

Descent 1281

Chapter 1281 Leash

Leonel's gaze only narrowed for a moment, but the dangerous feeling that gripped his neck was near instantaneous. He hadn't even moved or said anything, but it was as though the warning was already prepared. No, it was more like someone was hoping and praying that he would do something, as though this was exactly the sort of moment they were waiting for.

Leonel was under no illusions that he could already defeat a Void Palace disciple, he wasn't enough of a fool to have lost his head in such a way. At the same time, he also didn't believe that this young woman didn't have an answer for him. She wasn't answering because she didn't feel like it. Or, more accurately, she wasn't answering because she didn't want to.

That same air of disdain and disregard was carried with that dangerous feeling around his neck. The gap between himself and this woman was large enough that Leonel knew he wouldn't even last a few exchanges, but that only made the feeling all the more potent. These crafters hadn't had much respect for the rookies in this village to begin with, this was probably just an easy way for them to accumulate Void Points. But, for whatever reason, they were especially disdainful of Leonel.

Leonel himself, though, didn't flinch or retreat. In fact, his smile only completely faded away, a certain lofty indifference coloring his irises as he looked down toward the woman before him.

He didn't say a word, he only seemed to memorize this individual's face before his gaze shifted toward the other two 'store clerks', but neither of them even looked his way. It was as though these matters didn't have the slightest thing to do with them.

It all summed up to one thought: He had wasted 10 precious minutes.

Leonel turned and left the store without a word. The next place he went to was the smithy. If he couldn't secure uniforms, he had to, at the very least, try and secure weapons for everyone, that would be their true life's blood in this place.

Leonel had been out there already, even if you could do so, defeating those beasts with nothing more than your hands was too dangerous. The contamination of Anarchic Force would increase by several orders of magnitude and the result could be catastrophic.

Leonel had made such a mistake before when a hint of a creature's blood touched his skin and his situation could have turned for the worst if it wasn't for the fact he had Cleansing Waters with him. In such an environment, without a weapon that could actually survive in this land, you would be finished.

But, once again, he wasted 10 minutes.

The gaze of one of the burly and shirtless 'store clerks' met his own. However, instead of remaining silent like the young woman had, his mouth actually opened to speak.

"Crawl out of my shop while you still have legs to do so."

Leonel's irises flickered with crimson, a sudden heat searing to life above his right hip. The temperature of the smithy rose just the slightest measure, but it was an uncomfortable sort of heat, the kind that only occurred when the air was particularly moist and every rising degree latched onto your skin and

suffocated your sweat glands. In this sort of heat, even breathing felt uncomfortable and every inch of clothing felt unbearable...

Leonel was usually quite good at controlling his temper, at least when it was related to matters of himself. So long as such things didn't include his family and friends, biding his time and striking back in the most lethal of ways only when the moment was right was his status quo.

But, for some reason, he found it especially hard to do this now.

He had no idea how he made it out of that shop without letting his rage burn. This might have sounded like a throwaway line or an exaggeration, but it was actually the raw truth. Leonel dulled his senses to an extreme using Dream Sense, smothering the rolling flames in his chest, turned on his heel, and walked out without a word.

Others might have taken this sort of opportunity to sneer, but such individuals wouldn't have noticed the vacant look in his eyes, almost as though he was no longer even in control of his own body.

The next store Leonel visited sold food and water.

Those in higher Dimensions could usually spend longer than those in lower Dimensions without food, and this was thanks to Force. It was the control over these mysterious energies they had that could make up for a whole host of things, including food and sleep.

However, in an environment that fought back against you like this one, Force couldn't be casually diverted to the upkeep of the body, it was too focused on keeping you alive under the assault of the poison in the air. Leonel had eaten not long ago and he could already feel that he would maybe last a day more before hunger set in once again.

Unfortunately, it was yet another ten minutes wasted.

As though a glutton for punishment, Leonel still chose to go to the final store. This wasn't because he was a fool. Rather, he owed it to the others to at least check.

This final storefront was for medicine and health care. This was the only place most who got infected and gained severe injuries could go, and it was also the only place that sold herbs and pills that could counter Anarchic Force.

While being cut off from all the others could still leave one room for survival if they were resourceful and careful enough, not to mention willing to weather the humiliation of being without clothes, being cut off from this one was akin to sentencing a person to death.

Being rejected from this place was akin to these people saying they wanted him dead.

20 minutes he waited. 20 minutes he waited to confirm this truth.

The line for this place was the longest of them all and for good reason at that. When Leonel made it to the front of the line, he found a woman with green hair and irises that fused into the whites of her eyes. It was clear that she was blind, or at least she appeared to be so. But, her demeanor was no less momentous than all the other disciples.

"Leave."

Those were the simple words she spoke without the slightest hint of change in her expression.

By this point, Leonel was no longer using Dream Sense. The corners of his lips angled downward and his lips pursed as he nodded his head, his entire expression seemed to read: "Okay, no problem."

Leonel turned around for the fourth time and stood in the middle of the village square. He closed his eyes and took a slight breath.

10 minutes. That was all that was left of the hour he had had remaining when he returned.

His hands slid into his pockets, his head tilting up to the skies as his eyes remained closed. He couldn't seem to sense the glances of satisfaction that landed on him in the slightest.

In the skies, Cornelius felt another headache coming on.

'You just took away everything a madman had to lose, what the hell are you going to use as his leash now?'

[Author's Note below]

Chapter 1282 Masterful

Leonel's heart beat at a steady rhythm, his head tilted up to the skies. He seemed indifferent to it all for a moment, but it was only for a moment. In the next, a wide grin spread across his face.

The feeling was all too familiar. Down a single score, with the entire field to go, the ball in his hands and everything dancing upon his palms, moving rhythmically under his control. He never loved playing football, but whenever those moments came, something within him would awaken. His mind would become sharper, his arm would become stronger, his gaze would become more piercing.

But now, those stakes were even higher. What was the worst that could happen on a football field? At worst he would just lose the game and a blemish would be found on his perfect record. But, what would happen here?

His dreams would be cut off. His friends would suffer tragic fates and likely die. He would be humiliated, shamed, buried beneath stares of disdain and reminders of his own incompetence.

That sort of feeling made his blood rush. It made his mind elevate to another level.

His body tensed, then relaxed. His fingers flexed and stretched. The howling of his heart left a reverberating, but subtle beating quake dancing through the air. And then, he vanished.

