enemy wisely targeted and destroyed these teleportation stations? Even if they managed to protect the teleportation stations, who would upkeep their maintenance?

Leonel knew that he couldn't stretch himself too far. So, he decided to kill multiple birds with a single stone.

He would create a network that could be easily maintained without him while also protecting the ecosystem of EarthX1.

Minister Hamon's gaze glowed, understanding much of Leonel's thought process without Leonel speaking aloud. Leonel was essentially pushing for simple Crafts that could be forged by even weaker Black Grade Crafters. It was technology that even 21st Century Earth would have had, let alone 25th Century Earth.

If the rivers were used as the propulsion system, all they needed to worry about was aerodynamics and ensuring that material of the boats were strong enough to withstand the high speeds. That was it. Minister Hamon could imagine that if this was executed properly, Earth would claim a decisive advantage on this world and it was one the enemy wouldn't easily be able to claw back.

However, Minister Hamon had one scruple...

"I only have a single concern, if Prince doesn't mind hearing out this old man."

"Please speak." Leonel responded without hesitation. "You don't have to hold back your opinions around me, I'll take them all into consideration."

Minister Hamon sighed another breath of relief before nodding.

"Right. Though EarthX1's ecosystem is thriving, there's a lot of danger as well. The animal kingdom tends to be quite poisonous and many of them have evolved to have excellent camouflage abilities. This was why we thought it safer to clear away the land for the sake of building a base.

"Beyond this, any creature that can survive the harsh rapid waters of the river is most definitely powerful to an extreme. I don't believe that these rivers won't have any dangers at all, in fact, they might have the greatest dangers..."

"Does Prince have a solution?"

Leonel nodded. He had considered this problem as well. Protecting nature always sounded like a beautiful idea, but the issue was that nature didn't always appreciate your kindness. The river creatures would, especially, be an obstacle, especially as they continued to birth more and more talented creatures under Earth's influence.

Luckily, Leonel had a solution.

"Beasts can become very intelligent as they rise through the Dimensions, but there are two problems they will face. For one, this world isn't as talented as Earth just yet so most of the creatures will still be at a Fourth Dimensional level. In fact, they're likely struggling to adapt to suddenly being thrust into a Fifth Dimensional Fold of Reality as we speak, which is probably why you have yet to suffer any attacks.

"The second thing to consider is that though they might grow more intelligence, they will still lack the plasticity and flexibility of thought that humans have. The best counter to these beasts is right in front of us."

Leonel suddenly took out a rainbow colored Beast Crystal he had gotten from the rainbow island-sized piranha. He had planned to sell it to Jessica, but hadn't gotten around to it just yet.

"What beasts fear most is other beasts, especially beasts more powerful and more talented than they are. I have plans to create a shroud for the network of Boats and Floating Forts we'll create.

"The first layer of defense will be these Beast Crystals. Normal creatures won't dare to get close to them as they can't yet match up to Earth's beasts.

"The second layer of defense will be concealment. Invalids aren't as intelligent as normal beasts and rather than being off put by powerful creatures, they'll surge toward them in hopes of evolving. This will be our second defense.

"As for the details, just leave it up to me."

Leonel took a few steps out and entered the forest. Not far away, a small sized river—at least by the metrics of this planet—lay at a width of a few hundred meters.

With a light toss, the Segmented Cube left Leonel's hand. Just before it landed in the waters, its jigsaw pieces moved and morphed, connected by a large array of motes of light.

With a splash, it landed, having become a large yacht.

Chapter 1022 Layered Hand

Earth's Fold of Reality slowly solidified. In this state of flux, it became comparatively easy to cross over. This was especially the case since the Milky Way was a predominantly Fifth Dimensional galaxy. Since Earth was also currently entering the Fifth Dimension, it was more a process of assimilation than evolution, helping to facilitate the crossing over all the more.

There were quite a number of powers waiting for an opportune time to cross over and many that had already done so. Having lost the protection that came with being a lower Dimensional world, Earth had begun vulnerable and thus had no choice but to gain the strength to defend itself.

This moment was one that many had been preparing for a long while. Those that came from higher order worlds had many special techniques for predicting and marking the borders of evolving Folds of Reality and had thus scouted out the region long in advance.

With the information in their hands, they retreated, knowing the danger of being present in an area a Fold of Reality was moving over. However, now, they were prepared to make a move forward once again.

Those with confidence in themselves eyed pieces of the A-Order worlds. But, there were many that chose to not overestimate themselves, aiming for B and C-Order worlds, feeling that they wouldn't be as protected.

However, these people had no way of knowing that Emperor Fawkes was a madman. Not only had he focused his most elite troops on the lower order worlds, he had left EarthX1 and EarthX2 to his still maturing grandsons...

...

"Are you sure about this?"

Within a ship streaking through the vast stars, a meeting was taking place. Though their destination had already been picked, many still weren't sure about their leader's choice. Since it wasn't too late to change their destination, some were still doing their best. However, it seemed that this group was just a minority.

At first glance, these individuals looked like normal humans. However, upon second inspection it was possible to see that these people weren't entirely so. Many of them had odd birth marks randomly growing upon their skin that upon a closer look actually seemed to be no different from the bark of a tree.

Some didn't have these marks at all, but considering their nonchalance toward their fellow comrades' imperfections, it was likely that they had similar imperfections just placed in less than obvious locations.

At the helm of the room the man who this question had been aimed toward had a similar 'birthmark'. However, his own was prominently placed on his forehead and had a rich brown color to it. Rather than seeming out of place, it actually gave him a lofty character the others didn't have.

"I've already explained myself once, what need do I have to do it again?" He replied coldly.

The man who had questioned him immediately became flustered. The discussions were still amicable to this point but it seemed that they had pushed it too far. They had clearly almost forgotten just who this man was.

"If you fear death, what right do you have to follow Her Holiness?"

"No, no, no... I didn't mean it that way. It's just that though Her Holiness is all knowing and all powerful, we are not. We never asked the other Branches for help like we should have."

