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Chapter 171

Many hours later, one could find Leonel in a familiar position. His hands were pressed flush against a wall as Force slowly flowed out from his hands.

Though this seemed simple for him, it was actually quite difficult. Since he forewent placing Force Nodes in his hands, it was a bit more difficult for him in comparison to another to achieve this result. But, with how high his spirit was, how could his Force control not also be great?

Soon, another ore had manifested. This time, it radiated a dirty gold light. It was quite similar to the fur coat of the bear king, albeit much less resplendent.

‘Black Tempered Vein Ore...’ Leonel smiled happily.

Vein Ores were another family of metals. They could be considered another ore type that was almost as important as Urbe Ores. However, they were just barely lacking.

In truth, the value of Vein Ores was above Urbe Ores. However, the reason Urbe Ores could be considered a step above in usefulness was because it had an impossibly wide variety of applications. One could use Urbe Ores in practically every Force Craft imaginable. It was for this reason that the universal currency of the universe were Urbe Coins.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

However, Vein Ores were used in particularly intricate creations. They had characteristics very similar to Force pathways that linked one’s Force Nodes. When they were used in crafts, they allowed Force to flow more freely.

That said, this wasn’t the most important use of Vein Ores. Their greatest use was in drawing more permanent Force Arts.

Take for example Leonel’s pistol craft. He had to draw the Force Arts directly onto the alloys he fused with his Black Urbe Ore. However, had he liquefied a compatible Vein Ore first, and then used it to

inscribe the Force Arts, their power would gain a great boost. In addition, it would greatly strengthen the nozzles as well, allowing them to withstand many more shots.

There was a final more secretive use of Vein Ores as well. In fact, Leonel wouldn't even be aware of this had it not been for the words of the creator of [Dimensional Cleanse].

According to the creator, there was a special type of Vein Ore that could be absorbed. The special energies of this Vein Ore could be used to strengthen one's Force Nodes. PANDA NOVEL

Though this wouldn't increase the amount of Force one could hold, there were many other benefits to this.

Firstly, it would be possible to replenish one's Force Nodes faster. It was necessary for many to artificially cap their consumption of Force to avoid damaging one's Force Nodes. Though Force Nodes are self-created, they can't be willfully abandoned. This is a law enforced by the Universe itself. So, injuries to Force Nodes needed to be avoided at all costs.

Secondly, this would make it easier to compress Force Nodes in the future when it becomes necessary to cross the boundary of a higher Dimensional body.

For someone like Leonel, this second point was especially important. Though his Force Nodes being constructed of a hundred cells sounded grandiose, the truth was that this made his future path far more difficult as well. The more Force he had, the harder it was to compress, and the more pressure there would be on his body.

The third reason was enough for any Force cultivator to go wild with greed. Everyone was limited in the number and length of Force pathways they could create. Especially in the beginning phases of creating a Fourth Dimensional body, many could only connect their Force Nodes via a single path. But, this greatly limited their Force wielding abilities. PANDA NOVEL

With the help of a special Vein Ore, it was possible to create many more Force Pathways, allowing one to unlock many Force wielding abilities usually reserved for higher Dimensional warriors.

This aside, there was a fourth reason that would greatly benefit Leonel even now.

If his Force Nodes were sturdier... wouldn't it also be much easier to withstand the Force Eruption?

Unfortunately, Black Tempered Vein Ore wasn't the Vein Ore he needed to undergo this process. In addition, according to the author of [Dimensional Cleanse], it was best to wait until forming all nine Nodes before undergoing this tempering process. So, no matter how eager Leonel was for this benefit, he could only throw it to the back of his mind.

'Alright, I think I've cleared out all the ore veins in this section of tunnels... as expected, not all the tunnels are linked. If I want to explore more tunnels, I'll have to leave the hive and enter through another entrance...'

Leonel was hesitant to do this. He didn't know what the situation was outside. If he left, he would probably expose everyone to danger again. Even if he set everyone else apart, he still needed to worry about himself. After all, he would still need a while longer to recover to his peak.

'Forget it, forget it. I've harvested enough for now and have all the materials I need. Even though I didn't find a Dual Water-Earth Elemental Vessel ore, I did find an Earth one. If I combined that with the Rushing River Vein Ore I found, it would still be possible to combine the two Beast Crystal abilities...'

Much like Elemental Vessels, there were different types of Vein Ores as well. Rushing River Vein Ores were especially good at inscribing for Water Elemental Force Arts. So, if Leonel was careful with his planning, it would be possible to combine the two without much issue.

Just like before, Leonel took his time to dig the entire vein out. He knew that if he kept the core of the vein intact, it might be possible for the vein to grow more ores for him in the future. Who knows, maybe the Segmented Cube had this ability as well. Even if it didn't, Leonel would still do this.

Just when Leonel was content with his gains and about to return to the cave to get started on the blueprints, his steps suddenly froze.

There, on the wall he just extracted the vein from, there were faint cracks.

It was incredibly difficult to spot, but there seemed to be a faint light coming from the other side. If it wasn't for the fact most of the hive was so dark, it wouldn't have been so hard for Leonel to spot the cracks because even if his side was dark, the other side would be flooded with light.

'This part of the wall is so thin...? I can probably pass my Internal Sight through then to see if it's worth getting Little Tolly's help to knock it away. It might not necessarily be a good thing to have a path to another network of tunnels...'

After having this thought, Leonel snaked his Internal Sight forward, passing through the gaps to see what was on the other side. But, the result left him stunned speechless.

Not only was the other side almost like an entire separate world, what shocked him the most was that there were actually other people there. Not just the fact they were other people, but the fact they were other people with characteristics Leonel was all too familiar with.

'Red hair... red eyes... The Brazinger Clan?'

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Leonel was shocked. The very last group of people he could have ever expected to find here was the Brazinger Clan. Wasn't this the personal island of the Slayer Legion? Didn't they monitor it? Were they really so incompetent to allow others to sneak in here so easily?

Leonel had already had a hard time taking the Slayer Legion seriously, but it felt as though their every action really only made him look down on them more.

After a while, he calmed himself. He realized that he had only reacted like this because of how hard the past few days had been. It seemed that even he needed someone to vent his frustration on.

'Stay calm...' Leonel closed his eyes, steadying his breathing and his heart rate.

He had already promised himself to remain calm in all things. It was still hard since he was just an 18 year old boy, but not everyone was made perfect in a day. In time, he'd temper his disposition.

After Leonel steadied himself, he began thinking of what could possibly be happening here. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

He doubted that the Brazinger Clan had come in after them, there was a high probability they had come here first. In that case, could it be the Force Eruption was predicted by them? Or was it that they wanted to take advantage of the ore treasury that was this hive?