When Leonel appeared again, he stood at the outskirts of the village, his eyes having snapped open to reveal two blinding orbs of violet, his hair standing on end and his aura blazing. His arms stretched out as though he was the conductor of an orchestra, Little Tolliver appearing even as the corpses of dozens of beasts appeared at his feet.

Leonel's gaze seemed to glaze over, his pupils flickering back and forth with an unfathomable speed, ricocheting back and forth within his eye sockets as though playing a game of pinball.

Little Tolly wrapped around the corpse of a wolf, rising it up into the air. By that point, Leonel's palm had already flipped over, a spear appearing in his hands and flickering with a radiant gold Spear Force.

His hand became nothing more than a blur, sweeping forward with such force that it wasn't even immediately obvious what sort of cut he had made. However, in the next instant, Little Tolly seemed to have already reacted, pinching itself into the cut Leonel had formed and squeezing itself beneath the layer that separated skin and flesh.

In the blink of an eye, the beast was suddenly stripped of its furry coat.

Blood rained through the air, but just as quickly as it appeared, globules of Cleansing Waters manifested beneath Leonel's deft control. In one movement of his wrists, the pelt was washed of all blood and Anarchic Force, and in another movement, Little Tolly was surrounded and completely cleansed.

The contaminated Cleansing Waters were jetted out into the distance, but Leonel had already moved on long before it could even hit the ground.

He repeated this exact same process dozens of times, his fingers forming whipping sounds in the air as they struck downward at an inconceivable speed, leaving nothing but blurs and cracks of wind in their wake.

By this point, many of the youths of the Three Pillar Sector had awoken from their meditation to see what was happening. Though they were still about a day away from adjusting to the climate completely, they at least looked far better than they had in the past. At the very least, they could split their attention now as their bodies continued to acclimate, but seeing what was before them, many were completely unsure of how to react.

Oddly enough, the only one who kept her eyes closed the entire time was Aina. If it wasn't for the light smile slowly spreading across her face, one would have thought that there may very well have been something wrong with her.

But, just the same, Leonel reacted as though he hadn't noticed any changes in his surroundings at all, the speed of his hands and fingers only becoming faster as his gaze blazed a brighter and brighter light.

Held up by Little Tolly, dozens of pieces of fabrics hung in the air. Leonel's mind flickered through the Dream Clone images of his companions, mapping out the most efficient method to use the pelts that hung before him, a process that took no more than just a single split second.

"Huuu..."

Leonel's spear left sizzling whistles throughout the air as it snaked forward. Everywhere it passed by, another piece of fur would be cut down to size. In a blink, his spear had vanished, replaced by the delicate coil of a Force Crafter's Quill.

Compared to his other equipment, this Quill had fallen the furthest behind. Its feather was a bit ruffled, the delicate outline of its black body and golden veins had dulled, and its tip had been ground down beneath continuous usage.

And yet, when it hit Leonel's hand, nesting into his fingers and gently waving beneath the wind, despite the fact it knew this would be the last time it could work together with Leonel like this, it seemed to sing, its body releasing a radiant glow as though a final outcry to the world.

The torches of Leonel's irises bloomed. He could feel that tug, a concept that had just barely alluded him before awakening right that moment.

'I will make sure the last Craft you leave to this world is masterful.'

Leonel's wrist left an elegant arc through the air, a line of gold following his every pen stroke as a dense fog of violet hung around him, growing in size with every passing moment until the point a miniature humanoid creation emerged from his forehead.

With a final flicker, Leonel's Crafter's Quill crumbled to ash, dancing into the wind and vanishing into the hovering pieces of fabric.

"Haaa..."

A steamy breath left Leonel's lips, his heart pulsing with a steady rhythm.

."

Little Tolliver's body seemed to vanish, concentrating into a long and thin sowing needle.

Leonel's Force Erupted, forming a thin line of thread that sparkled in the dark atmosphere.

Chapter 1283 These Materials

It seemed impossible, and yet Leonel's fingers only became faster and faster. The striking melody of his digits was so great that the air pressure rebounded against the tough ground, causing two hardy sounds to follow every single downstroke.

Every movement he made was another unique and perfectly executed command to Little Tolly. Their synergy reached another level and the little Metal Spirit moved about so quickly that it seemed as though it didn't have any limits.

Little Tolly had felt the final moment of the Crafter's Quill as well. Fueled by some unknown power and strength, the little guy went all out, its silvery body flickering with a subtle bluish hue that gave it all the more depth and character.

The sewing needle Little Tolly had concentrated itself into and the thin line of Force String Leonel had formed fused into one, the latter becoming the tail of the former. With this connection secured, Little Tolly whizzed in and out of the fabric, sewing pieces together and formulating clothing of perfect proportions.

Every time one finished, it would shoot out toward the person it was meant for, landing perfectly in their laps without the slightest issue.

<Seamster Synergy> was a tailoring technique that stood above others. Using Little Tolly as a guide and his own Force String as the fuser, fabrics could be seamlessly combined as though they were always one. It completely eliminated weak points in a Craft and, if the Crafter was skilled enough, could even make it a strong point.

The technique could be used on more than just fabrics as well. It could weld together metals and any inorganic materials Leonel might have to work with. Of course, it could only do this thanks to Little

Tolly's intrinsic properties and would be much weaker in the hands of someone who didn't have a Metal Spirit... But this wasn't exactly something Leonel had to worry about in the slightest.

A rectangular strip of fabric bent around itself and formed the shape of a tube top. Little Tolly shot out from its bottom, winding up through it like a corkscrew and sewing both halves together.

Blazing trails of blue were left in every which direction, numerous corkscrew-like formations being left hovering in the air long after Little Tolly had long since left.

BANG!

The final strip completed. Still in a state of hyperactivity, Leonel began to put his own on. Every piece that touched his body seemed to carry an enigmatic air to it, making his blood rush. He felt that without a doubt, this was his greatest Craft completed to this point despite the poor materials he had on hand.

First came the bottoms. Leonel didn't seem to care in the slightest as he took his original beast skirt off, slipping on a new pair. Then, he put on the ankle braces and the wrist braces, before finally slipping on a thin band that wrapped about his torso just below his chest.

The fur was all was a deep grey to black and didn't cover much skin at all. But, a pulsing sort of power seemed to rise when all the pieces were put together as one.

