

## Descent 1301

### Chapter 1301 Void Points and Void Merits

The issue was obvious. This space was simply too small and, by the last words she spoke, Ossenna had implicitly stated an even greater problem: there was no population limit.

Why would Ossenna mention a cap on future safe zones but say nothing about this one?

If Leonel was correct, not only were there not enough safe zones for most, even the ones that existed were so small in area that very few could hope to call this place home. Ultimately, most would be squeezed out and forced to their deaths. The idea of a congratulatory message was nothing more than a method of lulling them into a false sense of security.

One might say that the Void Palace rules would protect those within this space, and such a person would be right. But, for how long would that last?

During this year, those here would have to grow strong enough to make it to the next checkpoint which was also an unknown distance away. By the time Leonel had gotten here, Tier 3 beasts were already becoming far more frequent, so who knew what Tier you'd have to be able to face just to make it?

Even if you gave up and wanted to idle for the rest of this year, realizing you were in over your head and felt that expulsion was the best path for you, you would still need to exchange for food and water, something you would need as frequently if not more so than a Third Dimensional existence due to the constrain of fighting off Anarchic Force.

To exchange for this, you would have no choice but to exit the safe zone, and then what? By then, it would be a free for all.

The worst part was that even if by some miracle just the right number of people filled in this space and no one deemed it necessary to take the risk of targeting fellow disciples to survive, there were still a limited number of resources to go around.

Take the Spatial Bristle Bush. It could only be harvested once every several days before it could be taken from again. And, that was just one example. Leonel was absolutely certain that the other resources worked the exact same way.

After this beast tide calmed, there would only be so many beasts in the region before you had to travel further out, only so many herbs to harvest, only so many precious gems and metals to mine or even find, for that matter.

Then one needed to consider that there would be many ambitious individuals. Considering what Leonel had come to understand, the standard of this year's entries were much higher than previous. There would be many unsatisfied with staying as Nominal Disciples and would do everything they could to reach higher and higher levels. For such people, even if everyone could coexist, they wouldn't care. They would demolish everything that stood in their way.

This all led to one conclusion: there would be a blood bath here, maybe one no less lethal and heart wrenching than what was waiting for Leonel during the rest of this Selection. He couldn't leave his people here, especially while still in such a vulnerable state.

He had to set them up for success.

Leonel entered a storefront he hadn't seen in Village 0012. He expected that he would find a very different experience here than he had over there, and he was found to be correct almost immediately.

This storefront didn't have a person in it at all. In fact, though it was shabby in construction and the floors creaked, all while a musty smell hung in the air, making it feel just as ancient as it was, Leonel could feel a strong and sturdy current of Force running through this place. He had no doubt that the central hub and power center of this safe zone was this place. If this location was compromised, then the whole safe zone would cease to be. But, Leonel had a feeling that even if he went all out, he wouldn't be able to leave even a single dent in this so-called 'shabby' cabin.

Leonel stepped toward an empty counter. The moment he did, his mind seemed to have warped and his vision blurred before refocusing in a land of white and panels.

Before Leonel could do anything, the panels rearranged themselves, many of the items that had been there vanishing. Leonel had a feeling that this was related to his current status. This panel would likely only show him things that Nominal Disciples could exchange for.

Leonel didn't actually plan on exchanging for anything, though. What he wanted to understand was how much wealth he had now and what it was worth. Only one he had this information could he decide what steps to take moving forward. Of course, that also required understanding what his point total could trade for as well.

'1 Void Point is worth 1000 kilograms of Sixth Dimensional Urbe Ore? That's more than I expected, so Void Points are definitely very valuable...'

Leonel had a large amount of Sixth Dimensional Urbe Ore left to him by his mother. Billions of kilograms, in fact, not to mention millions of kilograms of Seventh Dimensional Urbe Ore. Unfortunately, while you could trade Void Points for Urbe Ore, you couldn't do the vice versa.

'Void Merits?' Leonel's gaze narrowed.

It seemed that Void Points were only one part of the currency system of this place, Void Merits was another. And, unlike Void Points, there didn't seem to be a one to one exchange rate provided for Void Merits, this immediately told Leonel that they could be considered to be invaluable.

Leonel shook his head and refocused. If Void Merits were so valuable, he definitely wouldn't use it on a list restricted to Nominal Disciples. Plus, he hadn't earned even one just yet.

Finally, Leonel found what he was looking for.

'So it's like that... a one cubic meter spatial bristle ring is worth 10 Void Points, the next highest tier is worth 100, the next following is worth 500. 500 Void Points for such a small ring... But then the core of the Spatial Bristle Bush is actually worth 2500 Void Points...'

'That would mean that all together I have 52 000 Void Points. The real question is, then... What can that exchange for?'

Chapter 1302 Choice

Leonel's pupils flickered back and forth quickly, scanning through the long list of items within just a few minutes. The fact it had taken so long, though, was a testament to just how many times there were available for exchange. Under this kind of time crunch, it was impossible that most would be able to go through the entire list to find out what they might need.

Once he was done Leonel took a deep breath and closed his eyes, his mind quickly arranging the new information he now had access to.

The amount of things was a bit overwhelming, even for him. There were all sorts of items from techniques, to Styles, to weapons and armor, there were special herbs, odd concoctions, it was even possible to exchange time with instructors or seniors to learn new skills first hand.

Some of the most valuable things on the list were related to the God Path and understanding it. There were also options to be transported to meditation halls. Though, Leonel assumed that once your time was up, you'd be forcefully transported right back to this safe zone.

Realizing just how much choice he had before him, Leonel first decided what was most important to deal with.

'The first and most important thing is to acclimate everyone to Anarchic Force as quickly as possible. Though the beast skin armor protects them and helps facilitate the acclimation, it also makes the process a lot slower. If they dispel the armor now, it would still take most of them about as much as another three days to a week to fully adjust. That's way too much time, they'll be driven out by then...

'There are probably two solutions to this. One is to allow them to naturally adjust themselves. Rather than trying to speed up the process, I'll just buy them enough food and water so that they can survive the period without being in danger.