"For help?"

The man rose, the brownish gold bark on his forehead radiating an oppressive aura.

"Do you know what happened just a couple months ago?"

The others shivered, unable to say a word. Though joining a religion gave you untold power, it was also a shackle like no other. So long as you were in the face of someone more favored by your God or Goddess than yourself, it was impossible to raise even a finger of resistance.

Compared to them all, this man was a tier higher and as such held the ultimate strength. They didn't have the option to resist even if they wanted to and leaving the religion wasn't an option either or else all of their strength would be stripped from them in the best case, and in most cases they would die horrible deaths.

"A month ago, a blasphemer of Her Holiness slaughtered one of our Brothers, a pious follower of Her Holiness, the Goddess of the Evergreen.

"Our faith lost a Three-Layered Hand but this is only the beginning. This blasphemer not only killed a child of Her Holiness, but he also destroyed Her Holiness's mark."

A shocked silence reigned over the ship. At that moment, whatever hesitancy they had turned into a righteous indignation. For the mark of the Goddess to be destroyed was a slap in the face of their Holiness. This wasn't something they could allow.

"This blasphemer is a citizen of Earth. This isn't just about spreading the word of Her Holiness, it is a crusade to wipe this blemish from her name and make those of the secular world understand the nature of Her Holiness Evergreen."

The atmosphere boiled over. However, though the man who had initially questioned Four-Layered Hand lemes seemed to be dutifully praying right now, his heart was shaken.

He wasn't fearful of Earth and its people, that wasn't why he had brought up such concern to begin with. The issue was that they had gotten word that two colossuses of the religious world had chosen to move in on Earth as well. However, their Four-Layered Hand was blinded by his own greed and refused to call over reinforcements.

It was clear that lemes wanted to promote to Five-Layered and likely even the legendary Six-Layered Hand. Only by claiming land in such a fertile world would he have a chance at doing so. So, against all their advice, he had chosen to target an A-Order world...

But, at what cost?

Aderlard clenched his fists within his robes tightly.

'We need to sweep through this planet as quickly as possible and lay our roots deeply. Within the nature of this planet, our Evergreen Force will have a great advantage. In addition, due to the blessings of Her Holiness and our location advantage, we should be ahead of everyone else by at least half a day.

'I can only hope that this will be enough...'

Without proper reinforcements, it might be possible that their Evergreen Religion would be wiped from the face of this Galaxy. From start to finish, though... Aderlard never worried about what resistance the people of Earth would put up.

Chapter 1023 Soundless

The ship of the Evergreen Goddess believers streaked through the vastness of space. In just a few hours, they entered the range of EarthX1's solar system, a bright yellow sun hanging a long distance away.

The trip had been exceptionally smooth. They had long since calculated the least turbulent route and due to leme's ambition, he had used up a large amount of accumulated Evergreen Force to ensure that they would be ahead of everyone else.

Though Aderlard was right to be worried about the other religions that had come to the Milky Way, especially after they had monopolized much of the galaxy for so long, that didn't mean that they didn't have any advantages.

Due to the fact their Temple was located here, they could make use of years of accumulation to accomplish things these other two religions could not. As such, they had a head start on everyone else, even though this head start cost them centuries of accumulation.

In Ieme's estimation, though, it was all worth it.

In a religion, one was able to rely on your God for certain things. These things could be asked for in Prayer and the return you received would be a function of your piousness and your offerings. Piousness was often measured by what level you had reached in a religion, each one having their own ranking system. As for offerings, for the Evergreen Religion, it was a measurement of Evergreen Force.

Evergreen Force could be accumulated through meritorious feats, sacrifices and offerings of treasures. These could then be converted into units of Evergreen Force which could be put toward Prayer.

Having been rooted in the Milky Way Guild for so long, the Evergreen Religion had most definitely accumulated large amounts of Evergreen Force and they had a home field advantage the others would not have as there were certain complicated penalties associated with Prayers involving events that were too far away.

Without overcomplicating matters, the fact was that Ieme had sacrificed much of their Evergreen branch's previous efforts all for the sake of EarthX1, because the world was simply too perfect for them.

What better world could there possibly be for their Evergreen Religion to thrive than one with such lush greenery? And this was a sentiment that even those who had disagreed with Ieme's methods immediately agreed with the moment they laid eyes on the beautiful planet hanging upon nothing.

EarthX1 was filled with crisscrossing rivers and two soft ice caps delicately covered with soft snow. The rest was nothing but endless greenery with trees so tall they threatened to pierce through the atmosphere and puncture a hole through it all.

Ieme stood with a dignified expression on his face as he faced the wide glass windows. But his heart jumped and leapt with joy. Even from here, he could feel the rich Wood Force even as it slowly grew more and more powerful.

Calming himself, he took a deep breath.

"Follow the plan. Land at point A and take root. Our first priority is to build our Shrine to her Holiness. In that way, this will become the new main base of our Evergreen Religion in this galaxy."

"Yes!"

The ship shot around the planet before descending at a preselected location.

Back when EarthX1 had yet to enter Earth's Fold of Reality, Ieme had long since scouted out the region. Then, through Prayer, he located the best location to build their shrine.

The ship came to a grinding halt after descending through the atmosphere. Its pressure caused the waves of water beneath it to separate and spread, almost flooding the opposite banks.

Unsurprisingly, the Evergreen Religion was also very much invested in protecting nature. This wasn't only a fundamental root of their teachings, but it also had selfish foundations as well. After all, if they destroyed the greenery, the Wood Force would weaken and so would they.

'Accumulating Evergreen Force in this place will be at least three times faster than normal.'

Ieme stood on the helm of the ship, his underlings having already gotten to work. While the ship hovered above the water of the large river, on the coast dozens of brown robed individuals sat beneath the trees in silent meditation. At first, it seemed like nothing would happen, but very quickly, Wood Force began to accumulate and the already large trees actually began to grow.