'There's another possibility as well...' Leonel furrowed his brows. '... According to Old Hutch, things aren't so simple as they seem on the surface. Could it be that these Project Hunt Islands were never the sole property of the Slayer Legion to begin with?'

When Leonel had this thought, he felt that his whole world had been turned upside down.

Hutch seemed to talk like the decision to let the commoners of the Paradise Islands die was a mutual decision. Was the relationship between the rebels and The Empire really so simple?

The more Leonel thought about it, the more confused he became. PANDA NOVEL

'Forget it, thinking about it myself won't get me anywhere. I'll observe them first.'

...

The space on the other side of the cracks really did seem like an entirely different world. It felt as though one had to step inside a spatial crack to reach it, but the truth of the matter was that it was within the hive just like every place else.

Though the space was dark much like the other network of tunnels, there was a dim halo of light around it. This light didn't come from the sun, but rather the countless plants littered all around!

That was right, this space within the hive looked no different than a garden. And, the halos of light being emitted from the plants were none other than the halos natural treasures had in the presence of a lower Dimensional world! PANDA NOVEL

There didn't seem to be any large source of water anywhere within the cave, making their existence baffling. The only hints of liquid were the drippings that fell from the stalactites on the ceiling.

'Mellow Dew Stalactites!'

Leonel trembled slightly.

Mellow Dew Stalactites could form a single drop a day. Each one of these drops were the greatest nourishment for natural treasures, whether those natural treasures were plants like the ones in this cave space, or the current ores in Leonel's possession.

The dew drops also had exceptionally high concentrations of Force. They could essentially liquefy Force, creating what could be classified as a Force Strengthening Deviation despite the fact it had no other characteristics aside from its high concentrations.

Just to put these matters into perspective, just a single drop from these Stalactites was enough to form any one of Leonel's Stars. This was how exaggerated the matter was.

Yet, the ceiling of this place was formed by at least 50 Mellow Dew Stalactites. It was no wonder this place didn't need any water to grow so many wonderful plants. A single drop of that dew would be enough to raise even an acre of Fourth Dimensional plants without issue.

Unfortunately, Leonel didn't know what these plants were. He could tell they were valuable, but he wasn't a Force Pill Refiner, so how could he know anything about them? Luckily, he could rely on the dictionary if need be. He was certain these higher Dimensional plants were in its database.

"Wow, I didn't think we'd find something like this. How do you think these plants managed to grow here?"

There were two men, both of similar stature. They seemed to realize they had stumbled upon something valuable, but they didn't know how valuable it was. Their knowledge was limited. All they knew was that due to all these halos of light, these were definitely at least Fourth Dimensional herbs.

“Let’s mark this place down and let the Young Lord know about it. Right now, the priority is still to find a path toward the Force Crystal Mine. We’re running out of time.”

Leonel’s gaze flashed. ‘Young Lord? Could he be talking about that monocle guy?’

A hardly concealed rage flashed through Leonel’s gaze. He had always been one who found it difficult to kill. It was only after countless battles that his heart began to slowly accept the kind of world he lived in now. However, if there was someone he wouldn’t hesitate to kill, two someones, actually... it was the Junior Governor Duke and that monocle wearing young lord of the Brazinger Clan.

‘It seems they split up to cover more ground. Their aim is also the Force Crystal Mine... I can’t guarantee that monocle wearing bastard won’t be interested enough in this place to set everything aside to come here first. These two might not know the value of Mellow Dew Stalictite, but that doesn’t mean he won’t...’

A resolute glint took hold of Leonel’s gaze. Though he was injured, he was still confident in taking on these two. Plus, if he could capture them, he might be able to dig out more information about what the Brazinger Clan was doing here and if they had any connection to the Slayer Legion...

‘No, they shouldn’t have a connection, or else we wouldn’t have been sent here at this time.’

Even as Leonel was thinking this, he had already sprung into action. Taking advantage of the darkness, he stealthily had Little Tolly devour the thin, cracked wall and rolled into the world of grass and plants.

Without hesitation, he quickly followed after the two men who had just left the wide space of greenery.

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Leonel looked down toward two unconscious men. He had already guessed that taking them down wouldn’t have been a problem, but even he hadn’t expected it to be so easy. In fact, it could be said that he was a bit too heavy handed.

However, Leonel hadn't had a choice. This whole knocking people out and taking hostages things was completely new to him. TV shows always made it look so easy. Just a simple karate chop to the back of the neck, right? So why had it given him such a headache?

'Forget it. I'll use those vines to tie them up in the Segmented Cube and bring them back.'

"How do I harvest these plants?" Leonel asked.

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, the best choice is to make use of the Segmented Cube's Suspended Animation ability.]

'Suspended Animation?' Leonel was confused for a second before he understood. 'Oh... It must mean the snowglobes.' PANDA-NOVEL.COM

The snowglobes of the Lab Setting had always been a mystery to Leonel. At first, he had thought there was a finite number. But, after he had collected the corpses of a couple hundred beasts, he realized that the 'snowglobes' multiplied without end. It seemed there would always be enough for his needs.

Also, he realized that corpses weren't the only thing he could hold in them. All of the ores he had collected had been taken in by them as well.

"What exactly does the Suspended Animation ability do?" Leonel asked.

[*Ping*]

[Suspended Animation: Phase One ability of the Segmented Cube's Lab Setting. It is able to house the living and the dead in the exact state they entered as no matter how much time has passed, evading the harshness of the passage of time.]

Leonel nodded. This was about what he had expected. His spatial bracelet could somewhat replicate this feat, but it wasn't the exact same. PANDA NOVEL

The reason why things in his spatial bracelet were non-perishable was because living things couldn't exist within it. As a result, there was no bacteria or fungi, so how could things go 'bad'?

But, from the explanation of the dictionary, it seemed that the ability of the snowglobes was far more profound than this. It also didn't seem like it restricted the living either.

'This is perfect. I was worrying about how I would store all these plants, but if this is the case there shouldn't be a problem.'

Though everything seemed to be going smoothly initially, Leonel was soon lamenting his plight. Unfortunately, the space within each snowglobe was limited. So, he had to uproot each plant individually before moving on.

How could this not leave him feeling aggrieved? If the Lab Setting could produce these snowglobes endlessly, why couldn't it make one with more space in it?

Soon, Leonel realized that it wasn't a matter of space. Despite the bear king being over five meters tall, it still fit in one. Yet, these plants, root and all, were barely a foot tall in most cases, but they took up an entire snowglobe to themselves. PANDA NOVEL

It seemed that the ability of the Suspended Animation wasn't as simple as Leonel thought. It was likely that the snowglobe was capable of perfectly adapting to the object it took in, adjusting its settings appropriately depending on the item.