'The second option is to buy up these herbs and potions that can speed up the process and compress it into a short time.

'The first wastes a lot of time and they'll end up being behind everyone else by several days. The second, though, is very expensive. If I took that route, I would blast through at least 30 to 40 thousand Void Points worth.'

This wasn't very surprising to Leonel. A medicine that could speed up how fast one could acclimate to Anarchic Force was practically a miracle drug or vaccine. These supplements were mostly used by higher level seniors who had to quickly adjust themselves to certain sections of the Void Battlefields and could be considered to be life saving measures for already well established geniuses.

In fact, it could be said that the 40 000 point price tag was actually quite cheap, and that was only because the Anarchic Force in this region compared to others was pitiful. As such, Leonel only needed to buy up the weakest of these drugs for about two dozen people, and yet it was still so expensive in the end.

Taking this route would leave Leonel with practically nothing. He wouldn't be able to help as much as he wanted.

'I could trade the beast carcasses I have as well. They're not as valuable as the spatial bristle rings, but I do have a lot more of them...'

"No. We'll do things this way."

Leonel shook his head, his gaze flashing as he came to a decision. After a few more seconds, Leonel quickly exchanged for everything he needed and walked out, only to find a line waiting outside.

'Seems I was quicker, that's good.'

Leonel felt that he was lucky to have entered first. Considering how long those lists were, who knew how much time another person would have wasted?

He stepped by everyone, ignoring the looks they gave toward Aina who was seemingly taking a nap in his arms, and returned to the Three Pillar group.

"Yip! Yip!"

Little Blackstar hopped onto Leonel's head, his two little paws holding onto two spatial bristle rings that Leonel had purposely left behind. With a flick, one landed with Arnold and Elthor while the other was given to Savahn and Yuri.

Leonel's gaze glowed for a moment, cutting off all noise from exiting their general area.

"Yuri, I hope you can help make sure that no one is eaves dropping on us. I have a few important things to say."

Yuri looked toward the peaceful Aina before nodding lightly. This was all Leonel needed before he began.

"Thanks." Leonel turned his attention to everyone. "I hope that even after I am gone, you all will stick together. I've given those two rings to people you all can trust. As much as I want to give one to each of you, if I had done that, I wouldn't have been able to trade for everything you all would need."

When Leonel said this, there was a slight breath of relief released by those that remained. It had felt like Leonel was abandoning them all already, but now they could be a bit more reassured. At the same time, Leonel could protect those he trusted by leaving this power in their hands, that way, those that he didn't know a lot about couldn't take advantage of the situation.

"First things first, I've left enough safe food and water within those rings to last you all a week. During this week, I want you to slowly and naturally become accustomed to Anarchic Force on your own. This will not only save you from any lingering side effects in the future, but it will also equip you to better deal with higher concentrations in later regions.

"I have already bought enough homes for all of you as well."

With a flick of his wrist, some vouchers that Leonel had purchased appeared. Soon, a row of wooden homes appeared along the outskirts of the safe zone. They seemed tightknit and safe. For the next week, as long as they remained inside, no one would be able to touch them.

The good news also was that these homes were very cheap, a fraction of the cost of even the lowest tier spatial bristle ring. All of them together didn't even add up to half that cost either. It was clear the Void Palace didn't think very highly of these cabins.

"Now I'll explain what to do following this week..."

Chapter 1303 Are You?

The beauty of Leonel's choice was that up until this point, he had spent practically nothing. All the cabins weren't even worth 5 Void Points while all the food and water were picked up by him. The water, of course, came from his Cleansing Water stores. He had downgraded it back to the Fourth Dimension as he didn't want its specialness to become common knowledge, but that would be more than enough. As for the food, it was Cursed Beast meat cleansed by Sixth Dimensional Cleansing Waters. It might become boring to eat after a week, but at least they wouldn't starve.

This was the main reason why Leonel chose this route. Like this, he would be able to use all more than 50 000 Void Points he had remaining toward improving the odds of them all surviving.

The beast armor he had left them, so long as they acclimated to Anarchic Force, would provide them a huge boost to their strength. The moment the power of the armor could be diverted from protecting them to just attacking and defending, there would be a qualitative change in them all.

By Leonel's estimations, this boost in strength in conjunction with their own raw power would raise them to a level where they would have been able to easily clear their way to this safe zone from Village 0012. This would put them at or above the level of many of the Nominal Disciples that remained. However, this wouldn't be enough.

That was where the real training would come in.

Leonel poured everything else into resources. For those he could tailor the experience of, he did so, picking out a perfect complimentary technique for them. For those he couldn't, he focused on buying things that could accelerate their growth, whether that was in Force or bodily strength.

When Leonel was finished, everyone understood what they had to focus on for at least the next months. If they took advantage of this, not only would the gap between them and everyone else close, but they would even gain a leg up.

They all gazed toward Leonel. They didn't know how much he had to sacrifice to allow them this chance, but they knew it couldn't have been cheap. How could they not feel grateful?

"Well, it's time for us to go." Leonel smiled lightly. "I hope the next time I see you all, you'll not only still have your lives, but you'll be much stronger as well."

Leonel took his responsibility to these people very seriously. It wasn't just about his guilt or his morality. Everyone here represented his foundation. They were the backbone of what he was building and they were all he had.

Years from now, he would have to face off against six of his distant cousins, each of whom were likely monsters in their own right, and each of whom had roots deeply entrenched into the Void Palace long ago. He was already several steps behind. So, every one he took forward had to be meticulous, purposeful and perfect. He couldn't afford to leave any stone unturned and he couldn't allow himself to waste any more time.

"Noah."

Leonel called out. Though there was a three hour limit, he wouldn't be wasting any of that time here. Ossenna had made it clear how much of a time crunch they were on, if he really spent three hours here, he would be an idiot.

"Leonel, I think—"

Leonel smiled. "You want to go your own way too, right?"

"Yes." Noah nodded seriously.

If he kept following behind Leonel, he wouldn't never be able to improve like he wanted. Plus... He was a Fawkes. Behind his stoic face and expressionless gaze, there was his own Emperor's Might lurking. Just like Leonel, whenever he got serious, an oppressive pressure would stifle the air, and that wasn't a coincidence by any stretch.