The branches began to reach over and intertwine with one another. Even the thinnest grew thicker than a man's waist. At the same time, even branches from two separate trees began to fuse as though they had always been one. It was an astonishing sight to see.

Very quickly, these intertwining branches became elaborate tree homes that carried an elegance even beyond normally built estates. And, at the same time, they didn't disrupt the natural ecosystem even one bit. If one looked closely, it even seemed that the trees had been strengthened.

How could they not be? The brown robed men and women had all been using Fifth Dimensional Wood Force to help these trees grow while many of the trees themselves were still within the Fourth Dimension.

"Help the shrine take root. Once this is finished, we can be said to have taken a strong foothold..."

Ieme directed traffic. Once he was satisfied, he fell to his knees in deep prayer, the bark on his forehead beginning to shimmer as the blessings of the Evergreen Goddess began to strengthen their Fort to an extreme. If it had already been powerful before, now it had a certain enigmatic character to it that was difficult to deal with.

Just as Ieme was about to put the finishing touches, investing even more Evergreen Force into their new home, a shout caught him completely off guard.

"Four-Layered Hand, Sir! The distance!"

Before Ieme could lose his temper, his pupils constricted. Without a sound, half a dozen boats moving at hundreds of kilometers an hour appeared over the horizon. They were already within a kilometer before anyone had noticed anything.

At the helm, a young man with pale violet hair stood at the edge of the ship, his gaze narrowed.

Chapter 1024 Speed

Ieme's heart jumped.

None of the normal signs of an approaching enemy had been there. There wasn't an influx of Force, there wasn't an odd sound, there were no fluctuations in space... There was absolutely nothing.

It took him a moment to understand, but he soon grasped it. There were none of those signs to grab a hold of because they weren't there to begin with. Those boats weren't being propelled by Force, they were being propelled by nothing more than wind and the rapid waters. On top of that, because they were using the water, their movements were masked by the rivers itself. It was no wonder none of them had realized that something was wrong until they were already so close.

After understanding this, Ieme calmed. He had been through a lot in his life and as a man who had been willing to uproot everything on this singular bet, he was decisive and intelligent as well. He immediately came up with several weaknesses to this clever plot of Earth, one of the main one's being that if Earth was intent on using river flow for movement, that meant that they could only ever attack from one direction.

Ieme stored these conclusions away and immediately stood.

His gaze narrowed when he got a better look at Leonel's face. To think he would meet the man who killed his Three-Layered Hand Brother so quickly. It seemed that the Goddess worked in mysterious ways and had laid this opportunity at his feet.

The others weren't aware of this, but the truth was that after Leonel shattered the seal that would have been placed on him, he had gained the fury of the Evergreen Goddess. As such, his head was worth a large amount of Evergreen Force so long as he was sacrificed to their altar.

The real reason Ieme had been willing to take this enormous risk was that Leonel's head was worth more than ten times the Evergreen Force he had used to gain this speed advantage over everyone else eyeing Earth.

So, seeing Leonel now, it felt to Ieme as though everything was snapping into place, as though the world itself wanted him to succeed and like the Goddess was smiling down upon him.

"Prepare for battle!" He roared.

They had already set up their Shrine in the two hours it had taken for Leonel and the others to get here. Though not everything was complete, it was enough to give them a small area of effect advantage and dampen many of the oppression they would normally face after entering another's Fold of Reality.

This was the advantage that Religion provided.

At that moment, the Layered Hands began to get into formation. Though they were men of Goddess, they were very much used to battle. In fact, even compared to other organizations, they were even a cut above.

Despite the speed of the raging waters, none of them was fazed and they easily stepped onto the rapid waves, forming up a strong formation before the quickly speeding boats.

Now that the formation of six was closer, they got a good look at the design. Those who had some Crafter experience couldn't help but nod their heads in appreciation toward the perfect design of the boats. They were truly built for speed.

At that moment, the six sleek boats suddenly simultaneously released their parachute systems, cutting their speeds in half as heavy anchors fell.

In as little as a hundred meters, they had come to a grinding halt. But, things didn't stop there.

The so-called 'parachute' system were actually wings of silver the boats suddenly deployed. Despite their thin and frail appearances, they hardly rocked as they brought the boats to a stop and also formed up a line of sturdy barricades at the same time.

In the blink of an eye, the formation of six sleek boats had become a miniature fort on the ocean, turning the advantage the Evergreen Brothers and Sisters had had in mounting a defense to almost nil.

"Fire!"

Leonel voice boomed over the battlefield.

At that moment, Ieme became almost too keenly aware that Leonel was the only individual present. At least, Leonel was the only one visible right this moment. And yet, he had just barked out orders.

Before Ieme could understand what was happening, a rain of hundreds of arrows suddenly shot out from above.

'This speed...!'

Ieme and the others were completely caught off guard. From the boats appearing, to them coming to a grinding halt and suddenly firing, not even half a minute had passed. The sudden shifts in the battlefield were far faster than anything they had ever been a part of.

"Again!"

Before the first wave even landed, Leonel roared again.

In a panic, the religious men and women put up their defenses, trying to work together to create a large shield of wood. Their speed was exceptionally fast, especially under the influence of their nearby Shrine. And yet, it was right then that Leonel pointed out two fingers.

'Range.'

Despite still being 200 meters away from their frontline and despite the fact that two volleys of arrows had already been loosed...

Leonel's Spear Force still made it first.

SHUUU!

The barely constructed wooden shield was sliced in two and continued unhindered, piercing into the hull of the spaceship still hovering above the waters and bisecting it as well.

Under the horrified gazes of the Evergreen Brothers and Sisters, their ship collapsed into the water and the shield was sliced apart, interrupting their rhythm.

With their collaborative efforts destroyed, their attempt to build a large shield failed and they could only quickly attempt to put up their own individual defenses. But it was exactly then that the first and second volley fell, causing a chorus of pained cries to call out.

Right then, Leonel shot forward. From behind the silver wings of the sleek boats, eight individuals quickly followed suit.