Unsurprisingly, it took Leonel several hours to take in every plant. It would have been faster, but he didn't want to accidentally harm them. So, he could only move slowly.

Soon, the garden had fallen into darkness, the only hint of light coming from the shimmering stalactites above.

Leonel gasped for breath, stretching out his back.

‘Plundering treasures is actually such hard work...’

Though he said this, he looked around the garden with a sigh. Who knew how many years it had taken for it to reach this state?

He wanted to take away the soil beneath his feet and the stalactite on the ceiling of the space, but he really had no means to. It had already taken him so long just to uproot the plants, how could he shovel all this soil into the Segmented Cube? Even aside from that, he had no idea where to even begin with the stalactites. They were easily 20 meters above him and each the size of a tall human man.

Just when Leonel felt that he could only leave such treasures behind, the Segmented Cube appeared on its own again. It separated into its jigsaw-like puzzles and shot across the room, enveloping it completely.

Leonel blinked and by the time his vision cleared, the once beautiful garden had become just as bland as every other cave in this place. The only hint that it was once something more were the vines and lush patches of moss that covered the walls.

‘...’

Leonel was speechless. If it could do this, why the hell had it let him waste so many hours here?

‘Forget it, forget it...’

All the things his father left him were too mischievous. He couldn’t help but feel that they were making fun of him at every corner.

‘Let’s clear out the ores in this network of tunnels then return to the group. I shouldn’t leave them for so long...’

Leonel didn't hesitate any longer. He didn't know how long it would take for the rest of the Brazinger Clan to notice the absence of their two family members, so he worked quickly, exploring the new network of tunnels.

His luck was great. He managed to find a Water Elemental Vessel. Though it would have been better to find a Dual Water-Earth Elemental Vessel, having a Water and an Earth Elemental Vessel was definitely the second best option.

He also found more Vein Ores that would give him greater flexibility in the Force Arts he could draw and even found a few large deposits of Urbe Ores. It was clear that this network of tunnels was more greatly influenced by the Force Eruption and thus had more treasures.

As expected from this conclusion, Leonel found that this network of tunnels had several paths leading several tens of meters downward.

'Since this is the case, it'll be easier to make it to the Force Crystal Mine if this is our starting point...'

Leonel quickly made his way back to where the garden once was. Then, making use of the vines and bits of moss that remained, he cleverly covered up the hole he had come from. Afterward, he made his way back to the cave the youths had taken as their base.

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"Wake up."

Leonel spoke coldly, pouring a bucket of frigid water he had gotten from Pisces over the heads of the two Brazinger Clan members.

In truth, Leonel had no need to get his water from Pisces, he only did it as a show. Since he had the Black Grade Soothing Waters pool, he was much better off than those drinking normal water.

Still, he made a show of politely asking Pisces for water everyday to try and smooth her attitude out a bit. Like this, it was much easier to maintain the balance of the group and it made her feel more comfortable thinking she had a modicum of power over him.

Though, if Pisces knew that the 'precious' water she so 'graciously' bestowed to Leonel was being used in this way, it could be imagined how she would react.

The two Brazinger Clan men were startled awake.

Their first attempt was to move, but upon realizing their hands and feet were bound, a tinge of fear colored their hearts. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel wasn't worried that one of their abilities could help them escape. Before he woke them up, he had the dictionary scan them. The one with the more square jaw had an auxiliary type ability that made his neurons fire faster, thus giving him greater reaction time and greater thinking speed. The one with the slightly thinner face had a vibration type ability. This one was a greater threat, but Leonel had already crafted the cuffs on his hands to be beyond his ability to vibrate out of.

After realizing that the two of them had been captured, the two clan members glared toward Leonel. But, inwardly they were feeling confused. There were others here? How was this possible?

"First, tell me your names." Leonel asked simply.

After a while, it became obvious to Leonel that they had no intention of responding to him. But, seemingly having expected this result, he only nonchalantly nodded.

With a wave of his hand, the poisoned corpse of the bear king appeared, causing the two men to pale.

"This poison is pretty tyrannical, don't you think?" Leonel said casually. PANDA NOVEL

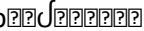
After a few moments, he stood and pulled the thinner man away. At such a sight, the square jawed man trembled violently, the fear evident in his eyes.

“No! No! I’ll tell you my name, I’ll tell you my name!”

Unfortunately, no matter how hard he struggled, he and Leonel still vanished, leaving the square jawed man in a sorry state. He was so scared that he directly fainted, unable to maintain his consciousness. However, he had no idea that Leonel and the thin faced man had simply gone to the Abode Setting, letting his fear stew.

“Oh, you’ll tell me your name now?” Leonel asked.

“Yes! Yes! My name is Cheri!”

A weird expression coated Leonel’s visage at these words. Cheri? That meant darling in French... The man sure had quite the... unique name. 

“Alright then Cheri, I have a few questions to ask you, you’ll answer them honestly, right?”

“Right, right!”

“Good.” Leonel nodded in satisfaction. “It would be a shame if the stories of you and your partner didn’t add up, right?”

Hearing this, Cheri’s trembling became several times more violent. He had indeed only planned to tell Leonel part of the truth. But, what if his partner didn’t tell the same lie he did? Then, wouldn’t he be asking for his own death?

This kid was so sinister!

He suddenly understood why it was Leonel had separated them. It wasn’t so that he could kill him, but rather so that they would have no idea what story the other told. Like this, if they wanted to live, they would have no choice but to say the truth because the truth was the only thing they could guarantee the other would know.

Having thought this far, any thoughts of struggle the man had suddenly crumbled.

He was a member of the Brazinger Clan, how could his will really be so fragile? Unlike those who grew up in Earth's common society, they from hidden families had completely different upbringings. They had been ready for the descent of the Metamorphosis since long ago and had begun training since their birth. That included him despite the fact he was only from a branch family.

Much of his fear had just been an act to get Leonel to lower his guard, maybe then he could find a chance to escape. But, who knew this teenage boy would be so cunning?

Seeing Cheri's flickering gaze, Leonel grinned, causing the former to shudder.

"My name is Jian, my name is Jian. Please forgive me."

Leonel laughed at this. So this Jian was trying to make fun of him by having him call him Cheri? What a conniving fellow indeed.

Jian shivered. He had no idea if his partner would expose his name as a lie, so how could he continue to hold back?

"Good."

Leonel walked to the bath house that held the Soothing Waters Pool and threw Jian against the tiles. Then, he found a stool and sat down.

