

Descent 1321

Chapter 1321 Right Hand

Cornelius watched Leonel, his expression warping from time to time.

'30%... He's gotten 30% stronger in a few hours... 40... 50... 80...'

Cornelius felt as though his head was spinning. A part of him wanted to believe that this wasn't improvement speed but rather just Leonel showing more of the strength he already had. But, he felt like he knew better than to try and conclude such a thing.

What was the most baffling was that he felt a change in Leonel after that fight...

'Those three... That young man is from the Sith family, the leading head of Shield Cross Star's Stealth Unit. He isn't the best among their current generation, but he's still within the top five, he's even awakened the Sith Lineage Factor to such a level already. But...'

Cornelius could feel it. Leonel got bored, and the instant he did, the rapid improvement that he was experiencing plummeted. It was as though Leonel could use his own mood to influence how fast his own progress could be. Cornelius had never heard of something like this before.

'Does he not have goals and aspirations? Does he not have something to strive for outside of what's right in front of him?'

If Leonel could hear Cornelius' thoughts he would be baffled. Reason being, he definitely had a goal to strive after. He wouldn't be able to understand how or why Cornelius would come to such a conclusion. However, for any neutral outside observer, Cornelius' conclusion wasn't only sound, it was reasonable and felt like the truth.

A person who had bought into their purpose, who truly strove after it with all they had, wouldn't be like Leonel. Why would something like boredom slow him down? Monotony was something anyone who wanted to succeed would have to learn to accept.

Did that mean that Leonel didn't believe in his goal...? Not necessarily.

If Cornelius knew of what Leonel wanted to accomplish, rather than feeling that it was all ridiculous, he might look toward Leonel more like he was looking at a monster rather than just a child he was looking after.

There were only two real explanations for this.

It was either Leonel didn't take his goal to conquer the Dimensional Verse as seriously as he claimed to. Or...

Leonel was so confident in his inevitable success that he felt no pressure whatsoever...

...

Leonel knew that he was likely being observed, but he had already thrown such thoughts to the back of his mind, already focusing on his new goal.

Now that he knew platforms didn't disappear and that paths formed by others could be used, he realized that this was a great opportunity. The more time passed, the more complicated the structure would become and the more chances there would be.

There was a good chance that the more empty paths there were the more geniuses would begin to travel along them. If Leonel ignored the easy paths to take, then others could take them. Eventually, the opponents Leonel needed would end up coming to him rather than him having to go and find them.

Leonel could tell that this trial was built to allow this to happen. The more platforms were cleared, the more interconnectivity there would be, and the more likely it would be for two groups to run into each other. From the beginning, this was the design. Leonel was just making a decision that would allow this to happen faster. Rather than following paths that had already been cleared, he would forge new ones.

As Leonel barreled forth, the day waned and Aina finally showed signs of waking up. When she finally did so, she realized that she lay on something as soft as clouds. It took her a moment before she registered the fact that it was a special ability of Blackstar's.

She sat up slightly, Blackstar's twin tails allowing her all the room she needed to maneuver.

Feeling the change, Little Blackstar, who hovered in the forehead of his foggy construct, looked back.

"Yip! Yip!" He excitedly greeted Aina, causing her to reveal a beautiful smile.

Aina's gaze shifted toward Leonel's back. She knew that he was probably aware that she was awake already, but he was too focused on ripping apart the Rapax before him to pay attention to any of that. The defined muscles of his back, shoulders and lats rippled with veins and striations as he destroyed yet another foe.

Aina took a deep breath, looking down at her hands. She felt much better. In fact, she felt better than she had in a long time.

The Anarchic Force wasn't that much of an issue to her. After decades of dealing with a curse day in and day out, this felt like a light punishment. She had just needed to replenish her mind after draining it so completely. Even with how powerful her own mind was, Yuri was simply on a different level.

Aina stretched, her curves displaying an enticing sight as she pulled her torso taut. Her figure was enticing to an extreme, her skin giving off a healthy color.

She ran her hands through her hair, a light smile tugging at her pink lips.

With a light push, she flipped through the air, landing like a feather on her feet. In a blink, she had appeared by Leonel's side, a delicate fragrance of apple and cinnamon following her every movement.

Leonel's fist shot through the throat of the last Rapax, exhaling a light breath. He looked to the side as they vanished, appearing above the lake once more.

His gaze met Aina's and he smiled lightly, his palm flipping over to hand her a familiar battle ax.

Aina accepted it gracefully, resting the enormous two meter long polearm on her shoulder as though it weighed nothing at all.

Without a word exchanged, the two leapt to the next platform, Little Blackstar following closely behind.

Aina had come at the perfect time. The number of Rapax they needed to face increased from just one to two, and it would very likely increase from now on.

Leonel let Aina take more of the lead, allowing her to get accustomed to fighting this new enemy. Subconsciously, Leonel knew that his biggest reliance in the journey ahead would be this woman by his side now. She was the only one among his current group with talent comparable to his, and he knew that this would be what it took to reach his goals.

How could his right hand woman not be able to cut down Rapax just as easily as he could?

Chapter 1322 Perfect Timing

Aina adjusted quickly. Her battle sense had always been beyond Leonel's. What Leonel had to deduce and calculate, she did as naturally as breathing, her instincts and reflexes existing on a plane all to her own.

Facing the oppressive leg kicks of the Rapax, her movements were as calming as a spring's wind and as lithe as a ball of cotton.

Leonel observed without a word, his mind entering a different sort of state. Now that he was out of his raging battle mode, he began to think about things in a new light. It was quite interesting, of all the battle styles the Rapax could have with its powerful body, their race seemed to have chosen to become a group of kicking experts.

One would never expect such a thing from their poor overall posture. But, at the same time, Leonel had to admit that it suited them quite well.

The claws on their feet had a lethality that spoke for themselves, their tails gave them an extra foundation to balance upon, giving them freedom of movement two-legged humans couldn't hope to match, they had an extra joint in their legs giving them added leverage for power and, as though all of these things weren't enough, their legs themselves were exceptionally long, taking up as much as three quarters of their body.

When things were broken down this way, it felt like it would be more of a shame than anything else if the Rapax chose any other martial art form.