With a flip of his palm, a wooden spear of deep black appeared in Leonel's hand, his speed so fast that the waters seemed to separate below him as a streak of gold followed his wake.

Chapter 1025 swing

Ieme was almost shocked into complete inaction.

Slicing apart the wooden shield was one matter. However, bisecting a ship designed to weather the dangers of space was a completely different matter entirely.

This ship was designed to handle the extreme temperatures of stars, withstand the barrage of an asteroid belt with a One Star Disaster Rating, and even capable of surviving a sudden change in Fold of Reality. It could be said that spaceships were designed to be among the sturdiest builds in the whole of the Dimensional Verse, which was why it was especially insane that Leonel escape Planet Vincero with one he personally designed.

And yet, with a single stroke of two fingers, this ship was cut in two. How could Ieme not be shocked?

'How could he possibly be so powerful?!'

Ieme's mind spun, realizing that the situation was most definitely not good. Facing an enemy with such a strong offensive output even without relying on a weapon was among the most dangerous things you could do in the Dimensional Verse.

Understanding the danger they were in, Ieme immediately made a decision.

BANG!

Ieme's palms slammed together, his aura blazing. At just a single glance, it became clear and obvious that he was actually at Tier 7 of the Fifth Dimension. But, as a servant of the Evergreen Goddess, this meant much less than his ranking—Four-Layered Hand.

Ieme was confident that he could battle it out and even had a good chance of defeating Leonel. However, even if he did so, it would be a pyrrhic victory.

Aside from his, there were only a dozen Three-Layered Hands that had come and the rest were Two-Layered or One-Layered. The strength they could display was much less and for most of them, their strength of faith was much weaker than their own strength, as such they relied on the latter.

By the time he defeated Leonel, it was likely that their current number would fall. There weren't many clergymen of the Evergreen Goddess in general. The more people there were, the less Evergreen Force there would be to pass around, so religions tended to have small numbers of true believers.

As a result, each was precious and the loss of too many would result in an overall weakening of the faith. If Ieme failed to protect his people, let alone being promoted, he would likely be demoted.

In that case, he would have to take a chance.

leme released a low roar, the Wood Force in the surroundings surging toward him. The illusory image of a lotus formed of several wooden hands began to shimmer into existence. However, it was clear at a single glance that this lotus was far more elaborate than the last Leonel had seen.

Seeing leme's actions, the Three-Layered Hands of the clergymen also took action, feeling large amounts of Evergreen Force surging out from their shrine and toward them. With the support of their base, their strength became at least a half better than it was normally.

Leonel's speed never slowed. However, he wasn't the first one to reach them.

Gil shot by him, arc of crimson lightning following his steps. Taking advantage of the break in their organized formation caused by the rain of arrows, two daggers flipped about his fingers and palms as he appeared within their midst like a flash.

Leonel was the second to arrive, his spear immediately beginning to dance about. The smoothness of his cuts were so immaculate that the spray of blood was heavily delayed. Sometimes, even long after falling to the surface of the water, the corpses were pushed into the distance by the raging tide without leaking a drop of blood.

'Interesting...'

Leonel didn't stop the preparation of the Three and Four-Layered Hands because he somewhat felt that it was impossible to do so. Instead, then, it was better to whittle down whatever resistance there was as much as possible before he continued onward.

A single sweep of his spear seemed to take a half dozen head at a minimum. It was as though whatever location he wanted his spear to reach, it would do so. His current abilities made [Vanishing Spear] seem more like a joke than anything else.

When the added range of Leonel's Spear Force was combined with his marksmanship and calculative abilities, the result was absolutely devastating. Even Leonel himself had underestimated just how powerful this breakthrough in his Spear Force was.

At that moment, Leonel's expression turned serious. Bronze Runes raced across his skin and a silver armor appeared not long after.

With a step, he appeared before a Three-Layered Hand just as the remaining seven of his brothers crashed into the clergymen army.

Before the latter could react, his head had flown into the air, his last expression being one of unwillingness and shock. Leonel sudden attack was completely outside of their expectations and so was his sudden and abrupt uptick in power.

Several wooden lotuses spun, their hands assaulting Leonel from all sides, however, he pretended as though he hadn't seen them at all.

Leonel's gaze flashed, the tip of his spear suddenly erupting with a silver-red flame as he pierced into seemingly empty space.

BANG!

Hearing the satisfying crunch, Leonel grinned.

That was one seal down. It seemed it wasn't so difficult to blaspheme a God after all. If before he had to rely on his Scarlet Star Force, now he had Radiant Fire Force. He didn't have to choose between either destroying his own body or relying on a much inferior Fire Force.

As expected, though Radiant Fire Force was nowhere near Scarlet Star Force in destructive capabilities, compared to normal Fire Force, it was countless levels above.

'This seal only seems to appear when the clergymen is of a certain rank. That makes sense, the higher their rank, the more their Goddess values them. So, this seal will likely only appear for those at the Three-Layered Hand level and higher.'

Leonel immediately came to this conclusion as his body flashed, dodging out of the way of several wooden palms and appearing to the back of another Three-Layered Hand.

One movement, one swing, and there came yet another head.

Chapter 1026 Quickly

The rage of the clergymen was practically palpable. As much as they were infuriated that someone had killed their fellow Brothers and Sisters, they were even more infuriated that this individual had actually destroyed the seal of their Goddess.

Ieme was especially furious. The more Three-Layered Hands that died, the more likely it was that he would be punished and the less likelihood he would have at defending a position on this world. This Leonel had to die!

Ieme roared, his lotus finally completely forming. However, compared to the others, there was a clear and striking difference.

His own pumped with veins of gold, giving the wood a more ancient and dignified character. Just the pressure it exuded alone was enough to dwarf the other lotuses entirely.

Whether it was One or Three-Layered Hands, all of them fell into the category of Junior Clergymen. However, upon stepping into the Four-Layered Hand ranking, Ieme officially became a Senior Clergymen. His power was on a completely different level compared to the others.

