

Descent 1161

Chapter 1161 Constructs

Almost the instant Orinik's words fell, Leonel was bombarded from all sides with a flurry of attacks.

The people of the Luxnix family narrowed their eyes. Too many of them hadn't seen Leonel fight previously and many only caught the tail end of what had happened. However, while news was cut off from the outside, the elites of the Luxnix were very well informed about what had happened that day.

Right this moment, other than maybe Myghell, there wasn't a soul with Luxnix blood who wasn't paying very close attention, and that went doubly so for the members of the Luxnix who happened to be in the same group with Leonel.

Leonel, though, felt as though his mind was working at speeds too fast for the world. For a moment, he just stood there, watching as these attacks charged toward him frame by frame as though it was all in slow motion.

'Hm...'

Leonel's hands slid into his pockets, his eyes slowly closing.

'Let's try... '

A strong surge of Dream Force coalesced around Leonel, his foot lightly tapping on the ground and causing a quickly expanding ring of dark gold to form.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Leonel was buried. A cascade of never ending attacks drowned his body in a flurry of Force of all kinds. The clashing of opposing and synergizing of like elements made the explosion all the more volatile, the entire center of the arena imploding into a rain of stone, rock and billowing smoke.

However, right at that moment, a mighty roar sounded. It carried with it such a violent momentum that the smoke and dust cleared, shooting out and dispersing in all directions to reveal an enormous, ten meter tall, dark gold bear.

Leonel stood leisurely on his bear construct's shoulders, unmoved and unfazed by what had happened around him. The bombardment of Force sometimes rebounded and was sometimes swallowed by the thick fur and skin of the dark gold bear, even its roar alone caused a rain of arrows to shatter and fly off like broken kites in the sky, leaving those who were left to witness it all speechless.

Leonel looked down at his bear construct. 'Not bad...'

It was quite interesting. Compared to more static defensive Mage Arts, this bear was a bit special. It carried with it the elasticity unique to a living being, making it so that the rebound of attacks was less grating on Leonel. At the same time, its maneuverability in battle was several levels higher as well.

"Aim for him!"

Seeing Leonel standing on the shoulder of such an enormous bear shook many to their core. How could they not recognize the Luxnix Force Art system? But, they had never seen a Luxnix complete such a complex construct so quickly.

That said, they knew the weaknesses of the Luxnix Force Art system. More complex didn't always mean better.

Leonel's bear construct swiped a paw at the air, standing high on its hind legs as another billowing roar left its lips. But, its speed was too slow and many made it through, aiming right for Leonel.

Leonel, though, seemed unmoved by this turn of events, his gaze glowing with a delicate pale violet light.

He let out a slow breath, but the heat that came with it was so scorching that sparks of Fire Force lit in the air.

Those sparks erupted, forming miniature flames about Leonel, all for the high pitched tweeting of birds to pierce the souls of all those who heard it.

In one moment, Leonel was completely unprotected. In the next, dozens of hummingbirds with wings flapping so quickly they left nothing more than a blur in their wake appeared.

They shot forward like guided missiles, piercing through the flurry of attacks aimed for Leonel with a spine tingling precision and burning them up from the inside out.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Like kamikaze bombers, they crashed into the stone platform below, causing concentrated blasts of fire to erupt in all directions.

Leonel stood on the shoulder of his bear construct, orchestrating the disaster. He never removed his hands from his pockets. In fact, he hadn't even moved a single inch since the battle began. One after another, he quick cast devastating Arts, causing screams of agony and horror to echo endlessly.

Ysac's pupils constricted. He had already organized several attacks, but none of them worked. Leonel seemed to see and plan out several steps ahead, and his casting speed was so fast that even if by some miracle you caught him off guard, it might not even matter.

'I'll do it myself.'

Ysac's gaze flashed, flipping his palm over to reveal a sleek arrow decorated from tip to tip in a complex array of Runes.

His gaze looked up, his Force surging. Leonel's bear construct stamped a foot down, causing a ripple of earth to surge out in all directions, but Leonel himself remained unmoved.

'Die.'

A blinding streak of silver shot through the skies. In the blink of an eye, it appeared just three meters from the side of Leonel's head. It was so fast that the bear construct couldn't possibly react in time. In fact, it was still stamping its feet, sending young geniuses sprawling and tumbling to the floor.

'... Might be an interesting application of Radiant Force like this...'

Just when it seemed that Leonel would be pierced through, a blinding light appeared on his shoulder. Ysac barely had time to register the fact that this light had taken the shape of a silver bat before a shocking screech forced him to cover his ears.

The bat's sonar sent ripples of concentric circles spiraling through the air, each rippled steadily getting larger.

Ysac's arrow suddenly froze in the air, an astonishing pulse of magnetism stopping its ability to move forward any further.

Then, it shattered completely, crumbling into little pieces as it fell from the sky.

Unfortunately for Ysac, the ripples of sonar didn't stop. The high pitched screech tunneled its way forward, crashing into Ysac in what felt like the blink of an eye.

He thought that he would fly backward upon impact, but what actually happened made his eyes bleed as they reflected despair.

"Ysac!"

BANG!

Ysac imploded, falling in a shower of blood, guts and gore.

Chapter 1162 Part of this world?

The members of the Arundo family all shot up. Even though this wasn't the first time a member of the Arundo family had died since this tournament began, it was most definitely the first time someone so high profile had.

Isac's blood vessels threatened to shatter and pop. If not for several members of the Arundo dog piling him to force him down and back, there was no doubt that he would have already sprung into action, his full fury on display.

Isac tried his best to fight those that were on him off, but he was a bowman, not a hulk. With so many having come together to stop him, and without him having the desire to kill them at all costs, he found his body almost buried into the ground.

He could barely tilt his head up slightly, freeing just a single eye to focus on Leonel for all that he was worth. The white of his gaze pulsed with so many vessels that it practically turned red and rabid, his body trembling completely out of his control.

But... in the end... he could only watch as Leonel's beast constructs vanished into motes of light, the entire arena empty of participants outside of himself.

A pregnant silence took hold of the arena.

There had been many battles before this, but none were ended nearly as easily as Leonel's own. They had thought that they might learn something about his speed from observing, when the reality was that

Leonel didn't even have to move a single inch. The gap was so large that it felt like they had just watched an adult bully children...