Still, what fascinated Leonel wasn't the choice, but rather everything that facilitated its success. The Rapax could display strength far beyond their Tier all because of this choice of theirs. Leonel could imagine that their people had probably evolved a whole culture around their legs. Every technique, every Lineage Factor, and maybe even their Ability Indexes to a certain extent, were all streamlined to maximize this ability.

Ability Indexes were meant to be random and had nothing to do with genes and DNA. However, they had to come from somewhere.

If Leonel was correct, then much like everything else, Ability Indexes were gifted and birthed from Force. And, just like Wise Star Order had said, the Human Domain was the only Domain where the Force was so widely variable and random. In that case, if the Rapax's Force distribution was so much more compact

and streamlined, then wouldn't that also mean that the kind of Ability Indexes that could be bestowed upon their people also existed within a narrow margin?

When things were looked at from this perspective, it all fell into place. Leonel hadn't noticed any obvious usage of an Ability by the Rapax in the battles he had fought. But, then again, he had only fought one real Rapax while these Aina was facing now were nothing more than simulations. However, he had a feeling that even if they were real, the talents of the Rapax would all be so united in one pursuit that it wouldn't be easy even for him to tease apart their intricacies.

'So this is why the gap exists between humans and other races... We're so good at so many things that we've branched our evolutionary paths into more roads than could possibly be accounted for. If things are looked at in this way, even though my world views make the likes of the Brazinger family to be disgusting... Maybe they have their reasons as well.'

Having such a thought made Leonel feel slimy, but it was the objective truth. The obsession of the Brazinger family over the purity of their bloodlines, even to the point of cursing a little girl to a lifetime of pain and suffering all as a warning, could be said to make sense if things were looked at through this light.

When Leonel thought about it, everything about Aina's talents were perfect. Her Ability Index, her Lineage Factor, her Style, her Force affinities... They all combined into a single monstrous monolith.

Now that he thought about it, the one other Brazinger family member that he had had in depth contact with was also like this. Simeon's Gene Manipulation Ability Index was a lot like Aina's Ability if you thought about it. If anything, Simeon's Gene Manipulation Ability was just a more involved and controlled version of Aina's Ability when extrapolated to an extreme...

Something that would make perfect sense since Aina was a half-blood while Simeon was, presumably, full blooded.

When Leonel reached this point in his thoughts, he felt his heart skip a beat. These were all things he had already known for a very long time, but when they were put together and described like this, it all made almost too much sense. But, at the same time, it was a reminder of his weakness.

Leonel's talents worked together well enough, but it couldn't be said that they synergized and exponentially improved one another. However, if he truly wanted to reach the pinnacle of his strength, he would have to find a way.

Leonel's gaze became serious. 'When I return to Earth, I won't let Simeon go again. His Gene Manipulation Ability isn't even documented in any Ability Index I've ever read. In fact, I haven't ever seen Aina's Ability documented either. But, it also happens to be the perfect last piece to what the tentacle womb is missing...'

Leonel's mine whirred.

He had created his Dream Path ability to help his brothers maximize their training regimens, taking inspiration from Aina's Ability. It seemed that he would need to adjust it. Not only would he need to focus on maximizing their training, but he would also need to fuse all their talents toward a single path and battle style, only like this would they become the absolute strongest versions of themselves.

'But first... I need to figure out how to do this for myself. I've already decided that my foundation will be my Scarlet Star Force and my comprehension of it is progressing smoothly... I need more data to complete the Dream Simulations for my future path, though...'

Leonel suddenly looked up as they vanished from the foggy world. 'Perfect timing.'

Up ahead, a group led by a young woman with a poisonous sort of air appeared to their left.

Chapter 1323 Good Thing...

Leonel knew that he was getting ahead of himself. He couldn't complete this new streamlined battle Style with the limited knowledge he had now. Only after seeing all the resources the Void Palace had on hand could he make an informed decision. But, in the mean while, gathering data and ensuring Aina gained an Amethyst Token was his top priority.

When the group across from them realized that they were facing Leonel, their gazes narrowed. But, it wasn't just this, they could tell that Aina's cloak of gold was also a brighter and more vibrant sheen than usual as well. It was clear that this group had defeated others before reaching this point.

There was no doubt that information about Leonel had already been spread. In fact, it could be said that it was because of Leonel that the battle to the center of the lake had become as violent as it had.

The idea of fighting through many Golden Token wielders, a large segment of whom would have been Amethyst Token wielders any other year, was like asking for death. Most would have chosen to cut their losses and focus on reaching the main objective rather than chasing after side quests.

However, Leonel had become a juicy piece of meat dangling over all of their noses. Rather than defeating a whole host of Golden Token wielders, all you would have to do is defeat a single fake Amethyst Token holder and you would be promoted in a single bound.

That sort of enticement and luck of the draw lottery was on a completely different level. And, as a result, there were many more participants.

All of this said... There were many groups who would have chosen to participate regardless, groups that had full and unbridled confidence in themselves... And this group, from a very familiar Golden Sector, was one of them.

The young mistress of the Pyius family, Simona, almost seemed to glide as she walked, her dainty feet only barely peeking out beneath her long, dark purple gown from time to time. It truly seemed as though she was walking on air rather than solid ground, her gait too smooth for words.

Her hips swayed like a hypnotic pendulum, her skin so pale that one might feel as though you just might be able to see right through it. However, she contrasted her near transparent skin with bold dark purple lipstick and long, curved nails, decorated with gems and a base coat of the very same color.

Her hair was once again a dark shade of purple, the only slightly lighter sheen to be found were in her pair of irises, steady with an undying cold light.

Despite the darkness she exuded, she was truly a beauty beyond words, a gorgeous woman with a delicate nose and gently sloping chin that lost out to Aina in no way.

Her slender waist swayed just once more before she came to a stop, her subordinates following suit without a word as well.

At that moment, a slender little pinkish purple fox with the stature of a puppy peeked out from Simona's leg, its large black eyes blinking curiously as it observed Little Blackstar.

Leonel took all of this in without a word. The pressure he felt from this woman was no joke. Compared to the three he had defeated previously, she was on a completely different level. The dangerous light in her cold eyes spoke for itself even while not saying a thing.