However, just as his confidence was hitting a peak, he was immediately shocked to find that Leonel had appeared before him. It was as though Leonel was waiting for the perfect time to come. Knowing that it was impossible to stop Ieme, he instead chose to come right this moment before he could even think of targeting the others.

"Leave it to us, Cap!"

By the time Leonel appeared before Ieme, there were exactly eight of the twelve Three-Layered Hands left. It was clear that this was by no measure a coincidence.

"CHARGE!"

The one who roared this out was Leonel. The moment he did, the silver wings of the half dozen boats in the distance split, revealing a flood of warriors. Though they weren't the most elite troop of Avalon, they weren't bad either, most of them having a firm hold within the Fourth Dimension.

The timing was once again perfect.

The clergymen had their hands full with dealing with the nine of them, causing the formation to scatter and weaken. Just when they thought they would finally have some relief as they became occupied by their Three-Layered Hands, a group of twice their number suddenly charged for them, leaving them all at a complete loss.

The worst part of it was that Leonel and the others had already killed all of the Fifth Dimensional existences beneath the Three-Layered Hand rank, leaving them not only outnumbered, but without even a strength advantage to take advantage of...

They were finished.

leme's forehead pulsed with rage as several wooden palms attempted to smash Leonel to death.

'This feels different.' Leonel thought as he calmly dodged. 'It isn't just that this is more powerful, there's a certain character to it as well... It feel a lot like the artistic conceptions that I've been basing my Mage Arts on recently... I see... It's a Style.'

Leonel came to an understanding. 'If things are like this, then...'

Leonel's body swayed and shuffled. Rather than slicing apart the arms as he did normally, he allowed them to swarm him. Very soon, it felt as though he was being smothered and caged.

leme's gaze sharpened, sensing an opportunity. He didn't understand what Leonel was trying to do, but in battle, second guessing yourself when there was a chance of victory right before you was a massive taboo. If you didn't have the confidence to fight, you had likely already died long ago.

Many of leme's wooden palms shot into the water below, beginning to wind and intertwine about each other, forming a cage below and above Leonel that he had no chance of escaping.

'[Evergreen Style: Creaking Wood].'

A strong surge of Evergreen Force blossomed forth from the center of the lotus. It rotated about, its sudden action causing the trap leme had set to snap into place and block out all of Leonel's potential escape paths.

A palm much larger and far more elaborate than the others descended with an unprecedented momentum. The waters beneath Leonel's feet had already split apart long before it reached even ten meters above him, displaying its power outright.

However, its target was completely unmoved. While it was true that there was no escape to the right or left, or down and up, who said that he had wanted to escape in the first place?

The waters beneath Leonel's feet began to sizzle, his gaze flashing with a slight silver-crimson color for just the briefest of moments.

It was one thing if Leonel didn't have a time crunch, but this was hardly the only enemy he had to deal with. There were more yet still coming and there would be even more after even them. He didn't just need to win, he needed to win quickly. Holding back and bringing out trump cards one after another wasn't conducive to this at all.

So... he didn't do that.

'Four Season's Realm: Summer... Radiant Core.'

BANG!

The palm suddenly came to a grinding halt.

In the beginning, it looked as though it was stopped by nothing more than air. It was only after a second inspection that it was possible to see a small sphere of silver-crimson hanging upon Leonel's palm.

The core trembled lightly, radiating out with a heat that caused billowing steam to rise up from Leonel's feet. At the same time, it seemed to release a barrier around it that the palm above couldn't cross no matter how hard it tried. It was firmly stopped five meters above the core, unable to move a single inch.

At the same time, the palm of wood began to sizzle along with the water, its surface being burnt away piece by piece until to Ieme's horror, it began to crumble.

Leonel's spear hand twisted, his wooden spear dancing in his hand before piercing forward.

The Radiant Core balanced upon its tip, using the momentum of Leonel's spear swing to shoot upward and shatter the palm entirely.

At that moment, as though the lotus had lost its supporting core, the cage around Leonel began to crumble along with the arm. In the blink of an eye, a lotus that had dwarfed all the others was burnt to ash, leaving nothing but a small Radiant Core the size of a palm hanging in the skies above.

Chapter 1027 A Step

Ieme's heart shook when he looked at the small ball of reddish silver flames. He could feel the danger stored within it to the point it made his heart skip several beats. It was such that he almost completely forgot to react to the fact that his lotus had actually crumbled.

He knew what happened. Leonel had targeted the core of the lotus and ruined its structural integrity. But though Ieme understood this, it didn't mean that he was willing to accept it.

Doing such a thing required understanding the Style to an in depth degree. It was something Ieme had only seen when higher ranking clergymen faced lower ranking ones. It simply didn't make sense to him that Leonel could do this.

'Let's call this ability... Dream Rupture.'

Dream Rupture. It was Leonel's ability to grasp the artistic conception of an enemy, find the root of it, and destroy it from the inside out. It was an ability that Leonel felt rose a level above finding the weakness of a normal technique... This Dream Rupture instantly became one of his stronger powers.

Leonel found that when he stepped into the Fifth Dimension firmly, his sensitivity toward the nature of things and the artistic conceptions that they represented was heightened. Of course, this made perfect sense as Leonel had always been meditating on the Natural Force Art that was the core formation of [Dimensional Cleanse]'s third layer.

As Leonel tried to master his Natural Force Art, his comprehensions grew deeper and the way he saw the world began to subtly change. If the improvement in his Spear Force was half due to the fact he had switched to using a wooden spear as his main weapon, then it could be said that the other half was related to his meditation on [Dimensional Cleanse].

His Summer comprehension, Radiant Core, was another example of his grasp of artistic conception shining through. Despite it only being a quarter of the Four Seasons Realm and couldn't display its full power without the other three Seasons being present, it was actually still so powerful...

The Radiant Core shot down from the skies, once again finding itself hovering above the tip of Leonel's spear. Yet, despite its heat, it didn't seem to affect the wooden spear in the slightest.