The Luxnix Star Order elders narrowed their gazes, watching Leonel walk away. They too hadn't witnessed the fight between Elody and Leonel, but from what they knew, it lasted several exchanges and was quite heated, even though Leonel won in the end.

With that bit of information, they had of course concluded that Myghell would win easily. The gap between Myghell and the three Arm Heads was so large that it might as well have been night and day.

Seeing Leonel fight now, there wasn't anything he had just done that Elody couldn't. Well, Elody couldn't quick cast in such a fashion, but their meaning was that he would have won just as easily. Still... Seeing Leonel's talent in action made them wonder just how far he could go.

...

Leonel returned to the group with a light smile on his face.

"You're such a show off, Cap." Milan laughed.

"Is that jealousy I hear?" Leonel's ears perked up.

"Fuck you!"

Milan dove forward and tackled Leonel, but he found his arms swinging at air. By the time he noticed Leonel jumped over him, it was far too late. He crashed into the ground, skidding for a few meters.

An eruption of laughter filled Earth's seating space. However, seeing the cheeriness of their atmosphere only made the fury smoldering within Isac's soul burn even brighter. He had never felt so much rage in his life. But, he had already had his turn and didn't even have anywhere to vent it.

"Let me go. I'm leaving."

Isac's voice seemed to have dropped several octaves. Only after the others were certain that he was, indeed, leaving the arena did the rest of the Arundo relax.

Amidst the Arundo elders, their Patriarch sat with a stoic expression, watching as Isac turned and left. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking by just his facial features alone, but he didn't seem to have reacted to Isac's death at all.

Inwardly, though, he felt that this was a turning point for his family. If Isac could climb this mountain, maybe it would be exactly what his Arundo family needed to cross that final barrier and grow to match those three pillar families.

...

The events continued. By the time the end of the day began to roll around, countless geniuses had gone up.

When it was Myghell's turn, one might have thought that he hadn't stepped onto the stage at all. Everyone ran around him as though they had blinders on, refusing to even think of attacking him.

Myghell stood in silence, not bothering to make a move either. When just three individuals remained, he casually stepped off of the platform without a care in the world.

The Luxnix Arm Heads received the same treatment. By coincidence, the equivalent geniuses of the three leading families didn't meet, so their rounds ended just as easily and without fanfare.

The likes of Savahn and Yuri surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, also gained a spot for themselves. Savahn was a talent of Earth and had been able to adapt on Planet Viola for far longer than the others had, so her success wasn't too much to accept. As for Yuri, she was of mysterious origins to begin with and had always had more power than she displayed. Even after claiming a spot, she hadn't seemed to have gone all out...

The Montex and Viola geniuses, of course, performed just as well. Though their deterrence wasn't as great as Myghell, they still received their due respect. Rychard was among those that passed, only having to exchange one to two blows to properly display his might and prowess.

Rychard couldn't help but frown lightly when he stepped off of the platform before when he looked toward where Aina should have been, she was absolutely nowhere to be seen. However, he turned his head away not long afterward. After giving up so much to earn a spot, he doubted that she would miss out on her chance.

Finally, the day waned and the billboard flickered for the final time, its motes of light forming around the last list of names...

As though a ghost, Aina appeared once more.

When she stepped out and toward the arena, the crowd itself seemed to suck in a cold breath all at once...

This level of beauty... Was it even meant to be a part of their world?

Chapter 1163 Now

The current Aina didn't have the presence of maturity and elegance that a woman slowly reaching her prime should have. Her current mindset was quite infantile and she still hadn't quite grasped concepts of her own feminine wiles and charms. In addition, she had already learned to perfectly control her own mental coercion. After the shackles on her talent were released, she improved by leaps and bounds everyday. And yet...

None of it seemed to matter.

For those here, this was the greatest beauty they had ever laid eyes on. Despite her indifference to the world, it only added to her charms, making her seem as though she had descended from another world entirely.

The current Aina wore a flexible armor that wrapped around her curves almost too well, an enormous battle ax of red-gold hovering to her back. Her every step carried its own explosive power and the depth of black her armor and hair shared seemed to give her the tinge of a devilish vibe.

Leonel fell into silence when his gaze landed on her again for the second time in a month. His expression didn't flicker and his arms remained crossed about his chest. He could tell with a single glance that she

had improved vastly since he last saw her, even after all his own improvements, he had next to no certainty of defeating her. In fact, he faintly felt that he might very well lose.

It was a surprising conclusion for Leonel to come to, but it hardly moved the needle for him one way or another.

After a month of rest, Leonel felt that he finally understood what bothered him so much about all of this.

Objectively, he knew how he had hurt Aina. She was in a vulnerable point in her life and she was heavily reliant on him. That moment hadn't been the first time she got mad at him for risking his life for the sake of others, he had lost count of the number of times she had insisted that he should put himself first.

He and Aina had been clashing in this way even long before they made their relationship official. That day, when Leonel excitedly left the Mayan Zone, eager to see her again, and she pierced a hand through Conrad's heart... Leonel knew that that had been her way of waking him up to reality.

Not only was she not solely that shy and timid girl he had known, but she was precisely the kind of cold blooded murderer Leonel himself never wanted to become.

Time and time again, they faced this exact clash. Even in the Joan Zone, when Aina and he almost died because he was too soft with how he used his blade, even so far back they had always butted heads.

Leonel knew this. He knew how she felt. So why had he reacted the way he had? The answer was so obvious that Leonel felt that he had been running away from it as opposed to chasing it like he should have been...

All those years, Leonel had always been chasing after Aina, always doing the things she wanted, how she wanted to do them. He never batted an eye, never complained, and always followed along, happy just to be by her side.

This wasn't a burden on him, and for him to pretend like it had been would be nothing more than revisionist history. He had been happy to do it. She was the woman he loved, the only woman he loved. To him, doing things for her wasn't a sacrifice, it was a pleasure, a privilege...

However, when the day came that Leonel finally had something he wanted to fight for himself, a goal he wanted to aspire toward and chase... Rather than receiving the same sort of support he had always given Aina, what he received in return was doubt and insecurity.