And that was when it happened.

A rushing Black Force surged out from the clothing. What sounded like the clink of armor resounded, alternating between a foggy blackness and the corporeal.

Leonel's hair and face were enveloped by this black fog, the former seeming to grow out like a dancing river. His hands grew a size, becoming demonic claws and his back suddenly began to grow out long tendrils of darkness, eerily similar to the preferred method of attack used by a particular Cursed Beast...

Deep within the fog that now covered Leonel's hair and face, two orbs of red now hovered, seeming to pierce through any and everything before it.

Power rushed through Leonel's as he raised his leg, stomping down hard.

Slowly but surely, walls of earth began to rise, forming two protected sections.

"Change here."

Beneath the black fog, Leonel's voice sounded several octaves too low as though he was truly reaching out from the depths of hell. But, just as he said this, the cloak vanished beneath his command, revealing the figure of a young man wrapped in beast cloth as though what happened previously had never happened.

The youths looked from Leonel to the beast clothing in their hands. Did these really produce that? That strength, where had it come from? How had he done it? Was such a thing even possible?

No, maybe that wasn't what they should be focusing on at all. Let alone possible, how had it been done in such a short amount of time...?

Four minutes... He had used just Four Minutes...

Leonel slowly walked back into village 0012. Despite the short amount of time he had left, it didn't seem like his steps were hurried in the slightest, almost as though he had all the time in the world remaining.

The eyes that were on him now had changed drastically from just five minutes ago.

Fear. Apprehension. Wariness.

These emotions suffused the air, and Leonel's indifference wasn't doing anything to help it in the slightest.

Little Tolly bobbed above Leonel's shoulder, changing shape as it pleased and picking forms that only seemed more sinister with every passing moment. First the little one was a wolf, then a tiger, then a menacing grizzly bear, before finally becoming a silver dragon, coiling about Leonel's body before resting its head on his shoulders.

No one seemed to understand what Leonel wanted to do, but that only made them more apprehensive. With how cruel this place was, couldn't he just snatch whatever he wanted from any one of them passing by? Even if the store clerks acted to stop him, there was only so far they would be allowed to take this. This was supposed to be a challenge for rookies, it wouldn't be much of a challenge if upper year students could just act as they pleased.

It was then that Leonel's body vanished. But, what happened next was something that no one could have possibly guessed. Even Cornelius rose a palm to his forehead, closing his eyes and sighing.

BANG!

Leonel landed on top of the Smithy, his heavy weight causing the shoddy construction to wave back and forth.

He rose an arm into the air that instantly became enveloped by black fog, forming an enormous demonic claw as Little Tolly snaked forward.

BANG!

Leonel's claws shot and clamped down, pulling at the highest log that formed the Smithy's roof and ripping it from its seams.

He cast a gaze down, finding many pairs of eyes looking up from within the Smithy with incredulous expressions on their faces. None of them could believe what they were seeing with their own eyes, however, rubbing them didn't seem to change what was taking place in the slightest.

Leonel's gaze met the very Craftsman who had told him to roll out, his gaze filled with a dense coldness as he hoisted the log onto his shoulder before reaching down again and ripping out another thick log from the ceiling of the Smithy.

"These materials. I'll be taking them."

Anarchic Force rushed into the Smithy and down into the protective curtains, ruining the Crafts they had been working on.

Chapter 1284 The Rules of the Void Palace

Gemmes was completely caught off guard. The Craft he was diligently working on practically crumbled within his hand.

His expression suddenly changed. With quick movements, he retrieved his Fire Spirit, storing it away before it could suffer too much beneath the Anarchic Force.

Spirits were fragile beings, especially ones of lower quality and beneath a certain standard. The curtains weren't just important for protecting the privacy of the rookies they Crafted for, but it was also a protective shield against the Anarchic Force that managed to make it through when the doors of the Smithy opened. This way, they could keep their Spirits relatively safe.

And yet, in a single action, Leonel had ruined all of that.

He simply gave Gemmes a glance and jumped away, landing on another shop roof. With the same motion, he ripped out a ceiling log. The food stores beneath were immediately contaminated as Leonel balanced a third log on his shoulder, his indifferent glance sweeping downward without a care.

His figure flickered and he appeared above another shop. This time, he landed on the tailor shop, a demonic hand ripping downward. Little Tolly acted quickly, rushing between the cracks that fused the logs together and shattering all the connections it could before Leonel ripped out the rest.

By the end of it, Leonel had four logs, each of at least five meters in length and about a foot and a half to two feet wide. It was definitely much more than he needed, but he couldn't be bothered to care.

He landed heavily on the ground just as several of the store clerks stormed out. Even the green haired store clerk of the medicinal store Leonel had left alone for now rushed out, likely wanting to pre-emptively stop Leonel from doing something. But, to her surprise, Leonel was already walking away.

Right then, though, Leonel's steps came to a pause. He looked back to find a seething Gemmes and a few others. The young woman from the tailor shop who had been the first to ignore him, a girl who went by the name of Janyn, was also among them. Leonel's actions had ruined several of the uniforms she had yet to properly seal and prime, how could she not be furious as well?

They hadn't come here for charity work, they came here to accumulate Void Points. Leonel's actions had made that practically impossible. They would have to fix the roofs first, but that would take work. And, something told them it wouldn't be so easy to get the logs back from Leonel, meaning they would actually have to go and procure their own, something that was extremely difficult to begin with.

Leonel had been correct in his assumptions, you weren't meant to cut down trees on your own, even upper Rank disciples found this to be extraordinarily difficult to do. Instead, you were meant to trade for the wood you needed with other resources. This wood would be far easier to work with than the raw wood one would find in the forest.

Obviously, Leonel seemed to have guessed this and hadn't hesitated to ruin them.

"What?" Leonel swept his gaze over them all one by one. "You want to attack me? I'm right here. Do it."

Leonel craned his neck back. Holding up four logs on one shoulder, Little Tolly glaring back menacingly on the other, and a deep, dense fog of black hanging around him, he truly looked like the bane of their existence.

Gemmes' forehead vein nearly popped out from the skin that kept it under wraps. Though Janyn seemed to look somewhat calmer, it was clear that she was having trouble controlling herself as well as they both met Leonel's gaze.