He had Royal Blood flowing through his veins.

"Here." Little Blackstar tossed over a vial of greyish liquid after feeling Leonel's intent. "This will help you adjust to Anarchic Force fully within a few hours, by then you'll be able to show your true strength. Keep in mind, though, that there will be side effects. So..."

Little Blackstar moved again, passing off another vial to Noah.

"... After you adjust to Anarchic Force fully, drink this and it will get rid of the impurities for you."

Noah held onto the two vials tightly, not sure of what to say for a long while. However, Leonel only grinned.

"Don't get sentimental on me now, we're family, aren't we?"

"Yes." Noah nodded.

Noah had never really had brothers. There were too many people trying to use him everyday. The only person he trusted within his generation was Jessica. But, ultimately, their relationship was between man and woman, it wasn't the same, especially not when they had unresolved emotions for one another.

This just... felt different.

"No more time to waste. I'll go that direction."

Noah nodded. "I'll go in that one, then."

With a smile, Leonel's figure flickered and vanished, hitting his top speed in the blink of an eye.

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Leonel adjusted Aina into a position on his back, using some more beast fur he had gained to tie her down firmly. Somehow, this situation felt oddly familiar, but his thoughts didn't linger on this as he secured her.

Once he was finished, Leonel took a breath of fresh air, or, a breath of air about as fresh as you could get in a place like this one. He finally felt like he could go all out.

A road of stars appeared beneath his feet as he shuttled over the now slowly waning beast tide. Despite the fact they were slowing, though, Leonel didn't place his guard down. It wasn't a coincidence that the beast tide was finally showing signs of weakening just as the first wave of people reached the first safe zones. Clearly, the beast tide was a challenge for the first part of the True Selection. That meant there would likely be a new challenge coming up very soon...

Leonel leapt up, landing on the branch of a tree. With a flicker of his finger, a strand of Bow Force split a beast that leapt up with him in two.

"Are you all going to continue following me for an entire day like you did the first time again? Or can we skip that nonsense?"

#### Chapter 1304 Your Method

After learning the usefulness of Universal Force in this region, Leonel was much more acutely aware of his surroundings. Just by infusing his Universal Force with his Internal Sight, his range had increased tenfold. If that was stacked with his King's Might, his understanding of the region around him might not have been as bright and crisp as Yuri's, but it was most definitely functional.

Simply put, his sensory abilities of just a few hours ago couldn't compare to his abilities now in the slightest. Seeing within a hundred meter range was no problem at all, and if it wasn't for him minding the stamina drain, he could push further beyond that.

Standing on the bouncing branch, one hand on the tree's trunk and the other holding his spear, Leonel looked down.

In a few moments, Droet, Huon and Keiza caught up, appearing up in their own trees. Whether by coincidence or not, each of them blocked a path of retreat. It could be said that if they were coming for peace, they weren't doing a very good job. But, Leonel wasn't so naïve to hope for such a thing.

Keiza raised a brow. Her gaze fell on Aina whose cheek rested on Leonel's shoulder. It was clear that Aina wasn't wasting the slightest effort to pay attention to her surroundings, she left it all up to Leonel. Even her battle ax had been taken away by him and stored away without her even flinching in her sleep.

Keiza couldn't help but playfully pout. "Why can't one of you two carry me around like that. My legs are tired after walking so far."

The two brothers looked toward Keiza. It was as though they were trying to check if she was serious or not first before they decided how they would react.

"Useless." Keiza shook her head, feeling greatly unsatisfied. If they were confident, why would they have to check on her meaning first?

The brothers, though, felt quite aggrieved. Keiza had been teasing them like this since they were children. One would think they would have seen through her by now, but the women of the Gemin family were innately difficult to deal with. Even together, the two didn't dare to underestimate her.

Much like the two brothers were the first instance in a very long time of their family's Lineage Factor brought to perfection, so was Keiza with hers. So long as that woman was still smiling, things were fine. But, the moment that playfulness vanished...

The Libra and Gemin family actually had a very close relationship with one another. If not for this, the twins would have never so easily asked for the support of someone else.

Keiza had actually come from a completely different village but had still managed to locate the brothers. It was clear that they had every intention on relying upon one another for the coming trials.

"Are you done yet?"

Though Leonel said this, his eyes weren't actually focused on the three surrounding him at all. In fact, he was sweeping the surroundings, trying to find out when the other foot was going to drop.

It was very possible that there'd be a three hour buffer before the next wave of trials. Maybe that was the true reason for the time limit? In that case, he should probably focus on traveling as far up the mountain as he could during this grace period.

"There's no need to be so hostile." Keiza said with a smile. "Shouldn't we all be working together? Coming from the same direction like this, it must be fate, don't you think?"

Leonel's instinct was to say that he had no interest in working with these people, but he paused for a moment, looking Keiza in the eye.

He needed to widen his network and becoming friends with a network of geniuses was a good start. The issue was that if Wise Star Order could so easily pick out the Gemin and Libra families like he had before, then that meant that these three were from very prominent families. The likelihood, then, that they had a relationship of some sort with the Morales was very high.

This meant one of two things. Either they had already fallen in line with one of Leonel's competitors, or, if they hadn't, it was very likely that such families didn't get involved with the Heir Wars at all.

It had to be remembered that the only power Leonel knew of that had supported a Morales Heir in the Heir Wars was the small Valiant Heart Mountain. For all he knew, then, other Seventh Dimensional families didn't even raise a finger for unknown political reasons.

'She should know I'm a member of the Morales family, though. After following me for so long, she definitely saw me use Tolliver. She had likely relayed this to the other two as well. So what exactly is going on here?'

"I'll make this as straight forward for you as possible. If you dodge the question again, I will attack. If you try to dance around the topic, I will attack. If you try to play it off as a joke again, I will attack. I don't have the time to waste here.

"What do you want, exactly?"

Keiza blinked. Her instinct really was to flirt again, but the cold indifference in Leonel's gaze made her words freeze over as well. She could tell that if she really tried it, Leonel wouldn't hesitate to attack just like he said. Plus...