Leonel had known that he might run into such a character taking the approach he had. But, he had left it up to fate. It seemed that his luck wasn't very good. And yet...

Some of that bubbling excitement seemed to want to resurface.

Unfortunately, as soon as that excitement came back, he felt a heated gaze boring two holes into his cheek. Eventually, he sighed.

"Fine, fine, fine. She's yours. I'll handle the rest of them."

Leonel had almost forgotten that Aina was even more of a battle maniac than maybe even he was.

Toward his words, she smiled sweetly, her visage seeming to disperse the fog like a ray of sun.

"You have to take care of your image," Aina said lightly. "What would it look like if a King was always fighting women?"

Leonel's lip twitched. Fighting women? What was wrong with that? There was probably a young woman, right about now, whose face was still half buried in dirt and stone who was lamenting the fact Aina didn't wake up earlier.

Aina giggled seeing Leonel's reaction. She knew well that he never cared about such things. On Earth, he gave women their due as the fairer sex. However, after the Metamorphosis, there was nothing 'fairer' about women. With how Leonel broke everything down logically, he saw no reason to not treat women as his equals any longer.

But, this was exactly why she was here. There were some things that couldn't always be dictated by logic. Aina had already decided to do something about Leonel's choice of wardrobe when next she got the chance. He was too handsome to be wasting it all on sweatpants.

Aina took a step forward, her smiling expression vanishing. Her battle ax rested on her shoulder, her long, jet black hair dancing about in the wind. She looked particularly wild, the short beast skin skirt and choker she wore playing on the fantasies of all who saw her. But, after seeing how she interacted with Leonel, they were under no illusions about where her allegiances lay.

Simona's cold gaze didn't waver. Instead, she only shifted it from Aina to Leonel.

"I don't fight the weak. Just hand over your Tokens and scam. I have no interest in wasting time on unworthy scum."

Her voice came out the same biting cold her image shared, her indifference washing over Aina.

However, Leonel only grinned.

"Good thing she's not weak. Unfortunately for you, she's especially not weak when she's angry. Good luck."

Aina's entire demeanor shifted, a dense fog of red erupting around her as her Ax Force pierced into the skies.

[Important Announcement Below!! :)]

Chapter 1324 Useless

Simona's pupils constricted. The instant Aina moved, it was as though the weight of an expert bore down from all sides. Her powerful thighs grew a size, her toned torso flexed, her slender arms pulsed with a power their slight frame had no business having... Every movement was efficient to an extreme and refined to the final detail.

She was a work of art.

Simona's expression calmed, her arms leaving their relaxed position and her hands raising. The long, painted nails that graced them curled like claws, shimmering with delicately designed gems.

Her arm swept at the air even as Aina's ax swung downward.

BANG!

Claw and blade met. On one side, a dark violet gown danced wildly in the wind and on the other, a long cascading river of jet black hair flowed as though a single cohesive whole.

Sparks flew between them, neither woman taking even a single step backward.

Simona's arm trembled, her gaze narrowing further. In that instant, what looked like a stalemate collapsed.

BANG!

The ground beneath her feet shattered, her dress threatening to fly from her body out from below as though a strong air current had assaulted her ankles.

Aina's strength with had been equal to Simona's suddenly erupted past her, forcing Simona to quickly retreat lest she be forced into the ground.

As Simona fell backward, her delicate and seemingly dainty feet left deep craters in the ground, the little puppy that had been dancing around her ankles quickly dodging out of the way to avoid being crushed into minced meat.

Simona's gaze flickered as Leonel's lip twitched. Well, he had given Simona a warning. It wasn't his fault that she hadn't listened. But, then again, by the time he had given said warning, it was probably already too late for his advice to be heeded.

There was no doubt in Leonel's mind that Aina had done it on purpose. Her control over her body was so finely tuned that she had put out only just enough strength to negate Simona's own counter in that

instant. Then, when Simona was feeling confident that their strengths were about equal after a single probe, Aina erupted with more strength in a position that wasn't conducive to gathering momentum in the first place.

The difference was clear. Simona had come into the exchange with intent to probe. Aina had entered the exchange with intent to humiliate. And, the only way you could get away with such a thing is if you had the confidence... and the arrogance to do so.

Simona's gaze turned a shade colder, her final stomp stopping what was left her momentum just before reaching the edge of the platform.

Simona wasn't very put off by this result. Physical strength was clearly Aina's strong suit but it wasn't even something Simona would list in her top three best qualities. However, it was clear that Aina was aware of this as well, or else she wouldn't have taken such an approach.

Aina could have forced her back immediately, but she hadn't chosen to do this. Instead, she had thrown down an obvious gauntlet. She didn't just plan to win this battle, she planned to cruise to its ends. She didn't just plan on winning, she planned on doing so handily.

The cold light in Simona's gaze grew, a fog of dark violet Force beginning to spread around her.

The expressions of her subordinates changed, their hearts skipping a beat. They could tell that their young miss was enraged. Despite the fact her expression didn't seem to have changed in the slightest, the blood thirst in her air now was heavier than the air itself.

"I would put the poison away, if I were you." Aina said lightly. "Unless you're seeking to be humiliated again, that is."

Simona didn't say a single word. Her right palm flipped over to reveal a snaking black with dense scale-like patterns that made it seem as though it had been carved out of the hide of a dragon. Her left palm flipped over to reveal a slender silver blade that seem a bit too long to be considered a knife or dagger, but still a hint too short to be considered a sword or short sword.

This odd dual wielding style was a specialty of the Pyius family. A tail-like whip and a stinger-like sword. Together they formed a lethal combination of long and short range.

The moment they appeared, two strong Level Two Blade-like Forces manifested. With a single step, Simona's gown tore a gash from its hem to her hip, revealing a gorgeous sight of supple calf and thigh. A garter pressed against her pale flesh, lined with slender silver needles that emitted an air of lethality.

As Simona raised her leg to take a second step, both women vanished.

A whip lashed out through the air, only to be deflected by a punch.

A short sword split the wind in two, only to have its Blade Force shattered by an ax.

A flurry of exchanges erupted, the glow in Aina's golden irises becoming more prominent and the coldness in Simona's own becoming deeper.