It was clear that Leonel knew quite well that there was nothing they could do. Refusing service was already at the very brink of the rules to begin with. Clerks like them were given this level of freedom so that the rookies couldn't just act as they pleased.

As Leonel had guessed earlier, the geniuses were far rowdier in the beginning than they were now. Everything looked peaceful, reserved and quiet, but that was only because enough had suffered at the hands of these clerks to know better than to try anything funny.

Leonel hadn't been the first to be blacklisted. He was just the first to be blacklisted from all of the shops. And, he was also the first that still dared to retaliate after suffering at their hands.

It was clear and obvious to Leonel that this was all due to Orinik. As an upper Rank disciple himself, it was quite easy for Orinik to get those here to believe in his words, and it was even easier when he didn't have to lie.

Leonel knew that he had brought many of these things upon himself by accepting things he shouldn't have, but even if he had to go back in time, he would do it again. When it came to striving after his goal, he wouldn't allow anything to stand in his way, even if that thing was the dissatisfaction of others. He was confident in due to time that he would prove that regardless of whether he was worthy now, he would most definitely be in the future.

Still, he made a mental note of Orinik, his gaze flickering with a cold light.

Seeing that the clerks weren't going to answer, Leonel turned and began to walk away. However, as he passed the green haired woman of the medicinal store, Rosomon...

"Even though you've spared my shop, I have no intention of serving you in the future."

Rosomon's voice was just as calm and even as it always was. She felt it was obvious why Leonel had 'spared' her. No one dared to slight a healer you might need in the future. However, she only sneered inwardly, doubling down on her stance. Everything about Leonel disgusted her.

The response she received in return, though...

Leonel stopped level with her, looking down at Rosomon. The distance that separated their noses was maybe a foot or two, and yet despite their power imbalance, Leonel didn't flinch in the slightest.

"You're overestimating yourself. The reason I didn't target your shop was to give those who haven't wronged me a lifeline to save themselves. However, I can say with great certainty that I will never need your services.

"That said..."

Leonel's gaze flickered with a depth of crimson light that shot out beams within the dull atmosphere of Village 0012.

"... I promise you that if one of my companions needs your help and you refuse them, the moment I'm strong enough...

"Your head will be the first I take. The rules of the Void Palace will not stop me, that I swear."

Leonel's words seemed to carry an enigmatic momentum to them, like an oath that was recognized by a higher power. The wind rushed by, swirling along the ground and causing miniature bursts of small cyclones. The Anarchic Force in the surroundings seemed to dim just the slightest bit, making everyone feel as though it was easier to breathe, and yet simultaneously making them not dare to take a breath at the same time. The violet in Leonel's hair and eyes flickered, the momentum of a King barreling forth.

Rosomon's pupils constricted, her body frozen in place.

Chapter 1285 Beast Skin Armor

Leonel walked by Rosomon and left without another word. He didn't even care to look back after he was finished saying what he wanted. However, the eyes of the Crafters turned clerks couldn't help but all focus on Little Tolly.

They had all been so lost in their rage that they hadn't even noticed that Leonel actually had a Metal Spirit by his side and he was actually letting it wrap around his body and wiggle about without even the slightest hint of protection.

That second shock wasn't enough to override the first, though. Even in the Void Palace, a Metal Spirit was impossibly rare. There were thousands, tens of thousands of high level Crafters here. But, they could all count on their hands and toes how many of them had a Metal Spirit by their side, and every single one of those Individuals was from the Morales family.

The Morales family was the only family capable of controlling such a dangerous Spirit. When left to its own devices, and allowed to grow on its own, a Metal Spirit was no less a threat to human life than some of the most fearsome beasts and rival Races in the whole of the Dimensional Verse and maybe only the Earth Variant affinity of the Morales met the requirements to tame such a beast.

To see it being used so freely by a brat and without the slightest precautions, they felt a cold chill creep up their spines.

The Crafter community of the Void Palace was an especially lofty place to be. It came with prestige and it was about the only way for you to gain Void Points without putting your life on the line constantly. Even this mission here was an extremely precious one, that was why they were so enraged that Leonel had ruined it.

But, if it had to be said who held the greatest prestige among the Crafter factions of the Void Palace, setting aside the super families that backed the Crafter Guilds, it was most definitely the Morales, and especially the Morales who wielded Metal Spirits.

They suddenly understood now why it was that Orinik had never explicitly stated Leonel's last name. Although, it could only be blamed on them. They simply hadn't cared. They were Crafters and were arrogant by trade. Just the fact Leonel's mother was a Sector Ranked disciple wasn't enough to sway them in the slightest, but this...

This was very different.

Rosomon eventually recovered from her shock, her gaze narrowing.

'The Morales family isn't the only family here.'

With that thought, she turned and returned to her store front.

...

Leonel worked just as fast with the logs as he had worked with the fabric. In fact, his goal with the logs were much simpler than what he had done with the fabrics so he finished even faster, even after being delayed a moment.

As expected, the prepared logs might have been softer than the trees outside the line of the village, but it also made it easier to cut and deal with. In addition, it managed to maintain some of its initial hardness as well, not losing out to many higher Tier Fifth Dimensional metals. This hardness coupled with Leonel's Force Arts would allow his companions to have some of the best weapons amongst the rookies.

Leonel finished just in time for the women to step out from their makeshift changing rooms, their elegant postures catching a lot of attention. If it wasn't for them knowing, or maybe hoping better, they would have thought that Leonel was a pervert with the ways he had designed their uniforms. However, regardless, they had to admit that the way it shaped to their bodies was very flattering and nothing was too small nor too big. They could only not think about how Leonel knew all their measurements so well too much.

In truth, Leonel had wanted to give everyone more clothing to work with, but he hadn't killed many beasts. In addition, because he didn't act with thought of preserving their pelts, much of the fur was rendered unusable by him. So, this was ultimately the only choice.

As much attention as the women got when they stepped out, even with how pale and weak they seemed at this moment, it paled in comparison to what Aina received.

The short beast skin barely reached the middle of her thighs. Her toned belly was revealed, her every breath causing the faint outline of a powerful core to flash in and out of existence. Her chest was covered by a beast skin band, covering just enough of the lower and upper halves of her ample breasts.

As scandalous as the main attractions of the uniform were, though, the accessories were even more so.

Leonel had used a fabric processing technique to form a pair of grey stockings for all of the women. The result somehow made Aina's long, slender legs even more attractive than they were initially.