That little mink on his head... She had almost missed it entirely, something that never happened with her level of senses.



"There's no need to waste anymore time, Keiza. Doing things your way isn't working." Huon spoke evenly. "Your method of clearing Spatial Bristle Bushes, we want it. In addition, I know for a fact you have at least a few hundred spatial bristle rings. But, you only gave away two. The rest of them, we want them as well.

"If you make this easy, we can go in opposite directions from here on. If you don't, we'll not only continue to waste your time, but we'll make certain that after we leave, your forward progress won't be nearly as smooth."

Huon hadn't even finished half his words yet when Leonel had already vanished, his spear appearing above Keiza's head.

However, his blade went right through her.

It was an illusion.

Chapter 1305 Probe?

Leonel's gaze narrowed as he landed on the branch Keiza had been on. He looked from left to right, but the two brothers had also vanished.

'A probe? This woman likes to play too many games.'

Leonel shot forward, ignoring everything else. He didn't even bother to try and find where their real bodies were, he didn't care. All he cared about was making it to the next checkpoint.

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"Why did you make us do that? Fuck! Now he probably think's we're afraid of him." Droet almost threw a fit, but this was as much as he dared to do around Keiza without going overboard.

The truth was that the strength of the two brothers, even individually, was no weaker than that of Keiza. The trouble lay in the fact that she simply wasn't the kind of enemy you wanted to make. Even if you could overpower her, the way you might lose could be very different from what you could expect. In fact, years could have passed, you could have long since forgotten how it was you had offended her in the first place, and it was exactly then she would choose to strike... when you least expected.

The two brothers had seen her do this all too often and they had no intention of becoming her next victim. With her abilities... She was too good at torturing people.

"Fighting here wouldn't be a very good idea. We should be using this grace period to travel up the mountain as fast as we can. Plus, I have a feeling that his methods aren't ones we can easily replicate. His skill as a Force Crafter is very high and I can see a strong Spatial Affinity on him, things none of us have. It's very likely that he relied on these gifts to deal with those bushes."

"That doesn't mean we couldn't have robbed him."

"If we were going to rob him, why do it now? Why not wait until he's accumulated more wealth? Plus, robbing him at all might not be a good idea. I get a very dangerous feeling from him, and his little girlfriend isn't a pushover either. Her mental coercion isn't weaker than mine despite not having a technique to funnel its usage."

The two brothers looked toward one another. There was nothing 'little' about her. But, they had no intention of correcting Keiza for fear of their lives and their family jewels.

"If there are so many roadblocks, we might as well just pick a different direction. Why are you so insistent?"

'Because he's a Morales, of course.'

Despite saying this in her mind, for whatever reason, Keiza didn't say this aloud to the two boys. There wasn't really a point in keeping it a secret either considering, by the end of this True Selection, there wouldn't be a single soul who was unaware, but... She still wanted to keep it to herself at least for the moment.

'Mother is such a smart woman but she was actually so infatuated with a playboy. Even father's death didn't fill her with as much emotion as the information that that man son was coming. Of course... that's probably because father's death was because of her.'

Keiza giggled to herself, not seeming like a woman with such a complex family life at all. It was clear that she didn't respect her father in the slightest. His life and his death wasn't enough to move the needle for her one way or the other.

'Unfortunately, I can't observe that man personally. But, you, as his son, actually has such an obedient little beauty by your side. Maybe, you've picked up something from being borne of that man. I really want to see what it is about your bloodline that makes women swoon.'

A cold light danced within Keiza's gaze. She hadn't even realized it, but her smile had disappeared. ...

Leonel had no idea that his father's past escapades had already given him two major problems to deal with. First Ossenna, now this Keiza. Trouble was that at least Ossenna was limited in what she could do. Helping Orinik spread rumors about him was about all that she could accomplish. But, Keiza was definitely a far more direct and immediate threat... especially given her charm.

Without her, the twins would have already given up this pursuit. But, due to her, they had chosen to linger in the shadows...

The worst part was that if Keiza could find the Libra brothers from a completely different village, she could most definitely find Leonel.

Leonel, however, wasn't thinking about any of this. As expected, the route forward was extraordinarily easy. He poured everything he had into his speed, running across the treetops and across the ground depending on the situation.

Whenever he spotted a Spatial Bristle Bush, he would immediately take advantage. His efficiency was even greater than it had been in the past, but because he was moving forward rather than checking locations with wide enough clearings to accommodate one, his harvest was much less. By the end of the three hours mark, he had recouped about half of the Void Points he had spent. If he was allowed to keep going, he would definitely be able to make it all back and more, but Leonel had a feeling that things wouldn't be so simple...

And he was proven correct almost immediately.

Without fail, the instant Leonel realized the three hour mark was up, a pillar of blinding light fell from the skies.

Leonel's gaze flickered, his body trying to think of a method to go around it. But, he realized that all he had time to do was come to a grinding halt.

Leonel just barely managed to stop, his nose halting a half foot before the barrier. Quite quickly, though, much like previously, it began to shrink. Soon, all that was left was a swirling portal barely taller than Leonel.

'A Sub-Dimensional Zone?'

Nothing here was a coincidence. This entire space was locked. Clearly, Leonel was being told that his only option was to step into it.

Without a choice, Leonel leapt in with Aina on his back. It seemed he would have to quickly clear this Zone.

Even as his vision blurred, Leonel had already flipped his palm to reveal the silver disk shaped dictionary. It was still the best Zone Analysis treasure he had and he trusted his father wouldn't let him down.

However, almost instantly, Leonel panicked and put the dictionary away.

'Dammit, old man! You couldn't make the dictionary resistant to Anarchic Force?! And isn't this a Zone, why is there still Anarchic Force here at all?!'

Leonel's frown set in deeply. How was he supposed to analyze the missions of this Sub-Dimensional Zone properly without a Zone Analysis treasure?

Chapter 1306 Nothing

The moment Leonel landed, his brows furrowed in confusion. This was mostly because not a single thing seemed different. The greyish black, coarse ground was the same. The thick black trees were the same. The dense fog and the grey skies were all the same.