When Leonel told Aina about his dreams, about how he wanted to unite the Dimensional Verse and have her by his side as his queen, he didn't receive the eagerness and support he had been expecting. Instead, he received a questioning that he would have expected from a stranger or a person who didn't care about what his own hopes and aspirations were...

He received the words of a person who didn't believe in him.

That day, when Aina left him, it was just more of the same. Leonel understood how she felt, he truly did. She had gone through so much trauma in her life and didn't deserve any more. But, in his eyes, the fundamental root of it all was that she didn't believe in him.

When Leonel met an opponent that didn't believe in him, he would just defeat them. When he met an enemy that didn't believe in him, he would just kill them. When he met a mountain no one believed he could climb, he would ignore those who looked down on him and climb it anyway.

The one fundamental truth about himself was that he absolutely hated to lose. Maybe why he was so good at following his father's mantras of Respect and Persistence was exactly because of this. This was such a core part of who he was that he excelled in everything he did, even when it was something he didn't like very much.

Maybe this was Leonel's own brand of arrogance, that deep seeded belief in himself that couldn't accept the speculation and doubt of others.

The question though... Was what would he do when the person who didn't believe in him was someone he had given his heart to?

How could he ignore her? How could he defeat her? How could he kill her?

He didn't know the answer to that. So...

He sat and watched as the love of his life wowed the crowd, her skills and movements breathing life into the world.

He sat and watched as she cleared her group, easily claiming her spot with her back to him.

He sat and watched as another man with a grin of pride on his face that should have been his own stepped before everyone, boisterously laughing as he pointed toward her...

"I want to thank the Montex and Luxnix family for allowing me this stage!" Rychard's voice boomed.

"Now that today's event has ended and there will be a gap between today and the second day's rounds, I would like to make an announcement to everyone.

"Two days from now, my and my fiancée Aina Brazinger will be getting married. I invite all those in attendance today to bear witness to the first day of the rest of our lives."

A certain shift took place in the atmosphere. Feelings of awe, worship and envy took hold. To have such a woman as a wife... Just how lucky was this Viola family Crown Heir?

Finally... Leonel stopped watching, his eyes closing in peace.

He finally had his answer. Now, he could let go.

[Author's Note: I'll have to ask you guys to trust me, this won't end like you think it will. If you want books that can subvert tropes, you have to give an author a chance first, lmao. Anyhoo, the main purpose of this note is to tell you guys that my birthday is tomorrow so I won't be uploading. Will be back the day after, love you guys <3]

Chapter 1164 CRACK!

There was a stunned silence that overcame the Earth region of the arena. However, it was for just a moment. In the next instant, a fiery pillar of rage suddenly erupted.

"YOU BITCH—!"

Milan, Franco, Gil and Raj all charged forward as though they had lost their minds.

Seemingly having expected this result, it was Joel, Arnold, Allan and Drake who leapt forward just a split moment afterward diving for their waists and tackling them down.

The eight immediately ended up in a furious sort of dog pile. But, compared to the warmth such a thing had carried just a day ago, there was something decidedly sad about it this time around. It only seemed to make it worse that in all the commotion of the arena due to Rychard's announcement, the commotion caused by these eight was nothing more than a drop of water into a vast ocean...

No one seemed to notice at all... No one except for Savahn and Yuri, that is.

"Let me go! I held back enough! I'm going to tear them both a new asshole!" Raj raged.

Unfortunately, the clamp Arnold had on Raj was far too strong. He could hardly move and he didn't have the heart to use his ability on his brother. In the end, he could only squirm wildly, his gaze just as red as Isac's had been just hours ago.

Roesia's eyes flickered with confusion. She didn't quite understand what was going on.

She looked toward her grandson, only to see that his eyes were closed. If she didn't know better, she would think that Leonel was having a nap.

It was then that she pieced everything together.

That day when she saw the pain in her grandson's eyes, hidden beneath his coldness and indifference, this Rychard and that Aina had both been present. Could it be that it was related to this? Was that why he had been feeling that way on that day?

Coming to this conclusion, Roesia's gaze also lit with fury. The murderous intent coming from her rose like the tides of a tsunami, threatening to drown the arena out in waves. It would only be a moment before everyone's attention was drawn, but...

Joel, Arnold, Drake and Allan all looked back toward Leonel.

Of Leonel's brothers, there were two divisions. Raj, Milan, Gil and Franco had always been the jokesters. They had their own brand of humor and if there was a joke being made, there was a 90% certainty that it was coming from one of them.

On the other hand, Joel, Arnold, Drake and Allan were far more reserved.

Joel was always the de facto leader of the group when Leonel wasn't present. Drake had meant to be Leonel's successor after he graduated from Royal Blue. Allan had an introverted personality, so much so that he didn't even show off his excellent physique, always wearing baggy clothing. And, Arnold was a man of few words, even when he was communicating with Leonel himself...

And yet, at that moment, they all looked toward Leonel with the same crimson gaze.

So long as Leonel gave the signal, no matter how high the odds were stacked against them, no matter how subtle such a signal was, they would immediately release Raj, Milan, Gil and Franco. In fact, not only would they release them, but they would be right along side them, charging forth.

To them, any slight against Leonel was a slight against them. They had been there before Leonel met Aina. They had been there before Leonel fell for her, before he spent years chasing after her.

He had never shown any interest in any other woman. His admirers could have wrapped around Earth itself, yet he had never bat an eyelash.

They had always believed that Aina wasn't worthy of Leonel. Even when she revealed herself to be a world toppling beauty, she left soon after, leaving a bad taste in all of their mouths. Now, they felt that things had gone too far. They found it difficult even to control themselves at this point.

Leonel's eyes remained closed, his face the picture of serenity.

In his mind, he had once again entered a world of white, a familiar balance standing before him. After everything, it had been perfectly balanced, no one side outweighing the other.

He gazed upon it silently, going through all the memories it held once more.

His body felt quite light and his mind felt extremely clear. His reflection on these memories made him feel as though he was right back there again, simulating that moment in real time without missing a single detail.

The first day he met her, the first time he realized he liked her, the first time he confessed to her... the second time... the third...

The time they spent in the Joan Zone, their battle against Royal Blue Fort, his rage fueled tirade against the Puppet Master... Those final moments of peace they had together at Variant Heart Mountain... The last time they shared a bed together...