"You..."

leme's expression flashed and suddenly became ferocious. With a single glance, he could tell that this battle was lost. It wasn't just him who had lost, but his Three-Layered Hands were just a few exchanges from no longer being able to hold on.

However, just as he wanted to use his countermeasures to escape, Leonel's hand suddenly stretched out.

"[Valiant Seal]."

A strong surge of Space and Earth Elemental Force soared. As heavy as the Wood Force in the air was, the Earth Force and Water Force were just as heavily present. The ease with which Leonel completed this spell, even at the expense of more than half his stamina, was far beyond any speed leme could match.

Right then, leme finished chanting and the pendant on his neck began to glow. A moment later, his body vanished. But...

BANG!

leme crashed into the spatial walls of the [Valiant Seal], a cry of pain and horror leaving his throat.

Leonel shook his head. leme ended up even more miserable than the black swan had. At least the latter's death was swift. But, leme had tried to forcefully teleport himself away, only to be restrained. That sort of forced end to a teleportation could end horribly in several ways and, despite leme's current sorry state, he could actually be considered to be lucky in how things turned out for him.

Leonel's [Valiant Seal] was constructed based on the artistic conception of a treasure capable of forcefully keeping a Sub-Dimensional Zone open. As long as something was within the parameters of the Fifth Dimension, it was simply far too difficult to deal with. In fact, Leonel felt that if he could properly improve his [Valiant Seal], it would be a spell that followed him for a long time.

It could be used flexibly for both attack and defense and was a Mage Art that Leonel was especially proud of. It was just unfortunate that passing it on to others would be difficult since you would have to have an extremely high Space and Earth affinity to cast it. Leonel couldn't think of a single person that met that requirement.

'This should be the end of things for now... I really didn't expect enemies to get here so quickly, it seems that things could quickly get complicated...'

Leonel reached out a palm and squeezed. He wasn't confident in whether or not the seal that protected Ieme was stronger than the others or not. If it wasn't, everything would be fine. But, if it was and he was forced to use his Scarlet Star Force again, it wasn't worth it.

So, rather than doing this, Leonel chose to toss him into a snowglobe and worry about it later. Of course, though, Leonel used the [Valiant Seal] to pin him down and take his storage treasures first, then he threw him away.

'Hm?'

Leonel's head whipped around. Reacting quickly, he sent his Valiant Seals hurtling through the air in a particular direction. His gaze happened to lock onto the battle between Arnold and a Three-Layered Hand. However, he was still a step too late.

Before his [Valiant Seal]'s reached their destination, the Three-Layered Hand vanished from sight, just barely dodging Arnold's palm before he was crushed into minced meat.

Leonel's brow furrowed lightly.

The pendant that Ieme had tried to use was a high level Bronze grade treasure and the same was the case for this man who had just disappeared. But, it was clear that none of the others had this treasure so it was obviously not something the Evergreen Goddess gave to all her high level subjects.

The reason Leonel wanted to stop this man was precisely because it was odd that he had this treasure and Leonel's instincts told him that he should try to stop him. Unfortunately, Leonel was still a step too late...

Chapter 1028 one Group

Across the Milky Way, in a religious building that had turned quite silent to this point, Aderlard appeared, gasping for breath.

This location was none other than the abandoned Shrine of the Evergreen Religion and had once been their main base of operations. Ieme, in all his ambitions, had chosen to uproot them completely and move everything to EarthX1.

If the bet worked out, there was no doubt that there would be a great boon to take advantage of. However, even Aderlard couldn't have imagined that the Earthlings would be so powerful. At first, he thought that the only anomaly was Leonel, but he realized that without showing his hidden trump cards, he had no chance to defeat Arnold either.

He realized then that he had made a grave mistake. He had been so worried about the other religions come to encroach of the Evergreen Goddess' territory that he hadn't even considered the idea that Earth would fight back.

It was beyond just the idea of them having the strength to do so or not, though. Usually, lower level worlds were hesitant to fight back against religions because of the power their Gods and Goddesses represented. There was a reason why Aderlard was scared of the clergymen of other religions, but not of the other families and organizations aiming for Earth.

But, it was either that Earth was ignorant to what it meant to offend a God, or they simply didn't care. And, Aderlard was afraid that it was the latter.

The perfect counter to religious Force was World Force.

When Leonel fought his first clergymen at Valiant Heart Mountain, he had analyzed Evergreen Force to feel like a cross between Universal Force and World Force. In truth, he wasn't entirely incorrect as it had aspects of both.

Without getting lost in the details of it all, a powerful World Spirit was able to counter the advantages religions could usually create for themselves, this was why many religions targeted weaker galaxies to spread their religion.

With Earth's talent, Aderlard was sure that Earth's World Spirit was also powerful. He had originally thought that it would still take time to mature, but if they were actually so bold in killing clergymen without thought for the consequences...

Aderlard took a deep breath and shook his head.

Leonel had no idea that his decisiveness had actually bought Earth valuable time to grow, while Aderlard had no idea that the wielder of the World Spirit, Leonel's mother, was nowhere near Earth's Fold of Reality right this moment.

'This is still an opportunity... I can make a trip to another branch and slowly replenish my Evergreen Force. Then, I can...'

Just as Aderlard was thinking of what his next steps could be, he froze. Up ahead, there was what could only be described as a Goddess descended from on high. She wore a white and fluttering dress and the small bits of skin she revealed were enticing to an extreme. It was just a shame that she actually wore a veil and no one could see what peak her beauty reached fully...

Aderlard was immediately on guard.

He had always been a cautious person but this woman had appeared without even alerting him. He even had a feeling that had she not allowed it, he would have never found her.

"Your Shrine has been uprooted?" She said lightly.

The voice was as delicate as a spring breeze and was easily ten times as refreshing. She seemed to sing with her words despite the fact she was only speaking normally.

"Y... Yes. Our Four-Layered Hand made a gamble and lost."

"I see, so you chose to try to plant a seed on Earth as well but you were destroyed."