Leonel had expected to be transported into an all new world, but it seemed that that wouldn't be the case?

'No... That's the wrong way of thinking about things. Every Zone is technically just a projection of the history of the land it was born in. If this is the history of the Void Palace, it just means that this region hasn't changed at all in a very long time...'

Leonel felt that this made sense, but there was still something that just felt wrong. With how long the Void Palace had existed for, how could its Sub-Dimensional Zones had not all been cleared already? And, if they took the route of Valiant Heart Mountain and used special means to keep this Zone open, then the time that had passed should have long since mutated this world beyond recognition. Or, at the very least, it shouldn't have been so... identical.

Leonel then thought of the possibility that the devices the Void Palace would have access to would be beyond that of Valiant Heart Mountain. Maybe it was the case, then, that their ability to maintain a Zone within a normal range was superior. But, Leonel didn't linger on this idea for too long because the

Valiant Pillars, in the first place, were a treasure gifted to Valiant Heart Mountain to begin with. It would be foolish for Leonel to draw conclusions about its quality just because of who now owned it.

With a thought, Leonel's Internal Sight stretched outward. However, even in looking, he couldn't find any oddities.

'The Segmented Cube can't hide the existence of people from a Zone, so I've essentially entered with six people. I have a feeling that that could be a problem...'

The Zone had made no attempt at limiting the number of individuals who had entered. Up until now, actually, the Void Palace had made no effort to stop teamwork either. But, Leonel didn't believe that this would continue forever. Or, more accurately, there would probably come harsher and harsher penalties for choosing to take this approach.

'Staying still won't get me anywhere.'

With this thought, Leonel shot forward once again, his mind scanning through everywhere he passed. But, he had hardly taken a third step when he suddenly felt a cold shiver rip its way up his spine.

Without the slightest hesitation, Leonel dove to the side, slamming the ground with a palm and flipping himself upward until he could land on his feet again.

SHUUU! PENG!

"Yip! Yip!"

Leonel's pupils constricted. What looked like a silver needle with a length of two feet and a thinness of barely a centimeter impaled a tree, having just barely missed the side of Leonel's ear.

Leonel slowed his breathing, his heart beating slow and steady. But, the shockwaves in his mind continued to roll like waves. That attack... it had managed to pierce the tree?!

Even now, Leonel wasn't certain if he could leave even a scratch on one of these trees without bringing his Quasi Life Grade bow out. But, even if he did, he had no certainty of accomplishing what this needle had. Of course, it had a certain advantage because of how thin it was, but it was also because of this that it was so shocking. Such a fragile piece of metal had actually managed to ram into something so hard without crumpling.

Leonel's Internal Sight stretched out once again, but he found absolutely nothing. However, now that he knew that there was something there, he realized there were only two explanations instantaneously.

The first was that this person had targeted him from outside the range of a hundred meters. The second was that this person could hide from his Internal Sight.

Regardless of what the answer was, though... He was still Leonel.

Even as he was still dodging, Leonel had already calculated the direction the needle had come from. His free hand, grabbed at the air, forming a Radiant Core and allowing a dreadful amount of Bow Force to rotate about it like a drill.

Falling through the air, he spun, whipping his arm backward.

Leonel had no way of telling exactly how far away this individual targeting him was. However, there was one thing about this environment that was in his favor: the trees.

Even with the power of the needle, it had only managed to pierce into the tree by about three inches. And, Leonel hadn't picked up the sound of it going through any trees before it. That meant that wherever this person was, they needed a clear line of sight between themselves and Leonel. In addition, because Leonel hadn't sensed the use of Bow Force, nor had the needle seemed to deviate, it was most likely that it had followed a perfectly straight path.

Taking all of this into account, and adding onto it some other small tidbits of sensory information, Leonel had made a decision. This person wasn't further than a hundred meters away, they were just capable of hiding from his Internal Sight.

'87% likelihood that they stand right there...'

BANG! BANG!

'Two sounds?'

Leonel landed nimbly on the ground, sliding his feet quickly and ducking behind a tree trunk.

If it had just landed on ground, there wouldn't have been two sounds. It was more likely than not that this individual had been forced to attack twice to dispel Leonel's attack. But, if that was the case...

'It means they can't casually use the strength they had to impale the tree...'

Leonel's figure flickered, rocketing toward the direction of the noise. The closer he was, the more control of the situation he would have. At least he would be able to lay eyes on who he was fighting. Since this individual knew he could find them once, they'd be more cautious the next time.

However, that was when something unexpected happened. Wise Star Order actually spoke unprompted.

"Ah, the young truly fear nothing."

Chapter 1307 Rapax

Leonel's expression changed when he heard this. He knew that the old man was definitely talking about him, or else why would he bother to say something?

Leonel was also well aware that the old man only spoke without prompt when he was either passionate about something, or he would lose out from Leonel doing something stupid. Clearly, this was the latter.

If Leonel fell here, they would be stuck in a Sub-Dimensional Zone. Even if Wise Star Order could then clear it himself, he would end up stuck in a place like the Void Palace, all while severely weakened. In such a case, there would only be two possibilities. He would either die a horrible death, or he would become a pawn.

Obviously, he couldn't let Leonel just go giving up his life.

Leonel was able to grasp this in just a split moment, but he still didn't understand why. Was this person really so dangerous?

Despite not knowing the answer, Leonel's steps didn't falter. In fact, his forward speed became even faster. Without the slightest hesitation, he went all out. His Bronze Runes blossomed into existence, the crown of his Spear Domain Lineage Factor protruding from his head once more even as the Halo of his Metal Synergy Lineage Factor enveloped his body.

The crackles of ice danced through the air like shimmering mist as Leonel burst through the final clearing. The gorgeous silver and sky blue armor coated him from head to toe even as his wings spread out from his body.

Running away would have been a foolish option. He still believed that an enemy that could hide from his Internal Sight was too dangerous to keep at a distance, especially when it had such powerful long ranged abilities.

In that case, the only option was to not take this meeting lightly. He would give it everything he had.