But, what truly brought it all together was the beast skin choker that clung loosely to their necks, giving the design of the outfits an added touch of flare.

Leonel truly hadn't tried to make it all so scandalous. Without the choker, the armor lost its balance and was much weaker. It was the same reason he had a thin band running just beneath his chest. It wasn't for aesthetic purposes. He had gone for functionality first, though... He couldn't bear for them to not also look cool at the same time.

And cool they were.

Leonel walked to Aina, handing her a replica battle ax that looked identical to her own except for the fact this was formed of greyish-black wood. But, surprisingly, she smiled lightly and shook her head, taking out her original battle ax.

"It's fine, mine can hold up. Sorry for the trouble."

Leonel's brow raised and he shook his head. "It wasn't much trouble."

It had only taken him a few seconds to form it, how could it be trouble?

"Arnold, take this. Making your usual palm weapons is difficult with the material I have on hand right now. If they fail you, you can use this."

"Mm." Arnold nodded.

"Quickly, I'll explain to you all the function of the beast skin armor..."

Aina stood silently by Leonel's side as he explained things.

Just as Leonel finished the final word, chimes rang and they all looked upward.

It seemed the True Selection would finally begin now.

Chapter 1286 Markers and Restrictions

Leonel's gaze flickered.

With a quick sweep, he took a mental note of the state of everyone. From what he could see, the closest to returning to their full strength were Myghell and Aina. But, even then, they were restricted to about 20-30% of what they could do. It would take them at least another day or two before they were back up to their peak condition.

As for the others, they were in an even worst state, most of whom could barely even stand on their own two feet. The likes of Noah, Karolus, Elthor and, surprisingly, Savahn, had about 10-15% of their strength now.

'Hm?'

Leonel's gaze narrowed as he locked onto the pale faced Yuri. The latter hadn't spoken to him or even looked at him since they 'reunited'. It wasn't that big of a deal to Leonel as he was never truly close with Yuri to begin with, but it was clear and obvious that the latter wasn't very happy with him at all.

This wasn't a very surprising turn of events. After all, even though he didn't show his face as they left, Leonel had felt a very dense killing intent lock onto him when he was leaving through the portal toward the Void Palace. And, it was especially obvious when Aina called him 'King'. So, Leonel had already come to understand that the father-adoptive daughter pair hated his guts.

That said, this wasn't the reason Leonel had locked onto Yuri at all.

'100%.'

Yuri was in perfect condition. In fact, after scanning everyone here, Leonel was absolutely certain that she was only faking her current state.

Feeling Leonel's gaze, Yuri finally looked up to meet it. The flash of coldness that followed it made Leonel feel as though thousands of needles were piercing into his mind. However, he looked back, unwavering.

He didn't know why it was that Yuri was hiding herself like this as he didn't know the truth behind her origins. But, for the moment, he chose not to expose her. He gained no real benefit from it, and, in truth, things might actually be an advantage in this way.

"Let's go. Activate your armors partially, it will help."

Leonel turned his attention toward the center of the village, expecting for there to be some sort of prepared explanation or orientation, but he realized almost immediately that he had forgotten where he was. This wasn't some nice and cushy organization that coddled its disciples. From the moment they had stepped foot into this place, they had entered a death trap.

The wall of black logs that formed a barrier of protection that separated Village 0012 from the forest beyond was standing tall and proud in one moment, but in the next...

The faint sounds of something large falling immediately caught Leonel's attention. But, even within the walls of the village, the range of his Internal Sight was at most double what it had been in the forest before. There was simply no way for him to locate something his eyes couldn't lock onto. Very soon, though, he wouldn't have to.

It started as barely a flicker of light in the dense fog that formed the canopy of the skies. But, it very quickly became a blinding orb of fluorescence, shining as though a star was crashing down from above.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The meteors crashed down, sending a wall of pressurized air out in all directions.

Leonel was almost thrown off of his feet. He crossed a forearm over his face, his feet trying to dig into the ground but finding that it was so hard that he couldn't find a firm grip anywhere.

Luckily, the pressure wall didn't last very long, though the billowing clouds of dust that followed it didn't have the decency of doing the same. However, it didn't need to for Leonel to realize what had happened.

The wall. It was gone.

Faster than even the clouds of dust, the fog rolled in, overwhelming everything from all directions and causing the concentration of Anarchic Force to multiply several times over. As much as the others had been struggling before, very soon, they would find themselves meeting a wall of opposition they wouldn't be able to walk out of.

"Now!"

Leonel's command roared out again. The others had been too shocked to act on his first call, but hearing his urgency, their sluggish minds snapped awake for a moment.

Using what little strength they could muster, they poured their Force into the beast skin armor Leonel had given them. They were all greatly apprehensive. After all, they barely had any strength remaining, so how could they easily accept using what little they had left in this fashion? However, there was something about the momentum of Leonel's voice that made them trust him.

The moment they acted, the pieces of their beast clothing seemed to vibrate to a unique cadence, a dense black fog connecting them all and enveloping their bodies. Some gained powerful horns, others gained large claws, some had longer legs than more while some gained longer arms, some even gained tendrils just like Leonel had. But, what wasn't doubted was that each gained a large leap forward in strength.

That, though, was just the tip of the iceberg. They felt the effect of the Anarchic Force lessen, allowing them to breathe easier and for their bodies to feel lighter. It also made the process of acclimation easier, although much slower.

When the wall of fog finally made it to them, the horror they had braced for fell like a single drop of water amidst a vast ocean. They couldn't help but look toward Leonel's back with hardly concealed admiration and worship.

What small reprieve they gained, expectedly, didn't last for very long, though.

Numerous pillars of light appeared in the distance. But, it only took a moment for them to begin to thin, separating out into fine, thin and breaking lines of gold before vanishing entirely.

'Markers maybe?'

It was hard to gauge distance in all this fog, especially since they seemed to have purposely made every pillar the same thickness. Leonel only got a general direction out of them.

"The True Selection Begins now. All restrictions have been destroyed and Cursed Beasts are quite drawn to loud noises. I would advise you all get moving as quickly as possible."

Chapter 1287 Third

Almost the instant the voice came to an end the howls of beasts shook the skies, penetrating the dense fog in a way that their eyesight couldn't hope to.