Aderlard clenched his fists but didn't say anything. He couldn't understand why but his entire back was drenched with cold sweat. This young woman didn't seem to be exuding any killing intent and she seemed as harmless as a fly, but right now he wanted to do nothing more than turn tail and run.

The veil of the young woman shifted. It looked as though she might have smiled, or maybe she had frowned. Aderlard's palms were too drenched for him to focus on the difference.

"You're scared."

She spoke so lightly that it was difficult to tell whether she was asking a question or stating something. She might have even been trying to comfort him, but he wasn't in the state of mind to know.

"This tends to happen when people can sense my Religious Force and it mostly only does when I'm in the presence of other clergymen. I think that's why he was so fascinating to me... He could definitely feel my Religious Force, and yet he wasn't scared at all. In fact, he treated me like a little girl..."

"But, I guess when you're so dangerous yourself, why should you feel fear?"

Aderlard had no idea what she was talking about at this point. It took everything he had to keep his knees from buckling and collapsing beneath him. Even his eyes were forced to rapidly blink as he tried to keep the sweat streaking down his brow from stinging them.

"He is very dangerous, too dangerous... But he hasn't done anything bad yet... It's a very hard moral dilemma... Should you kill someone knowing that they will do something horrible? Or should you wait until after they've done it?"

The young lady sighed, seemingly talking to herself at this point.

Shaking her head, her gaze fell onto Aderlard again.

"You have it with you, correct?"

Aderlard froze.

"According to customs, in case of a Head Clergyman going rogue, a second-in-command has the right to request aid, isn't that correct? And I have a feeling that a smart man like you used that aid to give yourself a way out. If I was as smart as you were, I would request... a secondary Shrine."

"You... You're..."

There was only one group of people that would care for the Shrine of a religion that wasn't their own...

Chapter 1029 woodworking

Leonel's brow furrowed. He didn't like the fact this person was able to escape, something told him that it would bring him more trouble in the future.

'Forget it. What's done is done.'

Very quickly, what remained of the battle came to a close. Most of the clergymen were directly killed. As for those that surrendered, Leonel chose to throw them all into the snowglobes.

Leonel didn't have the heart to slaughter people that had given up, but he also knew that it would be impossible to try to integrate these people into Earth's population like they were currently doing for the people of Terrain.

The people of Terrain had no choice but to rely on Earth. Their original world was practically empty now, they had no methods to return easily, and Earth provided them a better future due to the implemented policies of Leonel's grandfather. Most people of Terrain were a lot like the people of Earth before the metamorphosis, not knowing much about the wider Dimensional Verse.

But, these clergymen didn't share the same ignorance of the world and they wouldn't have the same gratefulness the people of Terrain would foster. If anything, they'd be a ticking timebomb ready to erupt at any time.

Without a choice, Leonel could only throw them all into snowglobes. At least this form of imprisonment didn't allow them a chance to escape and everything would remain under his control.

'This operation didn't go poorly. Our casualties are few and the Speed Boats work as designed.'

"How do you guys feel?" Leonel asked.

Franco swung his arm as though he was already ready for another fight in response.

"Light weight." He grinned wildly.

Leonel laughed. He had been paying attention to their battles and their prowess was beyond his expectations. He realized that he had looked down on his teammates far too much. Maybe if he had chosen to grow with them from the very beginning rather than just chasing after Aina alone, they would be far more powerful.

He felt a bit of guilt toward this. After all, he was always so worried about morality and the lives and deaths of strangers, but he always left his own brothers behind to fend for themselves. He truly was all over the place.

"A few with water affinity, come over."

Leonel called out. After giving a few directions, a small squadron of those with water related abilities came forward and began to pull the sunken spaceship out of the waters.

'This space has enough material to make at least a dozen more Speed Boats. As for the useless material, I'm sure I can find another purpose for it... Hm?'

Leonel cast a glance into Ieme's spatial treasure and his pupils constricted. After a moment of thought, he came to an understanding.

'How lucky... They must have tried to uproot their whole religion and take root here. It's no wonder he'd have so much wealth on him, they wanted EarthX1 to be their new base of operation...'

The wealth within Ieme's spatial treasure was not small. In fact, it was greater than the wealth that Leonel had dug up from Planet Solara if only Urbe Ore was considered. There were 20 000 kilograms of Fifth Dimensional Urbe Ore present, enough to pay Leonel's bounty twice over—if his bounty was still the same, that is.

Aside from the Urbe Ore, there were many precious ornaments, all of which were shaped of wood and sized into various statues. From a cursory glance, Leonel guessed that these either depicted their Goddess Evergreen or important figures of the Evergreen Religion.

The Force they radiated was a dense Evergreen Force and they were likely designed to be displayed within the church. Leonel wasn't exactly certain if these were valuable or not, so he set them aside for the moment.

What did intrigue him, though, were the pile of old texts that were neatly arranged in their own corner of the spatial treasure. Many of them were religious texts that retold tales with valuable lessons or accounts of their Goddess' feats. But, there were a pile of technique oriented texts that caught Leonel's attention.

Of course, Leonel didn't have Wood Elemental Force so he wasn't very interested in this for himself. Rather, he was more interested in what these techniques could do for their war efforts.

With a flip of his palm, Leonel took out one of these texts, his gaze glowing.

'Principles of Wood Elemental Architecture'.

This text began with reminders of the importance of nature and harmony before it introduced methods of creating homes for humans without interfering with the fundamental state of an ecosystem.

However, this was just the simplest section of the text. It went on to describe what was known as an Architecture Style that reminded Leonel a lot of concepts of Feng Shui back from Earth. Essentially, depending on the complexity and delicate balance of the arrangement, a certain architectural creation could either be more powerful or less powerful.

Within the Crafting Lessons Leonel's father left behind for him, there was a section on working with living things and another section on woodworking. The living things section encompassed everything from Beast Crystals down to rare Crafts that required certain Force Herbs to complete. As for woodworking, it was an intriguing lesson that Leonel had yet to gain the opportunity to apply.