The more blows they exchanged, the denser the dark violet fog seemed to become. The rolling waves plucked on the strings of the wind, gliding along with them and resonating as one.

The moment this dark violet fog entered Leonel's range, he could feel his Destruction characteristic eating at it alive. But, he could also sense the dark violet fog trying to fight back to no avail.

BANG! BANG! BANG

"I've told you. It's useless."

Aina's figure flickered. Her ample chest grew a size and her cherry lips parted.

Under the astonished gazes of all those watching their battle, she took in a strong breath, suddenly causing all the Force in the surroundings to be pulled into her body.

Leonel's brows shot up but his shock was nothing compared to Simona's. The latter quickly blocked her chest but found herself stumbling backward hard, her small feet once against leaving dense trenches in the ground.

Simona's gaze flickered, her palm flipping over to put her sword away just in time for her to reach for her thighs and throw out three needles at once.

Chapter 1325 Disparity

The needles whistled through the air with a strength that could match the Rapax. The strong currents of wind it should have produced were split in two beneath their fine construction. Beneath the low light, they almost seemed to fuse into the fog, their bodies carrying with them a hint of devastating pressure. Even without this odd poisonous Force, these needles were lethal. But, with them, it was enough to make far greater men feel inferior.

Aina took a strong step forward, her hair fluttering. She released a hand from her battle ax and her palm swiped through the air with an elegant flare. Her every action was filled with confidence. In that moment, it felt like even though Simona and Aina could be considered comparable in beauty, when it came to innate disposition, the latter was in a class all to her own.

As though the needles were nothing special at all, Aina caught the first between her fore and middle finger, the second between her middle and ring finger, and the last between her ring and pinkie finger. Her arm swept through the air in a clear arc, not pausing for even a moment. The only sign of her action was a dull slapping sound as each one was trapped between her slender digits.

Without missing a beat, Aina continued to move forward, her momentum not having stalled even a single measure. She didn't even seem to notice the dense purple Force around her fingers at all, as though it could do nothing more than tickle her.

Simona's eyes widened. She hadn't planned for her needles to harm or injure Aina, but she had banked on them stalling her opponent for just a moment. Catching them out of the air like that was completely beyond her expectations. It required a level of skill, speed and coordination that she could hardly wrap her head around, especially when the Force she had coated it in was taken into consideration. Just a single mistake would have ended in Aian being skewered.

Unfortunately for her, Simona hardly got the change to finish this thought before Aina's hand whipped forward once more. This time, the needles were sent flying again, but they felt almost twice as fast. Just a flick of Aina's wrist carried more strength than most could even begin to fathom behind it.

Simona, who was still off balance, quickly brandished her short, silver sword, realizing that there was no other choice to make.

DING! DING! DING!

Simona's wrist went numb, her shoulder quaking as she was forced several steps back once again. But, by then, even as she teetered on the edge of the platform, Aina had already appeared before her, her battle ax swinging downward once again.

Aina's battle style was ruthless and to the point. She wasted no movements and seemed to make moves on instinct that cornered her enemy step by step. From the psychological assault that started the battle to the oppressive physical might that seemed to be about to end it, she had been absolutely perfect and without blemish. It almost made Simona look as though she was truly not worth much of anything despite the fact she was a true genius.

"Young miss!"

The other younger generation members of the Pyius family couldn't remain standing no more. They had felt Simona's rage and knew better than to interfere. But, now that things reached this point, even if their young miss became enraged, they couldn't just allow her to die.

No one knew what was hidden within the foggy lake below, but considering the circumstances, it didn't take a genius to understand that it wasn't good.

However, wasn't Leonel still here?

Leonel had been observing everything intently from the very beginning. Despite being impressed with the battle, he wouldn't lag behind in intervening when the matter became like this.

His figure flickered, his body appearing amidst the encirclement of Pyius family members. There were exactly four of them, each carrying a demeanor similar to Simona's. It was as though this entire family was suffused with an air of hardly disguised coldness.

Their gazes only became colder when they saw Leonel. However, the latter only smiled, facing their attacks with a calmness.

'They're strong...' Leonel thought to himself.

Leonel pressed two palms outward, slapping the forearm of a fist aimed for his head. Taking advantage of the shift in momentum, he threw a solid punch at their lats. He could feel a satisfying deformation of flesh and bone when his fist connected, but it only last a moment before this individual was blown away.

At that same moment, Aina's blade descended upon Simona.

BANG!

Simona found herself thrust into the ground, the back of her head and even her back itself crushed into the stone beneath them. The only thing between herself and being sliced into was her blocking short sword, her entire body being pressed into the ground.

A deep humiliation flickered within Simona's gaze. She could feel that the gap between her and Aina shouldn't feel this large, and yet, here they were.

The sound of muffled groans resounded as Simona's people were further blasted away, their bodies unable to keep up with Leonel's strikes and counters. It felt as though he was twice as fast, twice as strong and twice as capable as any one of them.

"Your Golden Token." Aina said lightly.

Simona's blade trembled against Aina's ax while the latter's blade might as well have been as steady as a mountain. The disparity in raw strength couldn't have been more obvious. If Aina wanted to press down and kill her, she could do so only by adding a little bit more strength, just as she had done before.

Simona's cold gaze flickered. But, without a word, she brought out her Token.

Under a mysterious law, it cracked, its color flowing into Aina.

Leonel smiled, standing over the four defeated subordinates. This had gone even smoother than expected.

But, Leonel maybe should have known that things couldn't possibly stay so easy for him.

Chapter 1326 ...

It could be said that the Pyius family was simply unlucky to have run into Leonel and Aina of all people. If there were any two that could be considered perfect counters to their strongest points, it was most definitely this pair.

The Pyius family used a special Force known as Pyius Force which was known for its poisonous and corrosive attributes. Any member of this family would have spent most of their time learning how to master and control this Force due to the danger that it presented not to just to everyone around them, but namely even they themselves.

As a result of this, the younger the Pyius family member was, the more likely it was that the main tenet of their battle prowess would be their usage of Pyius Force.