Leonel's beast skin armor was the last to erupt. The dancing dichotomy of bright silvers and blues to deep and dark blacks creating a gorgeous cinematic image. But, what Leonel saw on the other side of the clearing was anything but.

It wasn't a person targeting him at all. Rather... it was an alien almost insect-like creature.

It stood on digitigrade legs with claws so long they could have each been their own individual curved blades. Its head was an oblong shape, warped like a pill with its mouth protruding forward and the back of its skull doing the same in the reverse direction. Its head, though, was encased by a silver metallic shell, hiding its eyes away and only revealing a mouth that split open both vertically and horizontally to reveal glistening canines.

The metallic frame of the shell that covered the top half of its pill shaped head traveled down its back, quickly losing its whole look and twisting into the shape of what looked like a real spine that eventually curved into a scorpion-like tail.

The entire monstrosity stood at over three meters tall despite its hunched posture. Leonel could feel so much hidden power within his body that the numbers for what its top speed must be flew past his eyes, becoming bigger and bigger with every new parameters taken into account.

'What the hell, is this alien from Alien vs. Predator real?'

In this sort of life and death situation, Leonel truly did have such an immature thought. The reality, though, was that aside from the general shape of their bodies, this thing and alien were nothing alike. Even just by danger level alone... This monstrosity was on a whole different level.

Leonel hadn't even landed on the ground yet when a whipping tail suddenly attacked his head.

With a thought, Leonel immediately activated his Dark Ice Domain. While his spear Domains were still too lacking, his Dark Ice Domain was still at a Sixth Dimensional standard. Though it wasn't as powerful as it was on Planet Luxnix, Leonel could just barely over a five meter radius. That was just enough to slow the tail about to rip his head off for him to dodge backward, his expression becoming serious.

This thing was strong. Very strong. Far stronger than even the version of Myghell Leonel had fought just a few months ago.

'What the hell is this thing, old man.'

'Thing? That's a living, breathing being. You sound like a racist bigot.'

Of all the answers he was ready for, this was the only one that could have caught him completely off guard. If Leonel wasn't so good at splitting his minds, he might have been nailed to death by that damned tail.

'Can you be serious, please?'

'I am being serious. This is a Rapax. They're a race of people just like you humans and they happen to share a border with your Human Domain.'

Leonel's expression flickered, his spear swinging up to clash against a strong kick by the Rapax. However, the end result was him being sent flying backward, his feet eventually gliding against the ground hard.

'What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?'

'They have extraordinarily powerful bodies. Even that needle that it used to attack you didn't utilize any Force at all, at least not in a conventional sort of way. They've also evolved to be completely invulnerable to mental attacks, it's a speciality of their natural metallic carapaces. It's also because of that that your Internal Sight couldn't spot it, it gives them a huge advantage in this dense fog.'

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The Rapax displayed a dexterity Leonel thought he would never find in a sequence of kicks. Each felt like a heavy mountain pressing down on him. If not for his own sturdy defenses and powerful body, Leonel would have found him being self being battered and broken already.

'It's odd, though. Usually, the Void Palace wouldn't throw something like this at the new recruits so quickly... Must be because you entered with too many people.'

Wise Star Order chuckled even as Leonel continued to grunt.

Chapter 1308 Runeless

Leonel immediately found himself to be at a great disadvantage.

The Rapax was stronger, faster, and its defenses felt impenetrable. Its naturally formed armor was already stronger than and more resistant to blades than most weapons Leonel had come across to this point. But, this was only a small part of the issue.

In Leonel's battle with Myghell, he had purposely chosen not to use his Ability Index. He had wanted to have a fun and blood boiling battle, and, quite frankly, he didn't believe he would have struggled very much at all if he used his calculative abilities to force the latter into a corner.

However, because his Internal Sight was useless against the Rapax, it made Leonel feel that even if he wanted to use his Ability Index, he couldn't. Whenever he tried to lock onto the Rapax, it was as though he had locked onto thin air. He couldn't read and calculate its movements, he couldn't sense its flow of Force, he couldn't even tell what emotions it was feeling right now or if Rapax even experienced the same range of emotions humans did.

Without the ability to do this, Leonel could only calculate his own movements. But, because he could only use his eyes to monitor the Rapax, not to mention the fact he wasn't familiar with its anatomy at all to begin with, the result was just him repeatedly retreating.

It also didn't help that this was the first kicking expert Leonel had ever fought before, he didn't even have a human frame of reference, let alone one for a Rapax.

Leonel couldn't even tell what Tier this Rapax was at. For all he knew, this creature was still in the Third Dimension, giving him all the trouble he could possibly ask for.

Luckily, the trees around him were like absolute defenses. Or so Leonel thought until...

Leonel continued to shoot backward, mapping out a path to his back. His steps were nimble and his gaze was cold.

He ducked behind another tree, and that was exactly when it happened.

Losing its patience, the Rapax kicked out anyway. As though a knife through butter, its curved claws split the side of a black tree into four, shooting for Leonel's head and appearing before him in the blink of an eye.

Leonel's pupils constricted. He had been leaning his head to one side of the tree to begin with because he had to keep an eye on the Rapax at all times. If he failed to do so, there was no telling if it would find a way to vanish outside the line of his sight. Unfortunately, that caution allowed just enough of his head to be exposed to the side. The Rapax shouldn't have had the angle to harm him.. but who would have thought that it would go through the tree itself?!

Leonel released a low shout, his Dark Ice Domain multiplying in strength as he fell back. The slow in the Rapax's speed was just enough for him to slip out of the way. However, the Rapax was relentless.

It quickly stamped its originally kicking foot onto the ground, using the momentum to spin and lift its other leg into the air. It was baffling that a creature that had just displayed such poor posture could actually raise its legs up in a perfect split, prepared to ax kick Leonel's body into a bloody pulp.

Leonel's expression flickered. Aina was on his back and she would take a devastating blow even if he blocked this. But, with the speed and relentless pursuit of the Rapax, he wasn't even sure if there was another path to take.