They were memories enough to move a man to tears... Somehow, though, to Leonel, it felt like he was watching the movie of someone else's life.

He reached forward and touched the balance scale, his hand trailing down its frame before landing on the final object that had managed to keep it all even.

It was a delicate, fragmented bracelet. It weighed almost nothing and was useless even to a Third Dimensional existence. It was nothing more than a sentimental ornament, but it weighed so heavily. It was the final strand of hope that Leonel had been holding onto, so much so that his logical mind had given it more weight than even it was worth.

CRACK!

With a light squeeze, Leonel crushed it to powder.

He turned and walked away, the golden-bronze balance crumbling into a pile of ash.

...

In the real world, Leonel opened his eyes. A strong pressure seemed to roll out from him in waves, his mind suddenly feeling extraordinarily free.

He blinked, seeing the gazes of his brothers looking back at him.

"What are you all wrestling for? Take it easy on Milan and Arnold, they still need to fight in a few days."

Leonel laughed lightly, his aura dispelling the tense atmosphere into the wind.

Chapter 1165 Didn't Care

Later that day, Leonel sat in silent meditation. He felt that everything about him was running smoother and faster than it ever had before. He could even feel his Innate Node far more clearly, so clearly, in fact, that he was shocked he hadn't sensed just how special it was before.

His Innate Node wasn't just a source of a special Force, it was more accurately the root of one. If Leonel had to describe it, he would say that an Innate Node was a step beyond a Pure Force Crystal, maybe several steps, even.

What this meant was that an Innate Node wasn't just a store of Force, but it also carried with it the Natural Force Arts one might expect to find in a Pure Force Crystal. The difference was that an Innate Node's Natural Force Arts were not only far more complete, they were far more layered and complex.

Though Leonel had never laid eyes on a Pure Force Crystal, at least not yet, he was absolutely certain of this. The depth of his Innate Force Node was so vast that even he had a hard time believing it. He also came to understand that this was where the difference between himself and Elthor lay.

Elthor had access to a Force on the same level as Scarlet Star Force in Chaotic Particle Force. The difference was that this was Elthor's ability granting him this affinity, whereas Leonel's own was an Innate Node.

Leonel had thought that there wasn't much of a difference originally, just a different rode to the same destination. But, he realized now that there was a world of difference. Elthor would never have access to the same depth of understanding Leonel could gain from his Innate Node.

The world that opened up to Leonel was so large that he was having a hard time deciding where to start.

Just to put matters into perspective, from only a cursory glance and look through, Leonel felt that he could: build a Visualization to aid his path through the Fifth Dimension, build a completely new Magic System, comprehend derivative Forces...

The possibilities were endless. It felt like he had just been handed the blueprint of a vastly more advanced civilization and now he could benefit by piecing together all of its mysteries.

The change was so great that even Leonel was baffled for just a moment. In the past, he couldn't even send his Internal Sight near his Innate Node without it trying to destroy his mind. But, now, he didn't have to risk his mind at all. It was as though his Innate Node was directly speaking to him.

Destruction...

Leonel couldn't have expected that releasing his own baggage would open himself up in this way. It was like the weight of Aina had been a blockage. Or, maybe it was just the act of allowing those feelings to shatter that allowed Leonel to ascend his understanding to a new level.

'Fascinating...'

Leonel wondered, did Myghell have this same ability? Could he naturally feel what Leonel had? Or were there complications with the process?

Leonel wasn't jealous, he was more so curious. Because if one Innate Node could bring him such benefits, what about another?

He already had the Little Mink who could snatch abilities from others. He could use the Silver Tablet to wash away the personalities of those abilities to allow his people to absorb them without backlash. He had the tentacle womb which he already had an evolution path for. If he also began to accumulate Innate Nodes as well...

Leonel's gaze flickered.

Maybe he didn't notice it, or maybe he did. But, he didn't even consider what it would take for him to accumulate these Innate Nodes.

'Hm...'

Leonel raised a palm, his Force flickering and surging.

After forming his Seventh Star, he realized that he had gained the ability to replenish his Innate Node faster. Unfortunately, this was a fairly useless ability since his body couldn't even withstand using his Innate Node to begin with. Let alone draining it, he couldn't even use a single percent of it.

However, now, Leonel realized that his Innate Node was no longer entirely useless to him either.

The Destructive Aura that he had subtly grasped alone made his attacks far more potent than they had been in the past. And, now that his senses toward his Innate Node were even sharper, his Destructive Aura would only grow.

There may very well come a time where Leonel would only have to touch something to make it crumble from the outside, in. His presence alone would cause things to disintegrate.

Though the effect would be lesser than using Scarlet Star Force, it was a good replacement while he focused on getting his body stronger.

...

The current Leonel sat outside, near the pool of the hotel. He was in full view of everyone around him, causing him to be the subject of quite a bit of scrutiny. However, no matter how many times they looked over at him, no one could find anything wrong.

"... Is he really alright?" Milan mumbled.

The eight of them, including Leonel's grandmother, were all furious. In fact, many of those who hadn't known the details previously were furious for Leonel as well. However, with the man himself acting as though nothing had happened, what were they supposed to do, exactly?

"You know Leonel, when he cuts something off, he doesn't even look back." Joel said lightly.

Raj snorted. "Good. It would be embarrassing if I had a harem and Leo didn't. This is the way it should be. He needs at least three wives and twelve concubines, I won't let him stop until he has at least that many. Our boy is about to have an elite fuckboy arc."

The women of the group looked toward Raj with disdain, but they refrained from saying anything since it was clear that he was just sticking up for Leonel.

However, Raj didn't seem ready to let it go.

"What are you all looking at? All you women are the same. How many men are you going to turn into the monsters you complain about before you realize that YOU'RE the problem?!"

Joyce suddenly snapped, her fists lighting with Force.

"Are you trying to fight it out, you sack of shit?!"

"Oh my, I'm so scared!" Raj rolled his eyes. "Come bite me. I can't for the life of me imagine why you're called the fairer sex, you're all little demons in skimpy clothing. You ever think that maybe the reason you're all so attracted to the hard exterior of a man is because you're all just as hard on the inside?"

"Come on, come fight me, then. At least in this kind of world you actually stand a chance."

Joyce was so furious she couldn't even put her anger into words.