Currently, Leonel used woodworking purely to solidify and improve the Designation of his fingers. That required doing things like carving out small statues or other small woodworks. He also knew that this would be important in the future because except in the case of some rare metal and gem trees, Little Tolly's abilities didn't work on normal wood.

However, it seemed that his lessons on woodworking might finally come in handy on a broader scale. This text was definitely a heaven sent.

Leonel's solution to not disrupt the ecosystem had been to build on the water. It was a fine solution and allowed for quick deployment of the Speed Boats, but the defenses weren't as great as he would like nor were there any terrain advantages to take hold of.

This text would be a great help to ending this war and solidifying Earth's defenses quickly.

Chapter 1030 Lake Crossing

The main base of EarthX1 underwent enormous changes in just a few days.

The chosen location was one of the only two points on the whole of the planet where the three largest rivers intersected. Due to an odd case of flow dynamics and physics, the water at these intersections was quite calm comparatively speaking. Though, the borders to this intersection were likewise extraordinarily dangerous due to the clashing waves.

This was as close to a terrain advantage as Leonel could find on the waters aside from a few waterfall formations that could be found around the planet. But, he knew that he needed something better than this, which was why he was happy to have found 'Principles of Wood Elemental Architecture'.

Though the boundaries of this intersection were especially violent, the range of the calm water had a several kilometer wide diameter. It looked so much like a lake as opposed to the clash of three rivers that this was exactly what Leonel called it—Lake Crossing.

The three main rivers—named West River, South-East River and North-East River by Leonel—met at their curves. Rather than actually crossing each other, the intersection was like a joining of three 'U' shapes at their base to form a sort of triangle with curved edges.

The locations where just the rivers met were exceptionally volatile, giving the region some cover. But, the main issue was that Lake Crossing had bodies of land as well. These bodies of land were exactly the weakness of this location and exactly the reason why Leonel wasn't confident in this terrain advantage.

However, now with 'Principles of Wood Elemental Architecture', Leonel was confident in fortifying these entry points to the water and that was exactly what he did... The result was a grand fort formation that became the result of less than a week's work.

...

Sitting right at the center of Lake Crossing an enormous fort lay. Taking inspiration from the Slayer Legion, it was like a large metal cube sitting on the calm waters. It was impossible to tell how deep into the waters it went, but the top of this cube reached up more than 20 meters.

This cube, or at least what appeared to be a cube, was connected with chains so large that its links dwarfed the size of a human body. These chains anchored to the land around it, keeping the 'cube' in place.

Upon the surface of these lands, grand wooden constructions stood. At first glance, it looked no different from a normal wide ranging and thick forest of brown and green. However, the longer you looked, the more exaggerated it all seemed to become.

Enormous tree homes, interconnected pathways, and most importantly defensive structures that took the earth itself as their foundation. The most shocking part of it all was that Wood Force continued to accumulate and grow in the surroundings. The trees absorbed this Force greedily, speeding along their evolution far faster than the rest of EarthX1

One after another, these trees grew thicker and wider, breaking into the Fifth Dimension one after another and showing not a single sign of slowing down.

The first day this tree fort was created its defenses could only be considered to be alright. But, come the third, fourth, fifth day and beyond, the sturdiness of it all dwarfed what Leonel could have created with his current Crafting prowess, at least not on the time crunch he was on.

It could be said that the Evergreen Goddess had truly left Leonel a great boon.

...

Leonel stood in the midst of the forest. On his lap lay a spear that seemed to be made of green vines and had a blade that looked like the closed petals of a pink rose. It radiated the aura of a Quasi Silver spear and sat docilely before Leonel, seemingly not minding at all that he didn't even have the slightest Wood Elemental affinity to speak of.

When controlling spears he didn't have an affinity for, Leonel often had to spend two, three, maybe even ten times the stamina he would normally. But, he had no other choice in this matter. Only he could comprehend the Evergreen Goddess' text and execute the completion of this Fort fast enough.

Luckily, he had the golden scaled koi fish to help him quickly replenish his stamina, or else things would have been even more troublesome.

The good news, though, was that manipulating Fourth Dimensional trees was much easier. If these trees had already become Fifth Dimensional, Leonel might not be able to accomplish this even with several months.

Comprehending the artistic conception was easy for him, though. He just had to manipulate the Fourth Dimensional trees into Fifth Dimensional levels of complexity and watch the Force do the work for him.

'I need to be fast. I need to finish all the Forts before EarthX1 and undergo a qualitative change under Earth's influence... I'm still too slow.'

Leonel suddenly looked up. "They're here, right?"

Arthur appeared in a streak of light. Whether it was Gil or Leonel himself, there was no doubt that Arthur had the fastest speed. It couldn't be helped, he could quite literally deconstruct himself into the Light Element at will.

"Seems you know already." Arthur responded.

Leonel sighed. "I wanted to take over both Lake Crossings, that way we'd always have the decisive advantage, but my wood affinity is just too weak. I couldn't finish here fast enough."

Arthur's lip twitched. Leonel had created such an elaborate fort in less than a week. It was practically impenetrable. Only a fool would attack it without several months of preparation. The fact he accomplished this was enough.

But Leonel didn't feel this to be true. He felt an anxiousness in his heart that he couldn't seem to get rid of. He needed to be faster, to be better.

They had known from the very beginning that there were two points that all three rivers met at. Unfortunately, Leonel could only choose to build one base at a time.

"There's no need to worry. They should have just arrived, it would be impossible for them to set up any sort of powerful defenses. In fact, they might very well be fighting amongst themselves for such a prime spot."

"Hm?" Leonel's gaze narrowed.

Arthur looked into the distance, his gaze also turning somewhat gloomy.

"It seems they want to test how good this Fort is too." Arthur said lightly.

"Leave this to you?" Leonel asked.

"No problem." Arthur laughed, his blade had been dry for too long. "Make sure to give those other bastards hell."

Leonel's lip curled into a smile. It seems that they really thought that Earth was ripe for the picking. It was about time they entered the grand stage and showed them all just what made Earth so talented to begin with.