Under normal circumstances, this was still enough for them to display strength beyond the imaginations of most. Pyius Force was capable of many things. It could corrode Force, its thickness could push Force it couldn't corrode away, forming a Domain where the only Force that could exist in a region was itself, it could infect a target, weakening their senses and slowing their reflexes... The list felt endless and even this much was just the tip of the iceberg. If a wielder of this Force wanted, they could even attack one's Internal Sight, corroding the mind and soul after a certain point!

With the support of such a powerful Force, the strength of its wielder would be undeniable. However, without it, Simona had lost as much as 90% of her true combat prowess.

Unfortunately for her, Leonel's passive Destruction Cloak, a name he had decided to give his current state, destroyed practically everything in its path. Scarlet Star Force was an innately higher form of Force than Pyius Force and, as a result, had no a single problem suppressing it.

On the other end, Aina was immune to poisons thanks to her ability. Her self-healing was on a level far beyond the Healing Factor given to Leonel by his Snowy Star Owl Lineage Factor. In her current state, even if Aina wanted to regrow an arm, she could do so. This was how far her Ability Index had progressed.

Aina retracted her ax even as another geyser rose into the air. Four more streams of gold entered her body and the resplendent light that coated her rose to an all new level. It seemed like it was right on the verge of evolving to a new tier. Maybe only one or two more Golden Tokens would be necessary for Aina to earn an Amethyst Token, then.

Leonel smiled. "Alright, let's go."

He leapt toward a new platform, Aina following close behind. A dull silence was left in their wake.

Simona didn't move for a long while. She knew why it was she had lost, but that didn't mean she accepted it. She wasn't the type of person to make excuses. There were many races on the Void Battlefield that had methods of immunizing themselves against her poison. It was her job to surpass these limitations and rise above it.

Her guardians had long since told her that she had reached the threshold of mastery in Pyius Force to move on to improving her battle prowess in other ways. However, Simona had been stubborn. She didn't just want to meet a minimum threshold, she wanted to be like her Ancestors and bestow the family with an evolution, a step beyond what they had now.

Due to this, despite the fact she could have begun to train up herself in other ways, she remained entirely focused on Pyius Force.

Of course, when she met those that couldn't counter her, she was unstoppable, being a genius no weaker than any of the top echelon of this generation. However, when she ran into someone like Aina... she felt like nothing more than canon fodder.

Simona slowly rose to her feet, not bothering to wipe the blood that trickled down her lovely violet painted lips. The dot of crimson was especially striking upon her pale features and her expression gave way to no emotion.

She strolled forward, whip in one hand, sword in the other. A murderous aura surrounded her.

She was going Golden Token hunting. One day, she would pay back this defeat.

...

"Huh?"

"It's a good chance." Was Aina's only response.

Leonel was speechless. They had only just left their battle with Simona when Aina said that this was a good opportunity for Leonel to recruit her. Leonel almost felt like he someone was pulling a prank on him and he'd unearth some hidden cameras in a few seconds. But, when Aina confirmed that she was serious, he really had no idea what to say.

"Why do you think I fought her instead of letting you do it?"

Leonel raised an eyebrow. Wasn't that because she was a woman? She had said so herself.

"The fact she was a woman is part of the reason, yes. But, I could also tell that she used poisons. It was obvious from the very beginning that we'd be able to defeat her easily, I have a certain sensitivity to that sort of stuff."

"And because she's easy to defeat...?"

"Because she'd be easy to defeat despite being such a great talent, in the event that she did lose, the resentment she held would be toward whoever defeated her, meaning me.

"She'll train, improve herself, and likely challenge me again. But, she will still lose. When this happens continuously, and yet she realizes that I follow you, she'll birth an innate respect for you that exists outside of whatever resentment she has for me. In fact, after losing to me continuously, she might even try to find a different method of defeating me that just might include being more useful to you than I can be."

Leonel's expression flickered. When'd this woman become so scheming? It didn't really seem like her at all. But, soon, Leonel would come to understand where this came from.

"She seems like a person far too prideful to take that sort of path, though."

"You don't understand." Aina shook her head. "The pride of a man is different from the pride of a woman. They don't manifest in the same ways.

"Plus, there are certain things that only I can do for you. Recruiting talented women is one of those things. Your status is special. If you go around recruiting women as the future Heir of the Morales family, people will misunderstand. That's why these sort of tactics are better."

"..."

Why did it sound like she was just keeping tabs on the women around him?

Leonel was about to respond when he frowned. 'Already?'

He could see it up ahead. The center of the lake was already in view and many groups had already surrounded it.

Chapter 1327 Interesting

Several platforms hovered in a circle around the center of the lake. It was clear by the lack of variety in the paths taken to get here that many had still made the opposite choice to Leonel, instead choosing to forge their way to the center as quickly as possible.

Leonel immediately felt that this was a great opportunity. Those with the least stone pathways were likely among those who believed in their abilities the least and were, as such, easier targets. Aina was only a step or two away from wielding an Amethyst Token.

However, Leonel suddenly thought of another possibility that made him frown.

'I went out of my way to always choose the more difficult path, and yet we somehow only ran into two groups with just enough Golden Tokens to place Aina on the brink of earning the next grade? Was that by coincidence? Or by design?'

Leonel's gaze narrowed. With how important the Amethyst Token was to the Void Palace, would they really allow one to so easily upgrade to it? What if these pathways had purposely led Leonel and Aina here after it deduced that they were close to a breakthrough?

'That lends itself to more questions than answers, though. There has to be a path toward reaching the Amethyst stage. But, why would it be here? The Void Palace must know that it might be even easier to gain what Tokens we're missing here compared to elsewhere... Unless?'

Leonel suddenly realized something quite obvious. There was no easy path to reach anyone here. Though they were all concentrated into a circle, the space between each platform was enormous. The circumference covered at least a few kilometers, but there were only a few dozen platforms and groups. There was no simple way to challenge them unless Leonel just flew over. But, something told Leonel that there was a reason they were so spaced out. If he tried to close the distance, he would definitely end up blocked.

'So we aren't given an opportunity to reach the Amethyst rank and we can't challenge people anymore. What exactly is the point of this, then?'

At that moment, another platform appeared within the circle, and soon another.