Jian's shivering grew fiercer. This time, he didn't have to fake it. What place could be more convenient for clearing up a dead body in comparison to a bathroom?

"Since we're both on the same page, there's really no problem, right? I can see that you're not a useless person, so you already know that everything I ask you, I will ask your partner. Be sure to be honest with me. After all, I may not have a great ability, but the one thing I do have is a great memory."

Jian nodded outwardly, but inwardly, he was cursing. Didn't have a great ability? He took them both down before they even knew what was happening. They didn't even have a chance to use their abilities before their worlds went black. How was this not having a great ability?

"Alright, first question. Did that monocle wearing bastard come here with you?"

Jian's eyes widened. The killing intent coming from Leonel enveloped him completely, causing his heart to shudder.

This young man knew about their Young Lord? What relationship did he have with him? Could he be from one of the other hidden families? Did they catch onto their Young Lord's plans?

According to the agreement, only the younger generation of their families' main branches could interact with the world until the Fourth Dimensional Metamorphosis was complete, so could this kid be a Young Lord from another hidden family?

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"I'll take that as a yes."

Leonel's icy voice woke Jian from his thoughts. He could only shut his mouth, keeping his mumbling to himself. He didn't know what his Young Lord had done to piss this young man off so much, but he could tell that he should refrain from asking.

"What did you come here for?"

Jian gulped. "Our Young Lord didn't tell us much. All we know is that there's a Force Crystal Mine and that the Young Lord needs it for some reason."

"How did you get in here through the beasts? Is there another entrance to the hive?"

Jian's gaze flashed with a peculiar light. But, remembering that Leonel would ask this same question to his partner, he could only throw all thoughts of lying to the back of his mind.

"... Those beasts are under the control of Young Lord."PANDA-NOVEL.COM

"What?"

Leonel couldn't hide his shock. At the same time, a cold sweat permeated his back. That monocle wearing bastard actually had such an ability? That's impossible. Leonel remembered very clearly that he had already asked the dictionary to read out his ability.

From what Leonel remembered, their Young Lord's ability was of the SS-grade. He had the ability to change the genetic information of a target. Judging by the fact his subordinates were weremen, Leonel assumed that in order to change this genetic information, he needed to take it from another source.

But, none of this had anything to do with controlling beasts. Could it be that his ability evolved? Or could it be part of his original ability? Or maybe it was someone under his command who had such an ability?

Leonel's mind was spinning.

The level of danger such a fact brought was unimaginable. With the control of six, now five, Elite S-grade threats, Simeon was practically invincible. And, there was no telling if he had other beasts following along with him now. Leonel didn't believe that he would really enter without the slightest hint of protection. PANDA NOVEL

While Leonel was thinking, Jian didn't dare to even breathe too loudly. The aura coming off the boy in front of him made him shiver to his core.

"He has the ability to control beasts? How long has he had this ability for?"

Leonel's question didn't make sense on the surface, but while his mind was wandering, he caught onto the faint inkling of something. If his thoughts were correct, a lot of things would suddenly make sense.

“This... It should be recent. The Young Lord has been running a lot of experiments lately, trying to iron out the kinks in this ability. He only perfected it a few weeks ago...”

Leonel’s eyes narrowed. “The gorilla man who attacked the Slayer Legion at the shore that day... That was him, right?”

Jian was shocked. Seeing this, Leonel didn’t need him to answer, he knew it was the truth. ρ??C(???????)

The matters of that day hadn’t made any sense to him before. Why would a man with an A-grade threat level throw his life away so randomly? He attacked Damian’s unit seemingly without cause or purpose, leading to his eventual death.

But, after that, they couldn’t find any clues about him. Not only was there not a shred of anything on his person, he wasn’t recognized as having a grudge with anyone in the Slayer Legion either.

None of it made any sense...

But... What if one looked at it from a different angle? What if that man was just a guinea pig? What if he was Simeon’s way of testing whether or not he could force others to throw their lives away at his command?

The more Leonel thought, the colder the chill in his heart became. This Simeon... Really deserved death.

At the same time, there was a hint of fear that blossomed in Leonel. Such an ability, it was too treacherous. If Simeon could really manipulate one’s genes such that they had to obey his every command... just what kind of power could he wield if he was allowed to run amock? What would happen if Aina had really landed in his hands?

‘He needs to die.’

A frigid aura permeated the bathhouse. Leonel had already sentenced Simeon to death. He wouldn’t allow that bastard to leave this hive alive.

“How close are you all to finding the path to the Force Eruption?”

Jian coughed, clearing his throat.

“We’ve only explored about 30% of the entrances, but the deepest one only goes about 50 meters below the surface. The Young Lord told us to mark down any unique caverns we found and report to him in a week...”

Leonel’s sneer deepened. “What kind of protection does that bastard have?”

“The Young Lord has his elite guards with him, they’ve all been genetically enhanced. Not a single one is weaker than an S-grade threat. There are nine of them and they follow him around everywhere. Even when we split up, it was only us ordinary guards that left the group. The rest remained with him.”

Leonel’s eyes narrowed. So many S-grade threats was definitely beyond his means. And, from what Jian said, that was their floor. Who was to say there weren’t a few beyond that?

For the first time, Leonel felt frustrated with his ability. He was maybe the only person on Earth with an ability that surpassed the SSS-grade, but because it was only auxiliary, the amount of strength it provided him was limited. If his ability was of the same grade but of the offensive nature instead, just how much power would he have?

Leonel really didn’t want to let that bastard go, but the more he grilled Jian about the protection his Young Lord had, the more he realized that he couldn’t take Simeon lightly.

The most ironic part was that this was likely his fault. A couple months ago, when he first met Simeon, he hadn’t had this kind of protection around him. That bullet Leonel almost put through his skull is probably precisely the reason he was so cautious now.

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Leonel grilled Jian with several more questions then knocked him out and dragged him back into the Lab Setting. Without a word to his partner, he threw him into one of the snowglobes, causing no small shock to the square jawed man.

Not wanting to end up like Jian, how could he not go all out in an attempt to satisfy Leonel? But the truth remained the same. In the end, he too was knocked out once more and thrown into a snowglobe.

Leonel took a deep breath and sat down, his mind running.

Though he could have asked the two about Aina's past, he decided against it. This was something he wanted Aina to tell him herself. It just wouldn't feel the same if someone else had to tell him. Plus, he wanted to respect her boundaries.

That said, even aside from that, the heavy pressure Simeon brought him was beyond his imagination.

What a joke he was. He had a Tier 3 Bronze ability, but he was being pushed into a corner by a Tier 8 Black ability. He was sure that if his father knew he would never hear the end of it.