Joel and the others felt a headache coming along. They knew the reason Raj was acting like this wasn't just related to Leonel.

At that moment, though, Joel's brows suddenly furrowed, a message entering his ears.

Joel immediately looked up to Leonel. He knew how sharp Leonel's senses were, there was no way he would miss such a thing. However, he didn't react in the slightest. It was either he was distracted by something... Or he simply didn't care.

Considering who it was, Joel had the feeling it was the latter.

"A few of you, come with me." Joel said lightly before going off.

Chapter 1166 Did I?

An odd silence reigned over the atmosphere in a forest just on the outskirts of a Luxnix city.

Joel, Franco and Allan stood across from Yuri and Savahn, the latter two wearing nervous, fidgeting expressions.

In truth, Joel was quite surprised that Yuri had managed to contact them from so far away. It had taken several hours just to get here. If not for Joel being pretty level headed, he wouldn't have even deemed to come. But, for matters related to Leonel, he was still willing to go so far.

That said, it made sense. This was Planet Luxnix, not Planet Viola. Plus, the status of these two was tied to Miel and Aina, so even if it was Planet Viola, it wasn't like they could move about as freely as they wanted. Due to these reasons, they had no choice but to contact Joel and the others from so far away.

The surprising part, though, was that Yuri was actually able to accomplish such a thing. It made Joel take her just that bit more seriously.

"Where is Leonel?" Yuri finally asked, somewhat unwilling to meet their gazes. In fact, much of her fidgeting was because she was trying to see if Leonel was coming or not.

Yuri had left a small tag on Joel's Soul Force the last time they met, but she had never been able to do the same with Leonel. So, she had contacted Joel, hoping to contact Leonel through him. But, Joel didn't seem to have come with Leonel at all.

This was a problem. If Leonel was truly angry, this would make things even more difficult.

Of course... this only showed how little Yuri understood about Leonel.

"... Is he that angry?"

Joel, despite his usual calm disposition, couldn't help but narrow his eyes at these words. What did she mean, 'is he that angry'? Setting aside the truth for a moment, so what if he was? Did he not have the right to be? The fact he hadn't exploded onto the arena stage was a proof of his self control and nothing else.

Joel reached out a hand and put it on Franco's chest, stopping him from snapping.

Among the three who had come, Joel and Allan were quite level headed, but Franco was most definitely not. Joel had made it a point not to take Raj along with them because he would only exacerbate any situation they ended up getting into, but the more rowdy of their group had insisted that at least one of them go because they didn't trust Joel and Allan to say the harsh things when they needed to be said.

That said... They knew that this was a gross exaggeration. The current Joel and Allan were just as enraged as any one of them.

Seeing the expressions of the three men before her, Yuri's own flickered, making her feel that maybe she had said something wrong.

"Your words show just how little you understand about Leonel, but that isn't your fault. You're just the friend of the woman he liked, not the woman herself. The one who deserves the blame is her."

Yuri's jaw clenched. Just the same way Raj was willing to go overboard in protecting Leonel, even saying many things he shouldn't have said, Yuri was much the same way with Aina. In fact, compared to the time Leonel's brothers had spent by his side, Yuri had been with Aina even longer.

However, this time, she took deep breaths, realizing that letting her temper flare like it had before would only be detrimental to her goal.

"You ... You all have to understand that this matter isn't what it looks like."

Joel's brow furrowed, but he chose to continue to listen instead of interjecting.

The truth of the matter was that if Joel had told Leonel that Yuri wanted to talk, Leonel probably would have come. And, even if Leonel chose not to come, it wouldn't be because he was furious, it would only be because he felt that his time was better applied to something else.

Joel knew better than most that what Leonel was feeling right now wasn't rage, it was indifference. If he felt that his time was better spent training and meditating, he wouldn't come. If he was curious enough to hear what Yuri would say, then it would come. It was that simple.

However, Joel knew well, at the same time, that there was a very lowly, maybe 0% probability, that Leonel would change his mind purely on what Yuri would say.

Knowing this, Joel chose not to waste Leonel's time. The three of them already had been booted from the second day of competition, they had nothing to lose wasting time like this. So, he listened to Yuri's story from start to finish.

"... So you mean to say that Aina's father agreed to this marriage for the sake of a position to enter the Void Palace Selection? But this was a lie because anyone could participate anyway?" Joel summarized.

"Yes, yes." Yuri wrung her hands together. "But they lied. The marriage was only supposed to take place after the Selection, but Rychard used a loophole in the agreement to place it after the first day of the Selection. Also, the deal wasn't of equivalent exchange because there was no quota this year to begin with! Even Savahn and I could participate."

Joel, Allan and Franco watched in silence and Yuri continued to explain herself. They didn't interrupt her and didn't shift her gaze away.

The only one of the two who seemed to realize that something was wrong with the atmosphere was Savahn who could only sigh inwardly.

Yuri loved Aina too much. She was unwilling for Aina to take any sort of losses, even if others had to suffer for it. The same way Leonel's brothers thought that Aina was unworthy of him, just how much more so did Yuri believe the vice versa, albeit subconsciously?

"And what do you want us to do about this, exactly?" Joel asked.

"We—we have to save her! I saw earlier that Leonel's grandmother is very powerful, if she works together with my adoptive father, can't we kidnap Aina before the wedding?"

A pregnant silence fell over the forest.

"... So let me get this straight." Franco began to speak, this time not receiving the interruption of Joel. "Your friend wanted to spread her legs for a chance to move up in the world, but now that she's been played she wants everyone to risk their lives to save her from one of the strongest families in the Sector?"

"Did I get that right?"

Chapter 1167 No One Else

Yuri was stunned for a moment before she suddenly imploded.

"WHAT THE HELL DID YOU JUST SAY?!"

BANG!

A violent invisible force shot out in all directions. The expressions of the three young men instantly changed as they hurried to protect themselves, but it was already too late.

As though a wall of solid wind had hit them, they flew backward like an iron ball out of a canon. In fact, it wasn't just them. The surrounding nature was completely flattened as though a fist had descended from the sky.

The rippling wave spread outward like a fan, sending the three flying for dozens of meters.

"YURI!" Savahn was shocked awake.