'No, I can't let myself be pinned down,' Leonel thought as he fell backward, his gaze locked onto the falling ax kick. 'The moment I do and this thing attacks with its tail again, it's over.'

This was Leonel's first encounter with a non-human race—well, if he ignored the Oryx, beasts and Yuri. But, regardless, this was his first true battle with one. And, the difference was almost despairing.

This Rapax hadn't used any special techniques, it hadn't used its Ability Index or a Lineage Factor, it didn't even seem to be trying very hard. On top of that, Leonel was certain that as cruel as the Void Palace was, it wouldn't present an enemy that couldn't be defeated. Even if this enemy had appeared because Leonel had entered as a group of six, that would mean that the Void Palace was saying that six human geniuses was only worth one Rapax.

'Tell me the truth, old man. What Tier is this Rapax in?'



Despite the desperate situation, Leonel suddenly became frighteningly calm, his gaze placid as he watched the descending foot even as he, himself, fell backward.

'You see those spurs on its metallic tail?'

'Mm.'

'Upon entering the Fourth Dimension a Rapax will finally grow its tail. Upon entering the Fifth, its tail will gain a blade. For every Tier upward it goes within the Fifth Dimension, it will gain a pair of metallic spurs.'

Leonel's gaze narrowed. The Rapax had four spurs... It was in Tier 3 of the Fifth Dimension.

'I should also probably mention that this Rapax is Runeless. So, it's at most a mass produced foot soldier. This Rapax is the lowest common denominator of their race. You see how far the gap is yet?'

Leonel didn't say anything to this, his gaze only growing indifferent to the point its coldness returned. It was right then that a frightening crimson erupted from within his irises.

A fiendish grin spread across Leonel's face.

'A King losing to a foot soldier, huh?'

The tendrils of darkness to Leonel's back shot out grabbing onto two trees and pulling hard. Leonel's falling figure was whipped back like a rock out of a slingshot, his gaze only growing more fiendish.

"Let's do this, Alien."

The foggy darkness around Leonel grew several fold. In one instant, the forest seemed silent. In the next, an eruption of dark tendrils splintered off in all directions, connecting all the trees in the surroundings in a complex web of black strings.

Chapter 1309 Revolve Around Me

Seemingly feeling Leonel's battle intent, the Rapax howled, billowing steam jetting out from its pores and causing its silver natural armor to tinge with red.

With a step, it immediately tore through the tendrils that Leonel had blanketed the forest in. But, just as quickly as it did so, more swarmed to replace them.

Leonel reached to his back. Tapping Aina with the finger glove form of the Segmented Cube, he sent her inside. He wasn't sure if he could trust himself to not harm her with what he was about to do.

His hair billowed in the wind, his body crouching atop a branch as the Rapax barreled toward him. The Spear Domain crown glowed a brighter and brighter shade of gold above his forehead, pulsing strands of bronze, violet and crimson jetting out from his body.

Leonel's body erupted with flames, his body becoming enveloped by a smoldering heat that clashed and fought against the oppressive cold of his Dark Ice Armor.

Releasing a steamy breath, his irises were almost completely taken over by a red-gold.

'Destruction.'

Leonel vanished. Almost the instant he did, the branch he had just been standing up crumbled to nothing more than ash.

When he appeared again, his spear was nowhere to be seen, but his fist was not to be denied, flashing before the chest of the Rapax like a falling meteor.

"SKREEE!"

CLANG!

The Rapax's tail lashed out, slapping Leonel's fist away with its blade. However, in a clash of metal on metal, they both rebounded against one another.

The Rapax's tail whipped backward to prepare for another strike even as it raised its leg to kick out at the retreating Leonel. However, it found its progress hindered by numerous tendrils of darkness. At the same time, Leonel had already smashed a foot into the ground, stopping his backward progress and shooting forward like a blazing star.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Having lost its balance due to the entanglement of its tail, the Rapax could only use its arms and one knee to block Leonel's torrent of punches. However, there was something different about these compared to Leonel's previous strikes...

They hurt.

The Rapax was pushed backward, but it found its retreat slowed by Leonel's Dark Ice Domain.

With quick strikes, Leonel tapped at the air three times. Violent slashing arcs of fire infused Spear Force jetted outward, aiming perfectly for the joints of the Rapax which remained unprotected by its natural armor.

Leonel's fighting style remained fluid, filled with pace and a relentless pursuit. It was clear that the improvements he had gained to his spearmanship had followed his overall Style, giving his every action an air of purpose, calculation and wisdom.

"SKKREEEE!"

The Rapax shrieked, greenish blue blood flying as its tough skin was cut into.

However, Leonel was completely unsatisfied with this result. His Spear Force layered with Radiant Force on top of his comprehensions of Destruction had only caused so little damage? He wanted more. He needed to see more blood.

The joints of Leonel's Dark Ice Armor erupted with billowing flames. If it wasn't for the fact his head was covered by a helmet and a visor, it would have been possible to see that it wasn't just it that had been bathed in fire. Leonel's eyebrows, his hair, even the corner of his mouth shot out with flickering silver-red flames, looking every bit the part of a demon risen from hell.

In that moment, even the tendrils of darkness suddenly gained a wild fire rushing through them, the shards of broken space that hung in the air reflecting gorgeous violet lights.

Everywhere the Rapax tried to step and move, it found itself swarmed by corrosive flames from all sides. As its injuries grew, the effect of the heat on it only grew, its shrieking only becoming more and more prominent.

Leonel was relentless.

He took a heavy step forward, blocking a strong leg kick of the Radax with two forearms. He planted a foot hard and sent his other sweeping at the side of the Rapax's planted knee.

BANG!

Almost instantly, the Rapax buckled. It reached out with its tail to pierce the ground for balance, but it was once again thwarted by the endless tendrils of darkness laced about the trees around him.

Leonel took another heavy step forward, taking advantage of the Rapax's lost momentum to send out a strong punch to its chest.

BANG!

The Rapax fell back slamming heavily to the ground and falling through a swath of flame laced dark tendrils. It suddenly found its body completely encased from all sides. It had been able to snap one, two and even ten tendrils easily. But, what about hundreds? What about thousands?