Leonel shook his head, staring blankly into space. After a while, his vacant eyes gained a steely coldness. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

'I'm certain that Simeon's ability didn't originally have anything related to control. The reason he can now is because he's mastered his ability to the point of squeezing out all of its potential, eventually allowing him to gain this new branch ability. I don't believe for a second that he can do something that I can't.'

The 'branch' abilities of Leonel's main ability seemed to have awoken randomly. First it was Dream World, then it was Dream Sculpt.

On the surface, both appeared without rhyme or reason, but was this really the case?

Dream World appeared to him when he really wanted to calculate the best orientation of his Force Nodes. This will eventually allowed him to gain his ability to simulate matters in his mind.

Dream Sculpt appeared when he wanted to find a way to make use of the treasures he wasn't allowed to take outside of the Zone. This will eventually allowed him the ability to ingrain perfect and permanent thoughts into his Dream World.

There was even the third ability he only recently named, Dream Clone. That ability was birthed when he really wanted to learn the primitive man's combat style as quickly as possible. This allowed him to split his mind and learn the same technique many times faster. PANDA NOVEL

Every time he needed an ability within his means, it felt as though he could produce it as long as these things fell within the purview of his Dream World.

Simeon's ability was a wakeup call to Leonel. He realized now that abilities weren't immutable things. They were made to grow and evolve along with their host. Why else would Leonel's ability still be growing even now? It was likely that it would still grow into the future.

Leonel took a deep breath. 'That's right, I need to open myself up to more possibilities...'

Leonel shook his head furiously. To think that he really almost had thoughts of letting that bastard off for now.

Absolutely not. He would make this hive Simeon's grave.

After a while, Leonel stood. PANDA NOVEL

"I have so many materials and even more Beast Crystals. If I can't make something to get out of this situation, I might as well not go and find Aina at all."

Leonel had already decided. There would be three keys to his success.

First, he would definitely find the path to the Force Eruption faster. There was most definitely an even greater treasure trove waiting for him.

Second, he wouldn't hesitate any longer. He would form his Seventh and Eighth Node. Continually doubting himself wouldn't get him anywhere. Maybe after doing this, he would find some clues about his Ninth Node.

If worse came to worst, he would just abandon all of his Force Nodes. Though there was a massive taboo against doing so, the price was comparatively shallow for those in the lowest Third Dimension, only after stepping into the Fourth or higher would abandoning one's Force Nodes become akin to a death sentence without incredibly special circumstances.

And third...

Leonel's mind drifted toward the first Dream Sculpt he ever made. It seemed like a simple golden staff, missing its flag. But, Leonel knew quite well the kind of devastation this thing could cause.

Leonel knew better than to use this staff to control humans. He had seen how badly Joan ended up with his own two eyes. And, back then, she had only been controlling normal humans.

By extension, Leonel also knew that controlling high ranking beasts with it would be foolish as well. Those beast kings had already awoken their intelligence and thus had strong wills of their own. If Leonel tried to take control of them, his ending would be just like Joans.

However... what about those weaker beasts who were only following the beast kings out of fear for their power? Just how quickly had the bear beasts beneath the bear king abandoned him after he died?

According to Jian and his partner, Quinn, Simeon should have only taken control of the beast kings then used them as a proxy to control the other beast hordes.

Plus, those beast kings definitely had their hands full holding off the tide of beasts coming from the ocean even as Leonel stood here. In that case...

Leonel smiled coldly. If Simeon thought of using the beast hordes against him, he would be in for a rude awakening.

**

Out on the sea, the Commanders of the Eastern and Southern Lookout were still fighting for their lives. Though, those with Commander Violet Rain were definitely fairing much better.

“I did it! I managed to get a message through!” Mellow Trees roared with happiness he never thought he would have over such a simple matter.

Violet Rain’s smile bloomed. Though they didn’t get a response because the link was swiftly cut off again, this much was enough. Now, they just had to wait.

What they forgot to consider was the fact the one in charge of their Southern Lookout now was Hacker Hutch... Who knew what maddening ways that senile old man would respond to such a call for help...

Chapter 177

A week later, Leonel stepped out from the Segmented Cube. His features seemed quite haggard, an unkempt beard ‘gracing’ his jaw and his messy dirty blond hair sweeping across his shoulders. But, his eyes remained as sharp as swords.

When the youths noticed Leonel’s appearance, they all perked up, traces of anticipation painted on their faces.

Leonel smiled lightly. “I’ve succeeded.”

They were simple words, but they alone made the youths feel that a massive burden had been lifted from their chests.

“There’s no time to waste.” Leonel said with a confident air. “We’ve already long since decided who would go and who would stay. Let’s move out if you’re all prepared.”

The lineup that chose to follow Leonel was quite interesting. Thunderous Clap, Roaring Black Lion and Flowing Wind all stood to move with him.

Thunderous Clap's ability was similar to Jian's vibration ability, but much stronger by several levels. The mysterious Quake Force he used could be considered a Force Strengthening Deviation, so he would be joining.

In addition, Flowing Wind, despite being from the Eastern Lookout, was also willing to help. Her Wind Elemental Force output was a level beyond Chasing Wind's. In addition, she had much more auxiliary applications to her ability like the power to use wind to scout out her surroundings. So, she was an ideal choice.

Finally, there was Roaring Black Lion. Among the remaining youths, he had the strongest defenses. In addition, there was no guarantee they wouldn't run into beasts on their journey. His ability to dampen their strength would be greatly useful.PANDA-NOVEL.COM

As for the rest of the top rankers, they stayed behind to protect the group from any unforeseen circumstances. It was simply impossible for them to take so many with them.

With that, the group of four set off.

"We're going to cross over into another network of tunnels. I found this place while I was looking for ores previously." Leonel explained as he quickly made his way toward the hole he had created a week prior.

He knew that he was running out of time. Much of the reason he left Pisces and the others behind was because he was afraid of this hole being found.

According to Jian and Quinn, they were meant to report in a week. When they didn't report as they were meant to, Simeon would most definitely check in on the network of tunnels they were assigned to. By then, there was no guarantee that this hole wouldn't be found.

It wasn't long before Leonel had led their group of four to the hole, crossed to the other side, and diligently covered it back up again.

After he was done, he dashed forward again, snaking through the tunnels as though the map of their pathways was tattooed to the back of his hand. Soon, he made it to his destination: the point with the most direct path to the Force Crystal Mine.

Leonel came to a sudden stop at a seemingly ordinary wall and turned back toward Thunderous Clap, Roaring Black Lion and Flowing Wind. PANDA NOVEL

“Before we go, I have something to tell you three. I didn’t tell the others because I didn’t want them to panic, but it’s best you three know in advance.”