Leonel's gaze locked onto a golden pair of irises, his eyes not shifting away. The appearance of Conon seemed to make the atmosphere several times heavier.

Before this trial began, Leonel had noticed this young man before. But, after the geysers started erupting and platforms started appearing, the phenomena cause the fogginess of the lake to increase manifold. The result was a clear line of sight vanishing for them all until they reached this proximity.

Seeing the young man again, and at a much closer distance, Leonel could feel the hairs on his skin tingling, his body threatening to re-enter that state once again. It was the same feeling he had gotten from Simona, except multiplied several times over. Much of Simona's lethality was concentrated in her Pyius Force, something that didn't give Leonel any pressure at all... His feeling when meeting her was more like an acknowledgement of her strength rather than an acknowledgement of the threat she might pose.

But, this young man... He was different.

Leonel could feel something not too dissimilar from his King's Might coming from Conon. Not just that, but he felt something quite similar to Aina's Berserk God Lineage Factor as well.

He and those that followed him had wild, unrestrained auras. But, they also had a lofty, imperial sort of arrogance as well. Just being in their presence felt stifling.

At that moment, Leonel smiled, an action that made Conon, who only wanted for murder, feel taken aback. He couldn't wrap his head around why this bastard was smiling at him.

"Is that son of a bitch taunting me?"

Unfortunately, Conon wouldn't get his answer, at least not immediately. After smiling, Leonel looked away and sat down cross-legged, taking a deep breath. Little Blackstar vanquished his wolf construct and hopped into Aina's arms as she took a seat as well. It was clear that whatever it was that was about to happen here, it wouldn't be occurring right this moment.

Leonel took a deep breath, his breathing even and his mind focused. He had felt like he was on the precipice of a breakthrough not long ago. But, after his blood thirstiness for battle vanished, it had slipped away as well.

Leonel always had at least a few of his minds reading and recording what was happening to his body at any moment. Whether it was his mindset, the changes to his biochemistry, and most definitely something as important as a failed breakthrough, he kept tags on them all.

Whenever he settled down, he could review these moments with absolute clarity. This was the power of the Tier 4 Control stage of Leonel's Ability Index. When he reached a certain level of mastery, he would even be able to 'replay' the state his body had been in during a failed breakthrough and make some minor tweaks to ensure that he succeeded this time.

'Interesting, so that's what happened...'

From what Leonel could see, an odd and special sort of Rune had tried to form but failed to in the end because it lacked appropriate stimulus. This Rune seemed to have wanted to take root in Leonel's Force Nodal and their Pathways, fusing together with his internal Force and influencing his every attack.

'It needs me in a state where I'm wanting for blood and battle. This makes sense considering what Wise Star Order told me about the disposition of Scarlet Star Force. These Runes are probably the key to fully comprehending my Innate Node and likely represent fundamental portions of the Natural Force Nodes hidden within it...'

These Natural Force Nodes had been able to protect Leonel from such a large concentration of Anarchic Force, they weren't a joke by any stretch of the imagination.

Leonel's eyes opened, his gaze sweeping over his potential opponents. They would be the whetstone he needed to cross this final barrier.

At that moment, another platform appeared and Leonel's smile became wider. It seemed Conon wasn't the only one who could make his heart race.

A hulking man standing at 2.5 meters tall appeared, his legs dangling from the edge of his platform and a twin pair of enormous battle axes pierced into its sides.

Chapter 1328 One Task

The broad chest of the young man was completely exposed, rippling with strength and muscles that could have fit right in with the sheer cliff. His bottom half was covered in tight black legging that sunk into every crevice, peak and valley of his monstrous quads and the only other accessory on his body was a fur covered belt that seemed to double as a spatial device.

Unfortunately, this fashion choice but this overly large young man placed the outline of a set of family jewels and their crowning achievement on far too great a display. But, it was either this young man hadn't noticed the provocativeness of his style of dress, or he simply didn't care.

This young man was none other than the third individual Conon Lio had mentioned during his tirade, Armand of the Tarius family.

He, indeed, didn't care about this appearance, nor was he trying to be provocative. Much like Leonel, he was only concerned with being as comfortable as possible. If it was up to him, he would be completely naked as he walked about and interacted with the world. But, his father had berated him one too many times about such a thing, some nonsense about how they were already seen as brutish enough without him confirming stereotypes, so he could only compromise in this way.

Of course, the Patriarch of the Tarius family was still infuriated by his son's choices. But, at this point, it was already much too late to do anything about his disposition. What was done was done. At least his future daughter in law would see what she was working with before she married into their family.

Clearly, the father was just as brazen and brutish as the son or else he would have never had such a thought to begin with.

Armand's feet swung back and forth on the edge of platform, stretching and yawning from time to time. He seemed a bit disappointed with the view, but there wasn't much even he could do about the fog.

"Hm?"

Armand looked up and matched Leonel's gaze almost the instant the latter locked eyes with him. His head tilted to the side, his muscles involuntarily rippling of their own accord. He didn't even notice Leonel's violet-gold cloak until several moments had passed.

"Oh?"

Everything about Armand just a moment before, if one disregarded his size, was entirely innocent. He swung his feet, he calmly observed his surroundings, and he looked like a bit of an air head one might want to protect. However, the moment he laid eyes on Leonel, his demeanor seemed to shift entirely.

His gaze didn't become cold nor did he release some fiendish or violent aura. Rather, his irises gained a glossy sort of look to them as his tilted head slowly straightened. His heartbeat slowed to a crawl, his skin slightly tensed and reddened, and everything around him seemed to grind to a halt as though Force itself was too scared to move.

Leonel's own gaze narrowed. This look... It reminded him of something.

His mind was sent into a dry prairie land with tall grasslands of brown and yellow. In the distance, a lion slowly stalked its prey, its reflective irises peeking through the strands of grass and fusing with the land.

There was no rage in its eyes, no anticipation, no killing intent. Its emotions were impossible to read, but even as your own legs quaked, even as your knees weakened and cold sweat poured down your back, it simply continued to slowly stalk forward, its four limbs gently gliding from one to another, its path connected to you by an invisible tether.