"SKREEEE!!!"

Even fallen, the Rapax's lethal claws whipped out at Leonel, its long legs still seeking out the kill. However, without proper leverage, the strength behind it was at best a tenth of its peak.

With a savage Spear Force laced swipe downward, Leonel clashed with the upward swinging claw, smashing them right back into the ground and leaping atop the tied down Rapax.

Leonel's gaze blazed, his palm rising into the air.

An enormous Radiant Core formed. But, this time, it was laced with a destructive will.

BANG!

Leonel's armor expanded by a size before shrinking, numerous tiny cracks spreading across its surface before rapidly healing. An implosion of Universal Force and a sudden change to his body fueled it all, a spontaneous rise in energy almost spinning out of his control.

In that moment, Leonel only had one thought... That everything should revolve around him... His blade, his enemy's life and death, the world... Everything was in the palm of his hand. Let alone a mere foot soldier, even the King of Rapax wouldn't stop his momentum forward.

He was a Star.

The feeling of the Heavenly Body Realm's comprehension enveloped Leonel from all sides, fueling a spinning drill of Spear Force.

"Die."

SHUUUU! TSSSS! BOOM!

Leonel raised his head up to the skies, releasing a roar that traveled dozens of miles.

Chapter 1310 Fusion

'Look at this brat, roaring at the top of his lungs as though he's actually accomplished something. Even I feel embarrassed.'

Wise Star Order clicked his tongue, shaking his head.

Leonel exhaled a long, billowing breath, pretending as though he hadn't heard a single thing the old man said. Maybe it was a bit silly that he had reacted like this after defeating a being two Tiers below him, but he was excited nonetheless.

With a thought, Leonel quickly placed the Rapax corpse within a snow globe and let the flames, his Runes and his armor slowly retreating into his body.

Leonel's mind was already swimming with thoughts of how to use the Rapax's corpse. But, the truth was that he had only placed it within the snowglobe just now so that the Zone couldn't recognize that he had won just yet. Though he was on a time crunch, Leonel still wanted a moment to take a breather.

The Segmented Cube shot off of Leonel's finger and expanded. Then, he disappeared within it.

...

In the skies, Cornelius gazed upon the images flashing before him, unsure of what to say or think for a long while.

His shock wasn't exactly related to the defeat of the Rapax. If there weren't at least some humans who could defeat Rapax on their own, what hope or chance would the Human Domain have had in lasting so long? The main issue was that upon a first encounter, things shouldn't have gone so easily.

'Could it be that Velasco prepared him for this as well?'

Cornelius had no idea what sort of parenting practices Val used. He had already been shocked enough that Spear Domain and the Segmented Cube were actually in Leonel's hands. Anyone seeing such a thing would think that Leonel had been pampered and handed everything on a silver platter. At that point, the idea that Leonel had had targeted training to prepare for this day wasn't so farfetched.

But this was exactly where the cognitive dissonance came in. If Leonel was supposedly prepared ahead of time for all of this, what was with the first half of the fight? Why did he seem like a deer in headlights? Was that just an act?

Cornelius didn't believe that a boy could fool his eyes so well, especially not one who seemingly had as hot a temper as Leonel. And, that also led to another. That roar of pure emotion, linked with that final breakthrough, it made Cornelius feeling that it was impossible for Leonel to have experience in this matter.

Putting all of this together, Cornelius felt that if he had to answer with his life on the line... He would choose to say that this was the very first time Leonel had ever come across a Rapax.

...

Leonel knew that there was a likelihood that he was being watched, so he chose to enter the Segmented Cube. Though he wasn't absolutely certain, he felt there was a good chance that whatever monitoring the Void Palace had left behind wouldn't be able to penetrate across this barrier.

'The Rapax make such good soldiers, if the tentacle womb could replicate them...'

Leonel's expression flickered, but Wise Star Order's words danced at the back of his mind, making him feel somewhat conflicted. Ultimately, the Rapax, although they looked different from humans, were a group of people too. Mass producing them felt... wrong, even if it wasn't possible—something Leonel wasn't absolutely sure of just yet.

However, if Leonel thought about it, wasn't it the same for beasts? They might have been unintelligent in the Third Dimension, but could the same be said now? He could feel the complexity of Blackstar's thoughts everyday, he had seen the kind of devious and well laid out plans the golden scaled koi fish had made, how could he still, with a straight face, say that beasts were different?

And yet, wasn't he trying to mass produce them either way?

'It might not be necessary to worry about such a moral dilemma...'

After the tentacle womb had absorbed Monkey's ability, it had undergone a qualitative change. In fact, it was so extensive and wide ranging that Leonel had actually left the dictionary to analyze it over several months. Though there was a small pause in that when he took it out to analyze to the Sub-Dimensional Zone, it should be about finished by now.

In that time, Leonel had grasped tidbits of its abilities here and there. From what he had learned, it was very possible that he wouldn't have to worry about it at all.

The fundamental change that Leonel was the most excited for was the fact that the tentacle womb would no longer need multiple samples of the same DNA to replicate it properly!

It had to be remembered that when two Ability Indexes fused, the result wasn't additive and it wasn't necessarily exponential either. Rather, an average of the two abilities would be added then divided in two. The result would then be a perfect reflection of both original Abilities. This was why Leonel couldn't just randomly absorb any strong Ability he came across even if he now had the Silver Tablet.

Though Leonel thought that the fusion of Monkey's Doubling Ability and the tentacle wombs Duplication Ability would work well together, he wouldn't have definitive proof of this until he saw the results. And, at least for this first portion...

He wasn't disappointed.

In the past, the tentacle womb had to have many samples. The more powerful the creature, the more samples of it were needed. But, the fallacy in this was clear. How could it be so easy to find so many powerful creatures? And, even if you did, how could they all possibly share the same Ability?

Due to this, Leonel felt investing in the tentacle womb would be a poor use of resources. He could create Crafts that were far more useful. But now...

After gaining a portion of Monkey's Doubling Ability, the tentacle womb only needed a single complete sample. Then, it could replicate it as many times as it needed to meet its goals!