The three looked toward Leonel. Seeing his serious expression, they too became serious. Would things not be so simple?

“There is another group of people in here aside from us. In fact, earlier, I had captured and interrogated two of them. It’s very possible that we could run into them.

“I believe that we’re ahead of them, but it’s best to be cautious. I suspect that there might be another path toward the Force Crystal Mine, I’m just not entirely certain. I just have a feeling that the valleys weren’t created without reason...”

The three youths frowned.

The complex network of valleys was precisely the reason they could only enter the center of the island through one passageway. They wrapped around the center of the island such that there was only one path forward.

Even beyond that, Flowing Wind actually had no ability to fly over it. She felt that the Force was incredibly volatile in that area, making it difficult for her to steady her ability properly. When she realized this, she hadn’t dared to continue forward, lest she fall to her death.

If the valleys were the result of some odd phenomenon related to the Force Crystal Mine... their odd attributes would be much easier to accept. p???(?????)

Only when the three nodded seriously did Leonel flip his palm, causing many things to appear.

“First, each one of you take these.”

Leonel handed each of them silvery-green mouthpieces that looked somewhat like a cross between a flute and a whistle.

“These are my creations. I made them out of Whispering Breeze Ore. They’re only Tier 1 Black Grade treasures, but they allow you to breathe under water and earth for three hours. After that, you’ll need to allow it to recharge for half an hour before you can use it again.”

The three nodded in understanding, watching as Leonel continued to take out nine total resplendent blue scales.

“These are another set of my creations, three to the each of you. They’re refined from the coy fish’s scales, they could be able to form an artificial Force Skin that melds and amplifies with your own. By my calculations, they should each be able to last half an hour under the full pressure of the Force Eruption. I’m not sure how long it will take us to stop the Force Eruption... we’ll have to play it by ear.”

Leonel took a deep breath and turned back to face the wall, putting the silver mouthpiece between his lips.

“Stick close to me.” Though his words had come out in a mumble, they still managed to understand him.

Leonel could only roll his eyes when he felt two soft mounds of flesh press against his back. Who else could it be if not Flowing Wind? Could this be considered sexual harassment?

Leonel didn’t have time to spend on the matter as an intricate ring on his finger glowed. Just like this, the seemingly solid wall before him became akin to a curtain of mud.

He pushed through it with slightly more difficulty than it would take to walk underwater. Still, it wasn't too bad. The only disadvantage was that he couldn't see anything and his Internal Sight was severely restricted in this kind of environment. However, he could rely on his obscene calculation abilities to maintain his sense of direction with relative ease.

Like this, the four youths formed a train, the three to Leonel's back closely following by linking their arms. What was especially magical, though, was that the wall of earth they left the range of reverted back to their original states soon after.

Though Leonel could see nothing but a vast darkness before him, he could feel himself getting closer.

He kept his hand in the lead, ready for it to enter clear air once again. And, a moment later, that was exactly what happened.

Leonel felt the resistance against his hand suddenly vanish and came to a grinding halt.

'Argh...'

Leonel wanted to groan, but he kept it in. He felt a sharp pain in his hand as though it could be lacerated to minced meat in but another few moments.

Without hesitation, he pressed his first coy fish scale against his body, causing a radiant blue to cover him like a thin layer of skin. He had already long since taken off his chain necklace, saving it for a critical moment.

After this, using his hand, he extended his Soul Force forward, stretching his Internal Sight outward.

What he saw made him grind his teeth in anger.

There was a vast underground space. Its ceilings were at least 100 meters tall and it was over a kilometer from end to end. It was filled with shimmering crystals so bright that had Leonel been looking at them with his eyes, he was sure he would have to squint.

Of course, all of these dimensions were just Leonel's approximate guesses. The Force was so volatile that his Internal Sight was incredibly fuzzy. The sharp range was severely reduced, causing his calculations to be lacking.

What had made him angry, though, was the fact that there was someone who had gotten here before him. More accurately, there was a beast that had gotten here before him.

Leonel's hand had appeared near the ceiling of the wide space. So, if he stepped out now, he would fall 100 meters to his death. Down below, there was an adorable creature, taking a nap without a care in the world.

Its fur was a lustrous black, its whiskers and small nose twitching as though it was having a particularly good dream.

Its body was long in considered of its proportions. It had such a small head, but it was easily a foot and a half from head to toe.

This adorable creature was actually a little black furred mink. But, despite having never seen it in its true form before, Leonel couldn't help but grind his teeth.

This little bastard was definitely the beast that had been harassing him for so long.

Chapter 178

Leonel suppressed his annoyance in his heart. He would definitely deal with that annoying little mink, but he also had to be cautious.

For one, that little mink could somehow sleep within that torrent of energy without any problems while he had simply stretched out a hand into it yet almost couldn't withstand the pain.

Secondly, after so many days of battle with the little mink, Leonel knew that it most definitely wasn't simple to deal with. He even felt that its danger level was a level beyond the beast kings outside. He was

thankful that all of their exchanges had lasted for a short time, or else maybe he would have been on the losing end far more times than he wanted to admit.

‘Why can it just sleep there so easily? Didn’t the dictionary say the only way to survive in this environment was Force Skin? It doesn’t look like that little bastard is using it...’

The little mink seemed to have a cloud of black fog perpetually hanging around its body, but this wasn’t exactly like Force Skin at all.

‘It must be its innate ability... That means its Dark Element Force Strengthening Deviation might also come from its innate ability...’

Leonel took a deep breath. He couldn’t consider this any longer. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Now that he knew there was this beast guarding the Force Crystal Mine, he knew that he had to take it out. He didn’t know why, but this little mink loved to attack him. Maybe the little guy thought it was a joke, but Leonel’s life had been on the line every time. He couldn’t take any chances.

After making a decision, Leonel started slowly descending. He had appeared too high, if he stepped out now, he would just fall to his death. But, if he went too low, his treasure would likely stop working.

The entire floor and much of the sides of the open space were covered with Force Crystals radiating resplendent lights. All the way here, Leonel had to navigate around ore veins because he knew his treasure wouldn’t work against high level minerals. Obviously, the same went for Force Crystals.

Unable to communicate with the others, Leonel had no choice but to make an explosive move. With Flowing Wind positioned right behind him, he believed that she would be able to stop their fall with her ability, albeit shakily considered how volatile the Force here was.

Leonel leapt out from the wall. Force and sharp winds whipped against his body as he fell down toward the sleeping black-furred mink.

With a flip of his palms, two pistols appeared, both outfitted with harpoons. This time, he had no intention of holding back. If he could kill this beast before it woke up, that would be for the best. PANDA NOVEL

BANG! BANG!