The voice itself was clearly from Ossenna, but it was impossible to pinpoint where exactly she was. It was like she was trying to remind them all that she was paying attention to what was happening even if they couldn't set eyes on her.

Leonel winced slightly, the loud howls threatening to burst his eardrums. The distance between them and the beasts shouldn't have been very close. He had already entered the forest once and they were all quite dispersed and he hadn't run into any packs, likely because the nature of Cursed Beasts didn't really allow them to work together. But, for their roars to be so loud despite the distance, Leonel's heart couldn't help but skip a beat when he thought about just how powerful they had to be.

'We need to move. Now.'

Time was of the essence, this was the conclusion Leonel came to. The fact he could only make such a benign and unimpressive deduction spoke volumes all to its own.

Leonel sent a gaze back, communicating with his eyes before shooting forward. He held back his speed to a level that most in their group could keep up with, not wanting to leave anyone behind. Though they now had the armor to sustain and help them, and they shouldn't have any issues maintaining it at these low settings, they were still restricted somewhat in their strength.

The likes of Aina and Myghell could use about 80% now, while the others were at about 60-70%.

Leonel blazed a path into the village, his gaze narrowing when he witnessed the scene ahead.

In the center of the village, several of the most severely injured youth lay writhing on the ground, the Anarchic Force eating away at their weak bodies and paralyzing them from the inside out. It was clearly already too late for them to receive treatment and one after another, they died.

Even further ahead than that, a surging wall of disciples ran for their lives, understanding that they only had a short time to disperse into the forest before the wall that had protected them before became the bottleneck that assured their deaths.

The issue with this, though, was that this small village already had several hundred geniuses who called this place home. Secondly, despite the large scale of the explosion, only about a 20-meter diameter of the black log wall had been destroyed. And, to make matters worse, the residual force and flames of the impact still lay in the pit that separated them from their escape, forming a barrier that no one dared to cross easily.

This resulted in a surge of people rushing from the back and a wall of individuals who hesitated to take a step forward. Even on Third Dimensional Earth, moshpits were the kind of places innocent people went to die, let alone in a situation like this where people were on a high that surpassed seeing their favorite musician. They were all fighting for their lives.

Leonel's gaze shifted from the hole in the wall to the portions of the black log that still remained. It was obvious that many weren't trying to leap over the normal way because of how difficult it was to climb a hundred meters straight up in a Seventh Dimensional world.

'Can they make it?'

Leonel's brow furrowed deeper. He could clear the hundred meters in just a few steps, but what about those following him? It was unlikely.

Leonel's mind worked in a blur, immediately coming up with a solution. His steps diverted, shooting off at an angle and away from the 20-meter gap in the wall.

"Karolus, with me!"

Karolus' expression changed but he sped up until he was shoulder level with Leonel. His tall and lanky body was filled with strength and vitality, especially after gaining the support of Leonel's armor. He was eager to make his mark.

"Together!" Leonel said, reaching out a hand.

In that moment, a crack appeared in space about a meter off the ground. When Karolus saw this, he immediately understood, his own hand reaching out a moment later. With a thought, his own spatial affinity latched onto the ledge Leonel had formed, widening and strengthening it.

Soon, the 'crack' in space had become like a splintered glass stair, stretching out for about two meters.

Leonel accelerated forward, his gaze flickering as he leapt into the air. Even as he did so, his hand reached out again, forming a second crack three meters ahead and two meters higher off the ground than the first.

Karolus followed suit, his brows marred by concentration.

Leonel's foot landed heavily on the first stair, propelling himself upward toward the second just as Karolus reinforced it.

Their group caught on just a moment later, rushing up the spatial stairway in pairs as they rocketed upward. In just a few moments, they soared over the log wall beneath the astonished gazes of many of those who found themselves on the village side.

"Slow your fall downward!" Leonel's voice commanded again, a road of stars appearing beneath his feet as he zigzagged through the air, slowing his descent by several measures.

Leonel's mind continued to work, his breathing becoming more even and his thoughts becoming focused. He knew the ins and outs of the abilities of everyone who followed him now. After all, while they thought they were anonymous thanks to the billboard of numbers, Leonel had already attached them all to faces. Using everyone quickly and efficiently wouldn't be a problem so long as they hadn't held back too greatly.

At that moment, though, Myghell landed heavily a large measure before Leonel had. Clearly, he hadn't taken any measures to slow himself, nor had he felt the need to.

He looked up, meeting Leonel's gaze for a moment. Even without an exchange of words, Leonel already understood.

Without a word, Myghell shot off into the distance, having no intention of waiting for the rest of them. Following Leonel? Was that a joke?

A smile curled Leonel's lip for a moment before a shocked cry resounded and a body flew out from the fog.

Obviously, it wasn't Myghell. But, rather, it was someone Leonel didn't recognize at all.

Leonel landed on the ground softly, his gaze sharp as it pierced toward the direction Myghell had vanished from.

'Wisdom Branch, Third Awakening.'

Leonel's pupils dilated to an extreme, the illusion of an owl's eyes appearing to his back as his vision jumped through the dense fog to land on a group of disciples Myghell had just blasted through.

Chapter 1288 Barricades

Leonel had recently stepped into the Third Awakening of his Wisdom Branch. Unfortunately, it didn't give him the boost to his mind that he had hoped for. But, what it did do was give him a sharper pair of eyes, eyes that could see much further within this fog than his Internal Sight could.

From just a few meters, Leonel's line of sight extended to about 50, allowing him to see what was going on.

There had been many cabins much closer to the black log wall, and many of them were geniuses on a level beyond those still struggling to get past the wall of fire. So, they had been able to clear the walls alone without relying on the tricks that Leonel had. They were likely talents that had either earned Golden Tokens or had been very close to doing so.

Some of these individuals had formed a barrier, blocking those who made it into the forest from continuing further in. This was a barricade that Myghell had come across, but he blasted through it as though it wasn't there.

'I see. Thanks for the heads up.'

By the time Leonel had observed the situation and understood what was going on, Myghell had already vanished into the distance. It seemed that those that formed the barricade hadn't cared to chase after him either.

Obviously, Myghell had thrown the body of this person back in Leonel's direction as a warning, knowing the poor vision everyone had in this fog.