You probably knew that you should run, but you knew that you would be too slow. You thought that maybe you should fight, but you knew that you would be too weak. You might scramble and hope to distract it or give it a meal that was more enticing, but you could see that it only had eyes for your warm flesh.

That glassy look in Armand's eyes was no different. His twin axes, each with blades half the size of his enormous body, released a slight aura, a blackish sort of Force that made the temperature plummet.

Leonel could feel his blood run cold. It wasn't completely out of his control. The weakness of his Snowy Star Owl Lineage Factor seemed to manifest in full force now, meeting a creature that stood so far above itself.

In that moment, Leonel's quiet observation warped, his brows furrowing and a deep pit of disgust deepening within his belly. He hadn't been in a rush to meditate upon the Bronze Tablet to improve his Lineage Factor before, mostly because he simply hadn't had the time yet. By the time he had recovered enough to train, they had already delayed the Void Palace enough and had to leave. But, this feeling almost made him want to vomit.

Right then, a burning sensation raced through Leonel's veins. A strong Force threatened to incinerate his blood to ash.

Aina frowned, looking toward Leonel. She could tell that something was off but she wasn't a mind reader. It was difficult to pinpoint exactly what the problem was.

Leonel closed his eyes, taking deep breaths. He forcefully suppressed the feeling. He would just end up harming himself if he acted on impulse. But, he had already decided, he would definitely purge himself of this Lineage Factor.

That said... He would first use this so-called 'weak' Lineage Factor to put Armand in his place. He had been thoroughly provoked.

Armand had no way of reading Leonel's thoughts. All he felt was a weak creature cowering away. He lost any interest he had had. At this point, he felt the only thing interesting about Leonel was his Amethyst Token. He would definitely be leaving here with it in his hands.

At that moment, the platforms rumbled, beams of light suddenly jetting out and connecting them all. In those final moments, what was presumably the last platform had appeared to trigger all of this, and it was unsurprisingly Simona who had managed to make it back.

"You only have one task, survive and make it back to safety."

The rumbling voice of a woman cast over them all. And then, they all disappeared.

This year would, indeed, be different. Up until now, nothing too out of the norm had occurred. But now... the true dark nature of what it meant to be a protector of humanity would show.

Chapter 1329 Foul Odor

Alarms went off in Leonel's mind. Without the slightest hesitation, he reached outward and grabbed onto Little Blackstar tight. At the same time, he used his other arm to wrap around Aina's waist.

A strong King's Might erupted from him like a pillar piercing through the skies. He held back nothing as he enveloped all three of them just before his vision went completely black.

...

Leonel's head swam, however he only allowed it to do so for a brief moment before he activated Dream Sense.

'What?'

Leonel's heart froze, his blood running cold. He tried to use Dream Sense again, but it failed once more just like it had the first time. The realization made him remember a particular conversation he had had with Wise Star Order and his brows immediately furrowed.

Taking a deep breath, Leonel dug deep. He had managed to make a faint connection with his soul and it could be considered to be partially awakened. However, he couldn't use his own nearly as freely as Wise Star Order could and he even somewhat avoided using anything other than its passive strengthening upon being accessed. Now, though, Leonel felt that waking up his mind was far more important than anything else.

Leonel's soul became like an anchor, stabilizing his mind and his senses. Everything slowly snapped back into place.

First, his proprioception came back and he could feel his limbs in space once again. He could tell that his grip on Aina and Blackstar were still there even though he couldn't feel them.

Then came his sense of smell, but he almost immediately recoiled. The air smelt like hot sulfur and rotten boiled eggs. He almost immediately began to hack and wheeze, or, at the very least, he thought he did. It was still hard to sense much of anything. He could just barely make out the shaking of his head.

Finally, his sense of touch came back and he could confirm that he did, indeed, still have Blackstar and Aina by his side. Both were absolutely still and unmoving.

Once these senses settled in, Leonel's eyesight finally came back. But, what he saw made him narrow his eyes once again. Unfortunately, this was less due to the shocking realization about where he was and had much more to do with the fact it was as hard to keep his eyes open as it was to breathe through his nose.

As bad as the smell was, his eyes felt as though someone had been continuously cutting onions in the surroundings. The irritation was so bad that Leonel was legitimately worried he might lose his eyesight if he kept them open too wide.

Leonel, Aina and Little Blackstar were actually at the bottom of a tall pit. Up above, there was a hole to the sky and the air current of this pit all seemed to be converging toward this location to be filtered upward.

Looking around, Leonel realized that this wasn't actually a pit but was actually a lot like a hive with deeply interconnected tunnels all with exits a lot like this one. The hole to the sky didn't seem to have any simple way to be used and even the closest edge of the hole was 300 meters above his head. Leonel couldn't even dream of jumping that distance especially since...

'The gravity here... Is so heavy...'

Even compared to the Void Palace which was difficult to deal with in and of itself, this place was at least double that. But, Leonel quickly shook his head. There was no guarantee that this wasn't the Void Palace.

'But my Ability...'

Leonel shook his head. There was no point in speculating until he found out more information. The goal here was clear. To survive and reach a certain destination. To do such a thing, he couldn't speculate, he needed facts. Allowing a bias to color his deductions would just make finding the truth slower.

Leonel released Aina, observing her intently. He didn't need to worry too greatly, though, in just a few seconds, she seemed to have regained her bearings as well. The first things she did, not much unlike Leonel, was look around, covering her nose with her hands.

"This is a nest." She suddenly said. "This smell... Though it's disgusting, it's coming from something that's highly nutritious, albeit disgusting to eat."

Leonel's brows shot up. With Aina's ability, she had a keen sense for nutrition. Not only was she able to naturally tell how best to train her body, but she also knew exactly how to concoct the sort of nutrients she needed to supplement her body as well. This was what made her natural talent as a Force Pill Crafter so high and why she had been so greatly valued by Valiant Heart Mountain.

The fact that her ability could be used like this was still a bit of a surprise to Leonel. Maybe this mutation of hers as a half blood wasn't as inferior as Leonel had previously concluded.

Leonel couldn't take out the dictionary in this place. The Anarchic Force in this region even higher than it had been beyond the walls of Village 0012, it was to the point that even Leonel's ability was no longer at Tier 4 in this place.