Leonel's gaze lit up. He knew his shots hit the mark. And, from start to finish, the little mink hadn't moved. In fact, it seemed that his shots were so powerful that it directly blasted apart the platform of Force Crystals the little mink had been sleeping on too. But, this made sense. After all, compared to those massive beasts outside, this little guy was really small. It was no surprise Leonel's attack went right through it like that.

Leonel landed heavily on the ground, a jolt of pain shooting through his legs as his blueish Force Skin fluctuated wildly beneath the pressure of the Force Eruption.

He shook the stinging sensation out of his lower half. It seemed that his fall had quite an impact on him, he should have definitely used his treasure shoes. But, he had been saving them in case the little mink woke up in time and made a move on him. If that happened, he would have needed his shoes to dodge, or else he would have been a sitting duck in the air.

However, Leonel could have never expected what he witnessed next.

When he looked up, he was stunned silent. The little mink was still there, sleeping its time away as though nothing had happened. ρ??∪???????

The two darts Leonel had shot out were still there as well. One went through the little mink's head and the other went through its body. However...

It was like the little mink was an illusion or in a completely different reality. Its body seemed corporeal, but Leonel's attack went through it as though it had no substance at all, almost as though this was just a projection and not a living creature.

'What the hell...'

Leonel's heart tightened.

At that moment, Flowing Wind unsteadily dropped to the ground, carrying Roaring Black Lion and Thunderous Clap along with her. Her control over her ability was extremely poor in this place, but it was at least enough to slow their descent. Either way, Leonel hadn't brought her here for her combat prowess, but rather to help in quickening the maturity of the Force Crystal Core.

"You... why'd you kill such an adorable little guy?"

Flowing Wind reprimanded Leonel without the slightest hint of her previous lusty personality. In the blink of an eye, she had suddenly become a mother hen protecting her chicks.

Leonel almost couldn't refrain from lashing out. Adorable? This little bastard had almost killed him who knows how many times?

After a while, Flowing Wind and the others also noticed the oddity. If such a small creature was hit with such force, shouldn't it be a rain of blood and guts by now? Why did it seem like Leonel's darts had been embedded into its body?

"It's incorporeal? Is it fake?" Thunderous Clap muttered.

"I don't think it's fake..." Leonel said slowly. "... But don't be fooled by its appearance. This little thing almost killed me several times."

The eyes of the three youths widened. Almost killed Leonel? Which of them didn't know how powerful Leonel was? Yet, such a small beast was a danger to him?

Hearing such words, they could only put their guards up.

"I didn't get a chance to do this before because it was too fast, but maybe now...? Tell me about its abilities." The dictionary appeared in Leonel's palm as his eyes narrowed with seriousness.

[*Ping* Evolved life form detected.]

[Simplified Title: Mink]

[State: Evolved ... Evolving]

[Abilities: ... *Ping* Generating nomenclature...]

[Shadow World: An ability that takes control of the world hidden from the stars.]

[Evaluating power... *Ping*]

[Evolution Stage: Elite Tier 9 Black]

Chapter 179

Leonel involuntarily held his breath.

This description... It was the simplest he had ever seen. It was also the most vague he had ever seen. The only description he had seen that carried this level of vagueness was his own. His own only became more detailed after he began using the dictionary to document his ability, which is why it now had a breakdown of all his abilities from Dream World to Dream Clone. But initially...

[Calculative Mind: An ability capable of simplifying the complex.]

This was what the dictionary had first told him about his ability. It never said anything about his Dream World, Dream Sculpt or Dream Clone ability. Aside from himself, he had never seen an ability as simply explained as the little mink's Shadow World.

But, what also shocked Leonel was the 'state' of the little mink. Not only did it say 'Evolved' but it also said 'Evolving'.

The little mink's ability was already classified with the Elite Tier 9 Black level. If it evolved, wouldn't it cross over into the Bronze level just like Leonel?

Leonel took a deep breath to steady his beating heart.pANDA-NOVEL.COM

Unlike him, the Little Mink's ability seemed exceptional for combat. Leonel couldn't even touch it despite the fact it was sleeping right in front of him. How was it even possible to do anything to this little guy?

Just with this ability alone, the little mink was untouchable in Fourth Dimensional Worlds. Only under the suppression of a Fifth Dimensional World would its ability begin to show some weaknesses. But, considering it was currently evolving into the Bronze tiers, it seemed that this wouldn't be true for long...

Leonel decided to leave his darts in place. He didn't dare to approach the little mink too closely anymore. But, he also knew that it was simply impossible for them to just leave now. Their success would decide the life and death of tens of people.

"How long will it take this little thing to finish evolving?" Leonel asked.

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, 3:21:51:05] pANDA NOVEL

'3 days, 21 hours, 51 minutes and 5 seconds huh... Hopefully that's enough.'

Leonel chose to go with the assumption that the little mink would stay asleep for as long as it was evolving. In that case, maybe they would have enough time to help the Force Crystal Mine mature.

"Let's hurry." Leonel said, receiving the agreement of the others.

The four youths turned their attention toward the raging tempest of white, gushing Force toward the center of the wide space.

The mine was over a kilometer in width and length. Of that space, the geyser took up barely 20 meters of width. But, its presence was imposing.

It was an odd feeling. Unlike geysers of water, this Force Eruption hadn't made a single sound after its initial burst. It bore a hole through the network of tunnels above it and remained completely silent, even to the point the youths could easily chat. p??J????

“Alright, Roaring Black Lion, you'll have to protect Flowing Wind. You all know what to do, right?”

The youths nodded.

Thunderous Clap had a Force cultivating technique and had formed four Nodes. So, his ability to keep up his Force Skin was relatively better. But, Flowing Wind had yet to do so for whatever reason, so she needed the protection of Roaring Black Lion. This was definitely a testament to how great her ability was.

“We just pour our Force Strengthening Deviations in, right? Sounds simple enough...” Flowing Wind mumbled. But, it was clear that she wasn't very confident.

Steeling their wills, the youths moved forward, approaching the geyser of white from different angles.

The moment they crossed the barrier, they realized that things were completely out of their expectations. Let alone the towering danger they expected, it almost felt as though they were walking through a spray of sparkling water on the hottest of summer days.

However, instead of making him feel more relaxed, Leonel's heart clenched as he pushed his way toward the Core.

Though he disparaged the dictionary sometimes, how could he not trust something his father had left for him? His father was the one person who he trusted with his everything. Even if the things he left behind would sometimes tease him in unexpected ways, they wouldn't ever truly put him in danger.