Savahn violently pulled Yuri backward, disrupting the eruption of her fury. Then, she sprung forward at her fastest speed, her Force reaching out to slow the blow the three had suffered. She barely made it in time to ensure that they didn't crash against the ground or any thick trees, however that didn't stop the three of them from coughing up blood. Savahn had reacted far too slowly to stop the initial impact.

Yuri was still furious enough to go for another attack, unfortunately, Savahn was standing in the path between herself and the three. Although she had plenty of methods of going around Savahn, she had a feeling that being so close, Savahn would definitely try to block her.

Joel, Allan and Franco coughed out another mouthful of blood, their gazes lit with fury.

"Savahn, get out of the way!" Yuri yelled.

"This bitch." Franco growled, about to get up.

Just when it seemed like things would truly get out of hand, Savahn turned back toward Yuri, her gaze livid. For a moment, she seemed to return to that same fiery tempered girl who always reprimanded Leonel for chasing after Aina.

"YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH! STEP BACK!"

Savahn's near roar shocked Yuri out of her own rage and even made Franco take a pause. He was already furious enough to go all out with this woman, but Savahn's actions seemed to snap them all awake.

Savahn turned back toward the boys, kneeling down. She handed them all healing pills she had managed to accumulate, allowing their injuries to stabilize.

"I'm sorry about Yuri, but she treats Aina like her own flesh and blood sister. She often says and does things she doesn't mean when it comes to her, but please hear me out. She didn't tell you the full scope of the truth and how things ended up this way."

"Savahn!" Yuri's expression changed.

Yuri wasn't a fool. She didn't speak about those matters on purpose because the less people that knew, the better. Not only did it involve a treasure that Miel could be hunted down for, if Aina didn't interact with the world as normally as possible, it was possible that it would have adverse reactions on the reawakening of her personality.

If it wasn't for the fact Savahn was so close with Aina and would immediately realize that there was something wrong with her personality, she wouldn't have been told the truth of the circumstances either.

Yuri had naively only ever seen things from her perspective. In her mind, Aina was perfect and everyone should treat her as such, not to mention care about her wellbeing just as much as she did. So, she had never considered telling them the full story because she didn't think it was necessary. Wasn't what she had said enough? Wasn't it clear as day that Aina had been wronged? Then how could they possibly act like it wasn't a big deal? How could they say such cruel words?

What Yuri couldn't wrap her head around was something that Savahn understood almost too intimately... It could be said that of all the people who understood best how Leonel felt right now, Savahn was at the top of the list.

Unlike Yuri, Savahn had been thrust into this world just like Leonel had, forced to scratch and claw for everything and even barely surviving her first Zone. And, just like Leonel, she had walked out to find her best friend of four years with her bloodied arm through a human's chest...

That event had caused Savahn to become estranged from Yuri and Aina. And yet, instead of trying to bring her back into the fold and support her in the moment she needed it the most, they both left her...

Aina left to go off on her adventures with Leonel and Yuri only ever truly cared about Aina's wellbeing, not considering Savahn very much at all. If Savahn hadn't felt the need to step in during the argument between Leonel's brothers and Aina, maybe they would have all remained estranged for a life time...

And what had happened after that? Well, the broken and fragile Aina collapsed in her arms, sobbing and crying her worries away, pining over a man she herself had chosen to leave.

She brought Savahn out like a crutch, even dragging her to this Sixth Dimensional world so she could continue to be used.

When Aina hadn't needed Savahn anymore, she was fine with ignoring her existence. But, the moment she had, she dragged her back into her life, forcing her to become a shoulder to cry on.

Did Savahn understand that Aina was a broken person? Yes. Did she understand that it wasn't entirely Aina's fault? Yes. Did she blame Aina and hate her like another might? No.

However... None of this changed the fact that it hurt.

No one ever considered her thoughts and her feelings. Despite having friends around, she felt like she was alone.

She had spent four years 'protecting' Aina, but she never received the same in return. There was no one else who understood how Leonel felt right this moment more than she did. But even now, she was willing to help.

So, she explained. The only details she missed were ones that she had never been privy to, but whether it was related to how broken Aina was after leaving Leonel, all the way up to her personality being completely erased, she left nothing out.

When she was finished, the three young men looked toward one another. They hadn't expected to have had the needle moved for them at all. But now...

What were they supposed to do?

Chapter 1168 Not Satisfied

Joel took a deep breath. This changed the dynamic of a lot of things, but he wasn't sure of how to proceed from here.

For one, the Viola family was far too powerful. The fact that they had moved the wedding up on purpose without regard for Miel meant that they were already determined to do this. It was clear that after the elders of the Viola family saw Aina's talent, they were determined to make her theirs.

But, this was just one aspect of it. Even if they had known this before, Franco would have still said what he said earlier. The fact that Aina wasn't entirely in control of her faculties, though, was something that made even them hesitate.

The choice was made by Aina's father to begin with, not Aina. And it seemed that Aina agreed because she saw the 'logic' behind it. Rychard wasn't worth much to her before, but if he was a ticket to the Void Palace, then it made sense to her. As for matters of love, she hadn't even considered it.

"We..." Joel shook his head. "... I don't know, I can't guarantee anything. I can only say that we'll speak with Leonel and Granny Roesia. Maybe there is something they can do."

Maybe if it have been before the first day's selection, Joel and the others would have been ready to wade through hell or high water, not for Aina, but just so that Leonel would have a chance at happiness. The odds a man would be able to get over his first love marrying and lying with another man was minimal at best. And, for someone like Leonel, just the attempt toward the action alone was enough for him to shut down and not mind it anymore.

But... Just earlier today, they had all received a rude awakening. All the pride they had had from their accomplishments in the Milky Way flew away like dust in a storm. They were nothing but ants here. They had barely gained the ability to fight against the geniuses of branch families, how could they possibly challenge the older generation of a pillar family like the Viola?

Savahn smiled a complicated smile. It had a hint of bitterness to it, but it was mostly filled with understanding.

The truth was that Miel hadn't even sent them here. It was Yuri who realized that something must have gone wrong, causing her to come here of her own accord.

She knew her adoptive father well and knew that he wouldn't put Aina in danger on purpose. He likely wanted to use Rychard, and then when she was accepted by the Void Palace, throw him away. The trouble was that while Miel had spent most of his time training, pining after a day he could get revenge for his late wife, Rychard had been embroiled in political schemes since he was a boy.