"Do you know what it's a nest of?" Leonel asked.

"... No, I'm not sure. I only vaguely have the instinct that it's an egg."

Leonel nodded. There didn't seem to be any immediate danger in the surroundings. However, Leonel knew this couldn't possibly last long. He had felt the teleportation try and separate himself and Aina. If not for his quick action, they would have been thrown apart. That told Leonel that there was no more hand holding and teaming up designed for this trial. They had truly thrown them off the deep end.

But, likewise, because they had chosen to do this, it was likely that the elders were aware that the danger wouldn't be immediate either...

"Wise Star Order, what do you know about this place?"

'It is indeed a nest... If I were you, I would probably start running. There's no way they haven't already sensed such a mass teleportation. And, the ones assigned to guard nests like these are nothing like those middling soldiers you've been fighting until this point.'

Almost as though to confirm Wise Star Order's words, a wild scream resonated through the hive, following the air currents of rushing foul smells and making Leonel feel almost as though his eardrums

might burst. The howl was like a furious battlecry and a sonorous warning, echoing all before the earth began to quake.

Leonel's pupils constricted, his jaw steeling and his lips being drawn into a thin line. The Void Palace sure seemed to like to play games. They had actually been teleported into a Rapax Nest.

"Oh, I forgot to mention one other thing. The Rapax like to build their nests in harsh environments so that only the strong amongst their young survive. You've probably guessed it already, but...

"This is a Void Battlefield. Trying to leave here and return to a Void Palace stronghold won't be easy for a fairly simple reason. The Rapax are probably the least of your concerns in a place like this."

Chapter 1330 Senate

"We need to move."

Aina nodded toward Leonel's words and they both shot in the opposite direction of the roar. Neither of them were fools. The pressure of that roar alone cleared the Fifth Dimension. That told them one very obvious thing, this wasn't a perfectly curated trial with their limits in mind. This was a real life and death crisis.

What Aina, Leonel and the other youths didn't know was that this sudden change had led to a furious uproar in the Void Palace.

**

BANG!

"WHO SANCTIONED THIS?!"

The roar shook the mountain range, birds flew out in fear and a small avalanche of small rocks and dust tumbled downward. For such a scene to occur within a world at the pinnacle of the Seventh Dimension, it could only be said that this person was not only furious, but they also wielded power beyond the imagination of most.

The location wasn't as one might expect and was rather within a governmental body of the Void Palace a step below the elder legion that sent Cornelius on his mission to monitor Leonel. The structure of the Void Palace was impossibly complex, filled with numerous factions, each with their own grudges and histories that could stretch back hundreds to even thousands of years... It could even be said that the Void Palace itself was like its own separate ecosystem and world, diverging from reality.

The Void Legion Elders could be considered to be the pinnacle of the powers of the Void Palace. They were the backbone and their moniker was a reminder that their duty wasn't just to oversee, but was also to act as the strongest line of defense.

Beneath the Void Legion Elders there was the Void Council. This was the current location and was located on the second tallest peak of the Void Palace. The Void Council, also called the Senate, was made up of Void Senators from across disciplines and factions. The major decisions and rules that all those who came here abided by were drafted and put into law by the Void Council and their Void Senators.

Unsurprisingly, with this sort of set up, the details of the True Selection were also drafted up by the Void Council, or so it should have been. But, it was either this infuriated Void Senator was ignorant to a decision made without him, or... One of the factions had gone rogue.

The one who had spoken was a middle-aged man with strength already into the Seventh Dimension. Without at least such level of strength, he would have never been capable of causing such a commotion. But, it was also this strength that made it so impressive that the Senate managed to keep its structural integrity, only swaying side to side slightly.

This man was Uramus and was the current Party Leader of the Stalwart Polearm Party. He was a well respected man, as he had to be to earn such a position. And, right this moment, he was absolutely furious.

What was shocking, though, was that other than his Party Members, there didn't seem to be anyone else as infuriated as he was. Seeing such a scene, Uramus chest heaved, his almost crimson gaze sweeping through the enormous Senate hall as though searching for his prey.

He tried to meet the gazes of several other Party Leaders, but all he received in return was a shift of gaze and a glimpse into a guilty conscience.

At that moment, a chuckle echoed through the Void Council, a man a head taller and a large measure skinnier than Uramus walking in as though he was gliding on clouds.

"Rosen, this was your doing?!"

Uramus' voice boomed. Despite the seemingly embarrassing situation he had been in just moments before, he didn't seem to notice in the slightest. The veins across his forehead threatened to pop.

Rosen was yet another Party Leader, however, his was known as the Unfettered Blade Party. It could be said that of all the parties here, the history between these two was not only the deepest, it also held some of the deepest grudges.

"You shouldn't be frowning all the time like this, Uramus. It's not good for your skin. You already look much older than you should, don't tell me you want to look even worse?"

"I'm not here for your petty games, Rosen. Who decided to send a batch of fresh meat to the Void Battlefield? Are you insane? They've barely adapted to the lowest level Anarchic Force of the mountain base, now you want them to adjust to an environment that's tenfold worse? This isn't training, it's sending them to their deaths! If I didn't know better, I would think that you had long since left the side of the Human Domain! This is our most promising generation in countless Selections, yet you want to ruin them like this?!"

Rosen's eyes narrowed, his playful demeanor becoming dark and as sharp as a blade.

"I would advise you choose your words more carefully, Uramus. There are certain things you can't get away with saying even if you are a brute."

"Bite me, you piece of shit. If it wasn't for the rules restricting me within the Senate, I would have already blasted your head into chunks of watermelon. Why don't you step outside and see how I'll deal with you?"

"Ha..." Rosen chuckled coldly. "... It seems that you're only so brazen because you haven't realized your predicament just yet. An air headed fool like you really would take too long to notice the crux of the issue here.

"Under your shared Majority, you've led the Senate into the trash heap and it's about time that stop."

Uramus' expression changed, suddenly realizing something.

"You dare?!"

Rosen sneered. "You've been voted out. Pack your things and scram. The Stalwart Polearm Party has been demoted back to a Faction. Take those trash you call subordinates with you."

Uramus froze, feeling as though he had been struck by lightning. What the hell was going on?!