Since his father's dictionary put so much emphasis on how dangerous Force Eruptions were, how could Leonel ever take them lightly? The fact things seemed so calm and even relaxing made his hair stand on end.

They say that there were forms of death where one would feel incomparably relaxed near the end. Some said that there was no better euphoria than drowning...

Something about this Force Eruption reminded Leonel of such things...

Soon, Leonel had made it to the Force Crystal Core. Without a better descriptor, he could only say that it was beautiful.

It was the most perfect sphere Leonel had ever seen. It stood amidst an array of Force Crystals that looked like the petals of a blooming flower. Despite the fact it was the cause of such a shocking event, it was completely still. It was almost impossible to tell that it was the source of all of this at all.

It radiated an assortment of colors, shimmering a resplendent rainbow. However, if one looked closely, it was possible to see golden lines being slowly drawn just beneath its surface. These lines seemed to exude an ancient mystery and were even somewhat more resplendent than even the rainbow colors of the Force Crystal Core. If it wasn't hidden beneath the Core's surface, it would definitely easily outshine its radiance.

'Those must be the Natural Force Arts...'

Leonel looked up to see three pairs of eyes looking toward him solemnly. It seemed that they felt this matter shouldn't be so simple either.

Leonel narrowed his eyes and took a step forward, lightly touching the core with a finger.

Immediately, his expression changed as he quickly retracted his hand. But, it was still too late.

The Force Skin protecting his hand burst. Soon after it, the skin on his left hand splintered and shattered into a rain of blood. Even the bones of his fingers were visible to see.

Leonel's Force quickly surged, pushing the torrent of Force rampaging around within him out with brute force.

By the time his heart settled down and he looked toward the Force Crystal Core with a solemn expression, all he could feel was a spine tingling pain from his hand.

Chapter 180

Leonel's face slightly twisted in pain. No matter how used he was to injuries by now, the feeling of having his hand practically explode from the inside out left him wanting to cry out.

The other three youths looked toward him with fear evident in their eyes. It was just a simple touch, but Leonel's ending had actually been so terrible. If he held on for just a fraction of a second longer, just how much worse would his injuries be?

Leonel took several deep breaths.

Maybe the worst part about all of this was the loss of his hand. A Force Crafter's hands were the most important part of their body. With his left hand in this state, it simply wouldn't be possible to craft anything.

'... I'm too reckless...'

Leonel clenched his jaw.

"Retreat."PANDA-NOVEL.COM

Leonel ordered this the moment he saw how helpless the situation was. That break in his Force Skin had shaved off more than half the remaining time the Force Skin treasure he had forged had. It wouldn't be long before it shattered completely. By then, there was no telling how horrible his ending would be.

However, just when he wanted to retreat, Leonel's expression changed.

It had been so easy to walk in, but he found that the way out made him feel as though he was walking against quicksand.

Leonel's expression immediately became ugly. What the hell was going on?

"What's going on? I feel like I can't take a step back no matter how much I want to."

Roaring Black Lion's voice held a rare instance of trepidation and fear. This was the very last thing they expected to happen. Why was it so easy to enter but not easy to leave? PANDA NOVEL

"It seems I've underestimated this Force Eruption again..." Leonel smiled bitterly.

There were all sorts of natural traps in the world, even before the Metamorphosis. All of them were easy to enter but difficult to leave.

A Venus flytrap wouldn't have any qualms about allowing a fly onto its petals, but would it so easily allow one to leave? A beast wouldn't hesitate to allow its prey into its mouth, but would it so easily release it?

This trap in particular reminded Leonel of a phenomenon that could happen in rivers and dams. Anyone swimming near a dam would be asking for death. The interaction between the rushing water suddenly met by an immovable force would cause a pattern of currents that would easily allow a human in, but make it impossible for them to leave.

The number of people who had died to such a phenomenon were too many to count. Leonel had just never expected that the flow of Force here would be able to replicate such a thing.

Leonel smiled bitterly. "Sorry guys... It seems I was still a bit reckless." ρ??ϕ???

Leonel sighed. He knew that once again this was a case of the dictionary being very specific with its answers. He asked about how to mature a Force Crystal Core ahead of time, but hadn't asked anything about something like this.

The three youths couldn't help but be disappointed. But, how mad could they be? It wasn't as though Leonel had sent them into this danger alone. He had stepped forward first and had even been willing to retreat when things weren't going well. This was something completely out of their expectations.

"Don't worry." Leonel said firmly after a moment. "I promise to take you all out of here."

The resolution in Leonel's voice shocked them. They hadn't expected that even now, he would still take responsibility. Usually, someone with as much power as him would definitely not have the time to care about them now.

Without another word, Leonel directly sat on the ground, entering a meditative state. He weakly supported his left hand on his lap, doing his best to ignore the pain.

'I have almost 30 coy fish scales. Each of them can provide 30 minutes of protection. Between the four of us, that's enough for a bit over three hours and a half.'

The three youths looked toward Leonel, then looked at one another. There were clear hints of despair on their faces, but what could they do?

Thunderous Clap tried to fight his way out, throwing out thunderous punches that rocked the air, but he found himself sliding back with every strike.

Flowing Wind and Roaring Black Lion tried their hands at it too. In fact, the former had the greatest shot and even almost succeeded, trying to ride the flow of Force. But in the end, just when it looked like she might succeed, she was blasted backward. Had it not been for Roaring Black Lion catching her before she landed on the Force Crystal Core, her outcome would have been even sorer.

Leonel's mind spun. However, no matter how hard he thought, everything pointed in a singular direction: Force Strengthening Deviations.

The only way to overwhelm Force was with Force of greater quantity or quality.

Right now, he couldn't spare thoughts toward maturing the Force Crystal Core. Wasting stamina on it would just make it so that they were less likely to survive. With only a little over three hours, every small bit of stamina could decide life and death.

'I need to improve my Light Elemental Force or my Spear Force...'

Leonel's eyes flashed open. He pushed forward his only good remaining hand, stabbing out toward the edge of the Force Eruption's influence.

But, what he saw left him feeling helpless. Even with the amplification of his Spear Force, his [Call of the Wind] only traveled a meter before being shattered completely.

Taking a deep breath, Leonel attempted to fuse his Light Elemental Force into the attack. It wasn't a perfect fusion, but it was barely enough to gain a small amplification.

He pierced out once more, but the result was just as depressing. It barely passed the two and a half meter mark before being crushed. That was still almost a full eight meters from the edge they needed to escape from.

'The closer to escaping the energy fluctuations it was, the harder it is to cross. The one to two meter distance was at least twice as difficult to cross as the zero to one meter distance... I need to improve...'

Leonel could only turn his hopes back to the dictionary. It said that there were levels beyond... right?