How could Miel outsmart Rychard? Rychard saw through his plan with a glance and adjusted accordingly.

Without the halo of Void Palace disciple around her, Rychard had no need to worry about forcing Aina to do anything. And, because he was alone and this marriage had been accepted by the elders of the Viola family, Miel couldn't snatch Aina away openly without being hunted down and killed.

This left Miel with very little options and Aina with even fewer.

Ultimately, they were all at a loss for what to do.

**

"Yip! Yip!"

Leonel smiled as Little Blackstar raced around his hands, arms and shoulders, messing about with Little Tolly. The two still had their rivalry and it only seemed to grow stronger after Little Blackstar awoke from his comatose state.

Still, though they seemed to be at each other's throats, Leonel could faintly feel that Little Tolly had missed Little Blackstar. The two little toddlers might as well have been the closest of blood brothers.

Leonel was happy that he had his own brothers as well. Being an only child could have very well been too lonely if he hadn't.

"Ah, be careful, don't touch that."

Little Blackstar almost nicked the blade of a sword Leonel was working on.

One would have thought that Leonel would be honing his skill, maybe practicing some more of the Luxnix family Force Arts. But, nope... He was crafting.

The sword looked like it was straight out of Grecian times. It was quite short, being only about a foot and a half long. Its body was narrower near the hilt and thicker near its tip before ending at a point, giving it a sleek sort of 'S' shaped curve.

It had a bronze blade and a delicate wood handle that was immaculately carved. But, maybe its most astounding feature was that the air seemed to tremble around it, almost distorting reality everywhere it passed.

Without Leonel even telling him, Blackstar suddenly sensed danger, rolling into a ball and vanishing into space before appearing high in the air. His beady black eyes looked down, his whiskers flickering between apprehension and curiosity.

Little Blackstar didn't feel like he would die from that blade, but he definitely felt that he would get hurt. In fact, he felt that he would be hurt even if he used his incorporeal ability.

Blackstar was used to being immune to most attacks because he could just displace his body into his Shadow World. But, for some reason, that sword seemed to be able to ignore him, even attack him while he was in there!

Leonel reached out and grabbed the sword, balancing it on a finger.

"It's just a prototype, but its pretty good." Leonel spoke with Little Blackstar. "If I made weapons like this, it would be good. The problem is that this sort of blade can only last one battle before its own

destructive capability eats away at the metal it was made from. A shame... I'm not sure if I could fix that, it would take quite some research..."

"Yip! Yip!"

Leonel laughed. "I can make you some claw gauntlets like this if you want. But, they would probably have the same issue. Plus, don't you think you scare your enemies enough?"

"Yip!"

Blackstar shook his head furiously. Clearly, the little guy wasn't satisfied.

Chapter 1169 Those Words...

Leonel laughed again, flicking his finger and sending the sword spiraling upward. With a dull slapping sound, Leonel grabbed the sword by its hilt and sent it flying forward.

A soothing whistle sound filled the air, only to be interrupted by the sound of blade meeting wood. A tree in the distance was directly split in the middle and it seemed that the sword might continued travelling right through it. But, it was at that moment that something astonishing happened.

As though it had been burnt from the inside out, the tree crumbled into a pile of ash, collapsing to the ground in a heap.

The sword continued into the distance before falling not far afterward. Unfortunately, the ground it landed upon became like an ash land of death. The greenery withered, the rich soil turned to harsh granules, and a crater formed and collapsed, the weakened ground falling in on itself.

Leonel whistled, the result being slightly more exaggerated than even he expected.

Of course, this weapon was the result of Leonel applying what he had grasped from his Innate Node. It was just a low level destruction Force Art, but the result was quite devastating.

Though that was just a normal tree and ground, and the crater wasn't very large, barely half a meter in radius, they were both still tempered by a Sixth Dimensional world even if they weren't anything special. To have them crumble like that... Well, it spoke for itself.

The only trouble was...

Almost as soon as the crater began to collapse, as though it had used up all its energy, the sword crumbled soon afterward. Leonel didn't even bother to go after it, he knew it was finished.

As he had expected, weapons he incorporated these sort of Force Arts into would have a short shelf life. He had predicted that they would last maybe one battle, but judging by the result, it might not last even that long. They might be good as a trump card, but as a main mode of battle... Leonel didn't think they could be trusted.

On top of this, they were expensive. Just to survive as long as it did, Leonel was forced to forge the sword of the Sixth Dimension Ore he had gotten from Patriarch Avarone Radix's body. When he had tried the same thing with a Fifth Dimension Ore, it didn't even make it past the production stage.

There were, of course, other problems as well. For instance, it wasn't scalable since Leonel was definitely the only one who could Craft them. On top of that, they were obviously dangerous. Leonel wasn't sure how easy it would be for others to harm themselves with it.

'The destructive power is undeniable. I might just need to stick to using it with arrows and maybe bullets if I ever decide to go that route again... The Tier 9 Gold Bow should be able to handle firing those arrows up to a certain point, the only trouble is where am I going to find so much Sixth Dimensional Ore?'

Leonel shook his head. Maybe instead of trying to find such things, he should instead focus on finding Ores better suited to withstanding the Destruction Force Arts.

'Alright, I'll leave this be for now. There's at least a proof of concept. I think I'll turn my attention back to the Luxnix family Force Art system now.'

Leonel's mind was like a machine working on the best sort of fuel. Everything was so clear to him and his minds worked separately and in unison completely seamlessly.

He let Little Tolly go play with Little Blackstar and he reallocated the minds he had put toward Crafting back toward analyzing the ins and outs of this new Force Art system.

One might think that this wasn't worth it. After all, Leonel's mother knew of the Luxnix Force Art system, yet all of her most powerful techniques used the Camelot Magic System instead. So, wasn't it better to focus on the latter?

But Leonel saw it differently. After speaking with his grandmother and consulting the dictionary, he understood a bit more about the World Spirit.

The reason why all of his mother's most powerful techniques utilized Camelot's system and not the Luxnix's was because she had Earth's World Spirit, not the Three Pillar World's World Spirit which was divided between the three families.