In Leonel's opinion, Myghell didn't have to do that. One might say that the latter owed Leonel because of the beast skin armor, but Leonel didn't feel that way. After all, it was his fault that everyone only had three hours to adapt, it was his responsibility to help them as a result, even if it was at a detriment to himself.

Leonel didn't have close ties with many of those he was leading right now, but he still did so because he felt responsible. The beast skin armor was what he owed Myghell. But, it seemed Myghell didn't want to leave any question and chose the path toward the cleanest separation possible.

Toward this, Leonel could only chuckle to himself before his gaze became serious once more. One after another, those of the Three Pillar Sector landed to his back, some more heavily than others. Luckily, the foggy armor was able to mostly protect those who couldn't slow their falls by a large enough measure.

'Why would they block the road ahead? Shouldn't they be focused on running now? The beasts will be here soon... No, they're already here.'

Leonel's gaze flickered, roaming about the perimeter. There was no easy way to sneak more than two dozen people through without running into one of these barricades. And, as he had thought, the beasts were already here. There were small skirmishes breaking out everywhere, it was just that these beasts were still manageable for now, most being at Tier 1.

'This is a calculated risk by them. They know that the truly powerful beasts are still closing the distance. In that case, they must want to take advantage of the commotion to stock up on more resources. This is the best opportunity they have to rob people. There's no easy way to deal with this, and with Myghell gone, our battle prowess has definitely taken a strong hit.'

"Prepare for battle. There's a blockade ahead." Leonel explained.

After saying this, Leonel rushed forward again, his palm flipping over to reveal his spear. But, surprisingly, he had brought out his Quasi Bronze Wind Domain spear instead of one of his Quasi Silver ones.

Leonel had been very fond of this spear back when he was still in the Third Dimension. It was four meters long from head to toe and had a ridiculous amount of flexibility, granted by its hollow core revealed thanks to the etchings that coated its body, allowing one to see all the way through it in some sections.

Leonel hadn't claimed a Quasi Silver spear like it just yet, so he had to settle for this one. But he felt it was perfect for this situation.

With a shake of his wrists, the flexible spear vibrated wildly. In that moment, a surging of wind began to form a cyclone around its shaft, grasping onto the dense fog in the surroundings and bending it around Leonel's spear blade.

Leonel's gaze flashed. As he rushed forward, he suddenly pierced forward a half dozen times in quick succession. Every time he did, a dense, Spear Force laced, spiraling tendril of fog would whistle forward, casting a net of volatile strikes that shot toward a barricade.

Aside from just the faintest of golden glows caused by Leonel's Spear Force, the attacks blended into the fog almost as though they weren't there at all. But, what was the most devastating about them was the fact that half way to their destination, the dense Anarchic Force within the fog began to swallow Leonel's Spear Force, increasing the concentration of Anarchic Force into the form of a blade that shot through the skies.

"Enemy attack!"

By the time a member of the barricade with sharper senses realized what was happening, Leonel's spear strikes had already arrived.

Forced to hastily block, many brought their weapons up to their chests while others couldn't bring their weapons out in time and were forced to block with their fists and arms.

Unfortunately, no matter which category they fell into, the results were devastating.

The dense Anarchic Force in Leonel's strike swallowed up the Force they used to defend themselves, ripping through their defenses as though they weren't there.

Those that used weapons ended up relatively better off as these weapons had strong resistance to Anarchic Force to begin with, but those that didn't have the chance found their bodies pierced through and a violent Anarchic Force eating them up from the inside out.

Leonel burst through the clearing, Aina and Noah following to his left and right as they all brandished their weapons.

Chapter 1289 Already?

Cornelius watched this skirmish with an odd flicker in his eyes.

'Already...?'

Maybe only he knew what exactly he meant by this. Or, more accurately, those who understood the difficulty of fighting on a Void Battlefield would all come to a very quick comprehension of exactly what he was baffled by.

...

Leonel's spear techniques flowed with a sort of smoothness it had never had before. This was the first time he had seriously used his spear since his battle with Myghell, and he could almost feel his every action singing, as though every slight movement carried with it a breath of fresh air and a purpose filled with life and vitality.

His four meter long spear left afterimages in the air, melding with the surrounding fog as though there was no separation between them at all.

Those that had managed to survive Leonel's sneak attack recovered quickly, brandishing their own weapons in retaliation. Leonel didn't hesitate to take on three of them, his blood pumping as his violet hair whipped about beneath his own sheer speed.

His foot planted hard against the ground, his body shooting forward.

For a moment, it looked as though he would crash right into a tree ahead of him. His three enemies cleverly used the congestion of the forest to their advantage, trying to recover from the sudden attack in time. But, that was when Leonel's spear showed its flexibility.

As though it had a mind of its own, it snaked around the tree from the left, appearing before the throat of the middle youth who suddenly found themselves frozen in place.

Leonel struck to kill, not showing even the slightest hint of mercy. Everything about his demeanor was oppressive and aggressive. He seemed to finally embody the true style of a spearman. His strikes were no longer bland. Though they still carried a calculative air, it also came with it a certain liveliness that couldn't be denied, as though it was prepared to read and adapt to any situation in a split moment.

"MOVE!"

Leonel's voice boomed.

The two to the side of the young man Leonel targeted reached out with their weapons to protect the throat of their comrade. But, when their weapons struck the tip of Leonel's spear, they suddenly felt as though an overwhelming mountain had crashed down upon them from above.

A strong flash of gold whipped outward, sending the flat of their blades careening against the throat of the companion they sought to protect and resulting in all three of them flying backwards as though a triplet of broken kites.

Leonel burst through the center of the barricade, his aura and movements becoming like a blinding torch for those to his back to follow.

Aina and Noah followed through, the former brandishing an ax of red-gold and the latter wielding a gorgeous blue saber. It was clear that this saber was given to Noah by Alienor, or else it was doubtful that it would be able to survive in such an atmosphere.

They were both just as ruthless as Leonel, Aina never having been a person who shied away from blood and gore and Noah being no less murderous.

What was different from this case in comparison to all others, though, was that the enemies they faced weren't canon fodder. In fact, they were unlike any enemy they had ever faced before. Even with the intent to kill, Leonel had actually failed to do so, and Aina and Noah were no different.

This place was where all the top talent of the Human Domain accumulated. They might have had their heads forcefully lowered and all their pride and aspirations watered down in the last several months, but for those had survived to this point, their strength had bloomed to a level it hadn't ever touched before.