Simply put, his mother had perfectly grasped Camelot's Magic System without even trying to its greatest depths. In fact, she was only limited by her current Dimension level. When it came to the Luxnix's, though, her comprehension was shallow by comparison.

Realizing this, Leonel understood that there was still great potential in the Luxnix's system.

Just when Leonel was about to completely close himself off again, he looked up, realizing that his brothers were all approaching him with complicated looks in their eyes.

"Hm?" Leonel blinked. "What's wrong with you all?"

Joel shook his head. He was certain that Leonel already had a guess, probably multiple. But, he still started to speak.

"Leo, this is how things are..."

Leonel listened silently, not interrupting even once. His expression wasn't cold or indifferent, he simply looked like he was listening to a friend tell him a story. He nodded from time to time and even hummed in agreement depending on the circumstances. If one didn't know just how much all of this should have mattered to Leonel, they would have never thought there was anything wrong with his actions.

"... The decision is up to you." Joel finally said.

"I'm with you, Cap." Raj supplemented.

After hearing the truth behind things, even Raj couldn't help but change his tune. In fact, he felt kind of bad for being so hard on her. But, in the end, the one he would follow would always be Leonel, even if it was at the expense of Aina.

Still... Being cursed from childhood, losing your mother, and effectively your father. Dealing with that sort of pain for a lifetime and having your insecurities amplified day after day... Raj couldn't help but be sympathetic.

"I see." Leonel nodded and remained silent for a moment before continuing.

"Unfortunately, I have no intention of saving her."

All those years ago, Leonel had made his stance very clear to Aina. In fact, he remembered the exact words he had spoken that day.

'I know you have a heavy burden on your heart. All I want you to know is that I'm here to bear it with you. I just want you to trust me, lean on me. Never go off on your own and do something stupid because I will not come to save you. Do you understand me?'

Those words, he had spoken them and he had meant them.

Chapter 1170 73%

Joel sighed when he heard these words. He had already expected as much, but hearing it so clearly like this made him feel that it was unfortunate.

Sometimes, Joel felt like there was some sort of god looking down on them and pulling these strings, making certain that they all looked as foolish as possible at any given time for their sick form of entertainment.

For a long while, they thought that Aina was completely unworthy of Leonel. And, truth be told, she hadn't really done much to change their opinion aside from becoming extraordinarily beautiful. Unfortunately, this wasn't enough to move the needle for Leonel.

Now, in an irony of ironies, it was they who wanted Leonel to step up. Of course, this wasn't for Aina's sake, but Joel believed that she was truly Leonel's best chance at happiness. Or, at the very least, if they didn't end up together, Leonel deserved some better form of closure than this.

And yet... It was now Leonel who wanted no part of it.

Leonel hadn't even bothered to say a word to Aina. They weren't face to face when she left, and he didn't even look in her direction after hearing Rychar's announcement. No matter how you spun it, they just found it impossible to feel that such a thing was healthy.

Joel wondered how they would take things from here. On one side, he wanted to support Leonel and his decision. After all, it was still Leonel's right to decide how they dealt with these matters. But, on the other, he didn't want Leonel to decide on something he would regret for a lifetime.

Unfortunately, Joel felt that Leonel wasn't a normal person by any stretch.

If it was someone else, Joel might think that they were just being vindictive and wanted their significant other to suffer just as much as they had, taking responsibility for their own decisions. But, he simply couldn't find any rage in Leonel's eyes at all. No matter how good of an actor a person was, it was simply impossible for them to mask such a fresh wound so easily.

Joel never got the chance to make his decision, though... Because Leonel's next words seemed to close off any sort of chance they had.

"I know that you all might try to do something, thinking it to be in my best interest, but I hope that you won't." Leonel's gaze gained a sincere and patient light to it. "I do not want my brothers to risk their lives, and the same goes with my grandmother. I only just began to reform a relationship with her and her body is quite frail now, she's no longer in her prime.

"Though my grandmother is powerful, she's not nearly as powerful as she once was and she's currently stuck at a bottleneck she can't break past. She has a lot of guilt on her shoulders even though I do not blame her, if you bring this possibility to her, I'm certain that she will go all out for a chance at giving me happiness.

"But, I need you all to understand that this path won't bring me happiness. If anything, it will lose me brothers and there's an over 80% likelihood that it will lose me my grandmother."

Leonel matched each one of their gazes. He wasn't pressuring any of them, but he wanted to convey his feelings as clearly as possible. When he laid out the truth so plainly and succinctly, the expressions of the boys couldn't help but change several times.

They subconsciously knew how dangerous these matters would be, but hearing it explained like this truly made them understand what kind of game they were trying to play.

"I can understand Aina's plight, however the risk is not worth the reward. I can't trade the lives of people I care about for the life of someone... I simply don't."

Joel and the others felt their hearts tremble when they heard this. But, it made Leonel's stance as clear as day. There was simply nothing else they could do to refute it. Judging by Leonel's tone, even though he didn't say it, if he felt that they were about to take action, he would stop them. He knew the date of the wedding just as well as they did and it would only be a day from now. There was simply no time for them to devise any sort of plan that could fool Leonel.

And even if they could... should they?

Leonel sighed. "I don't want these matters to weigh on you all, but I can't force it to not either. If it makes you all feel better, the current Aina can snap Rychard like a twig and she's completely immune to poisons due to her ability. Unless one of the Viola family elders stands in their wedding chambers, no one could force her to do anything she doesn't want to do. And if she does want to do it, why should you all be the ones to worry about it?

"Just focus on your training. We have much bigger things to worry about and much bigger goals in mind."

The eight looked toward one another and nodded. Maybe this was the best way to look at things.

They alone didn't have the strength to even think of challenging the Viola. And, they had no right to put Leonel's grandmother in danger when he explicitly asked them not to. How would they even face Leonel if they came back with Aina but his grandmother was dead? What if he cut them off just like he had James?

In the end... There was nothing they could do.

...

The hours continued to tick by. Leonel spent a few moments relaxing with his brothers, mostly at their insistence, before he returned to refining his comprehension of the Luxnix's Force Art System.

While part of his mind was on this, another part was on something completely different, though...

'Her father had something capable of erasing her personality, huh...?'

Sparks flew within Leonel's Dreamscape.

'73% probability that it is another tablet based on currently available information...

'So... How do I get my hands on it?'