Leonel knew this well. This was why he hadn't hesitated to use a sneak attack to get through, a sneak attack he knew they would have to take advantage of or else they would quickly find themselves on the losing side of this exchange.

The only regret Leonel had was that he hadn't managed to come across good enough materials to make a bow and he didn't have access to a bow he could use right now that wouldn't suffer under this Anarchic Force. He wasn't using the Quasi Life Grade Bow for obvious reason.

He knew that if he had had this bow, this battle would have ended even easier. In fact, in this fog, with his Third Awakening paired with his bowmanship, he would practically be untouchable.

The person who suffered the most from this, though, was Isac. Leonel obviously hadn't been able to make him a bow either, leaving him stuck with nothing more to use than his own hands and feet. Luckily, as a bowman, his movement techniques were still quite good as he had to maintain distance from enemies.

Leonel felt quite bad about this as he thought that if it wasn't for him, Isac would have probably been able to commission the creation of a bow from the smithy. Unfortunately, things didn't end up working out in this way.

Beyond this, Isac was most definitely reluctantly following Leonel. After all, Leonel had killed his cousin. The only reason he hadn't left was because if he let a moment of pride and hatred ruin his selection here, he would be letting both Isac and his family down. He owed it to them to do his best to survive until the day he could get revenge...

Things weren't actually this simple, though.

Leonel would soon come to learn that these matters weren't as much his fault as he thought. Bowman had a very special status in the Void Palace, a status that even often faintly surpassed that of Craftsmen. It was also why the bow in Leonel's possession was so special... But this was a matter Leonel would likely find out sooner rather than later.

The group finally burst through the barricade, vanishing into the thick fog on the other side.

[More coming 10/05/22]

Chapter 1290 Spatial Bristle Bush Cores

"They passed already? What the hell were you all doing?"

"Fuck you, where were you?"

"I went to double check something. I had to after what I noticed, just in case he had left behind any of the Spatial Bristle Bush Cores."

"And?"

"Nothing. He took it all."

"Tsk. You should have already known that after the first time you checked."

"Never mind that, it looks like he was already prepared for a barricade. We can't waste time here for too long. A beast tide has already formed and we need to make it through before the real big shots get here. This is nothing like previous years, it's like they really want as much of us to die as possible. Even the storefronts already vanished by the time I got back."

Leonel had noticed this as well. Not long after the voice announced the start of the True Selection, the storefronts and their clerks had all vanished, likely to take part in the Selection at a new location. But, this also left those who needed things stranded while also making all the homes they had built useless.

The ones talking right now were, of course, the Libra brothers, Huon and Droet.

After Leonel returned with an hour left, Huon had chosen to go out to check a few things. Since Leonel had managed to return unscathed, it was more likely than not that he had had some gains and their initial estimation of him was wrong. He was definitely a threat to them monopolizing the rewards available to Village 0012. And, they knew quite well that if they couldn't monopolize these rewards for themselves, they would end up at a disadvantage when facing other villages.

While a lot seemed to have changed about this Selection, the fundamental tenants of previous years were still here. They were still on their own, very little would be explained to them, and their main goals were to gather as much resources as possible while making it to the various checkpoints for any semblance of rest to be gained.

Ultimately, they would have to make it up the mountain. It was just that simple. The trouble was that a 'mountain' of the Void Palace, even the smallest, were easily taller than entire planets.

This aside, the twins chose to take a cautious approach. After their own deductions and Orinik's 'informative' talk with them, they had gotten complacent. But, Leonel's return snapped them awake. They would only have one chance at this, they couldn't afford to waste it. And what Huon found on the outside proved him right.

The destruction left by the Spatial Bristle Bushes wasn't something Leonel could easily cover up even if he wanted to. Seventh Dimensional worlds were incredibly sturdy, so any damage to the surroundings at all were quite rare especially in a region limited to Fifth Dimensional existences. So, when Huon found several deep pits of violent spatial qi, each at a location of Spatial Bristle he was familiar with, his pupils couldn't help but constrict.

Harvesting the spatial rings the two brothers had done every few days. But, even after more than two months, they had only managed to gather less than ten between the both of them. Yet, somehow, if

Huon was correct, Leonel actually had hundreds in his possession. The kind of buying power such a thing represented was enough to make him salivate.

The two brothers had been certain that the encirclement would be enough to slow them down. And, because they didn't want to alert Leonel, they had chosen to remain in the shadows and wait for an opportunity. But, it was clear that they had gravely failed in doing so.

"What exactly happened? What's his strength? What weapon does he use? What's the damage?"

"It seems to have been a surprise attack. He uses a spear and it's definitely not one constructed by the smithy, which means he has a weapon that can survive in this atmosphere without special refinement methods. Or, it was already specially refined for him. In addition, that beauty and one other also seems to have weapons like that."

"Three of them?" Huon frowned deeply.

There was no such thing as 'fairness' in the Void Palace. The things that others had that you didn't, you would have to rely on yourself to get. But, so many individuals with weapons capable of surviving Anarchic Force was unheard of.

The two brothers fell into this category of people, of course. However, they had thought that they would be the only two of this village to have this luck. But, it seemed that they were wrong.

"The damage is pretty bad. Three succumbed to their injuries and died, all of whom seem to have been hit by an odd elevated concentration of Anarchic Force. It's hard to tell if it was intentional or if they were just unlucky."

"Do you think we could get them for murdering fellow disciples?"

"You know if it was against the rules they would have already stepped in. The True Selection is much less policed in this fashion. If it's like other years, there's free rule outside the safe zones and rules are only enforced within them."

Huon nodded, having already known this.

"... The beast tide is already here. They still don't know we're targeting them. It'll be easier to get through this wave of beasts if we combine efforts in the vanguard. However, I'm not giving up those spatial rings. Even setting aside the Bush Cores, that many spatial rings is enough for us to practically buy our way to the peak!"

"We have Orinik to thank. If not for him talking to the seniors, he would have already exchanged them. But, we can't relax. There's far more to trade for at higher level safe zones."

The two brothers looked toward one another and nodded in unison, shooting off toward the sounds of howling beasts.

...

Leonel's gaze sharpened. His dilated pupils saw an endless wall of beasts rushing toward them. Just in a 50 meter radius from him, the numbers were already in the hundreds.

His mind went into overdrive. How could he get out of this without casualties?