

Descent 711

Chapter 711

In that moment, as though a ball had dropped, the movement of Jac and Leonel's hands became blinding. Anyone who might have thought that their skill would be too far apart immediately felt as though a bucket of cold water had been dropped over their heads. In fact, none of them were fools and many of them had eyes sharp enough to see through to the truth.

Leonel's hand motion was slower than Jac's, but his finger speed and dexterity was more than just a single level beyond.

By this point, Leonel had long since moved on from the beginner level techniques he used when he first started as a Force Crafter. His every action carried an air of sophistication and purpose he hadn't had before.

Years of simulations layered themselves in his every action, creating the image of an expert amongst experts.

Leonel's fingers rapidly oscillated, Little Tolly following the rhythm of his digits. The Polished Glass in his hands vibrated, its impurities being brought to the surface to be systematically cut off one after another.

When Leonel first began, he didn't have the skill to do this. As such, he could only use Little Tolly like a glorified Flame Spirit, using the little guy's ability to agitate the chemical structure of Ores to raise its temperature.

It was a simple concept. Heat actually reflected itself in the activity of atoms. By using this principle, Leonel was able to heat his Ores to incredibly precise levels, making use of sometimes even one or two degree differences in melting point to separate out impurities.

Though this level of control over heat was far beyond what a Flame Spirit wielder could hope to match, it was still considered a crude technique to Leonel's father. This alone was able to make the value of a Metal Spirit clear.

A Flame Spirit Wielder would only be able to gradually heat an entire Ore. Little Tolly, however, as long as the Ore was within a reasonable size – a size that was steadily growing as the little guy continued to evolve under Leonel’s constant nurturing – could cause the same change to occur through the Ore simultaneously.

Being able to control the temperature of an entire Ore to incredibly precise levels... Well, it didn’t need to be explain any more just how useful this would be.

Still, there were many downfalls to the use of this technique.

Ultimately, the heating and cooling of an Ore would inevitably cause changes. One of the most useful techniques in changing the strength and structure of a chemical bond is the clever usage of heating and cooling.

Even if the purpose of the original heating would be to remove impurities, this wouldn’t stop the Ore from being affected in other ways.

These subtle changes wouldn’t be a big deal to a beginner. However, to an expert, every introduced variable was a tick away from the perfect product they sought.

This problem, though, was only one for those who didn’t have special Spirits.

This technique was called [Centrifugal Oscillation] and was considered to be a technique only Silver Crafters could use. But at that moment, Leonel brought it out with all the confidence of the world.

He first used Little Tolly to separate the several Ores of the Polished Glass before him into several head sized pieces.

One after another, he picked them up. For a moment, it would seem to hang in the air, suspended upon nothing. Then in the next instant, it would begin to vibrate.

This technique required delicate control. Vibration, especially at these high levels, could also cause a transfer of heat. However, this was where the special properties of the Metal Spirit came into play.

A unique push and pull affect was created.

Little Tolly placed the Ores in a half digested state, giving the metal a level of fluidity it would never have in its natural state, almost making it like metallic liquid. The result was a fluid far thicker than oil, even faintly beyond the consistency of peanut butter or molasses.

However, this fluid state resulted in two things.

First, the metal's ability to retain heat plummeted and its specific heat skyrocketed. The changes caused by vibrations were negligible.

Secondly, the consistency of the pure metal and its impurities would have varying changes. As long as Leonel locked onto a particular frequency, he would use a combination of vibration and centrifugal force impurities to the surface.

The best part about this technique is that it put all Ores in an inert state. Even the usually violent Polished Glass became like a docile kitten between Leonel's fingers.

It was only at that moment that the members of Polished Glass realized how casually Leonel had taken his previous time with them. He had most definitely not used this technique with them before.

But, there was a very obvious reason for this. Little Tolly was still an infant and functioned on his instincts most of the time. Even up to now, Little Tolly's intelligence was still far beneath that of Little Blackstar.

Using this technique for the little guy was akin to bringing a foodie to the best restaurant in the world, then telling them that they could only taste the food, but not swallow.

Now imagine trying to control the impulses of a toddler to do the same. It was a tremendous strain on Leonel's focus to do this. However, he had already decided to go all out.

In just ten minutes, several tons of Polished glass had been purified to the point they shimmered of white. In fact, if one looked closely, it would even be possible to find flecks of gold hidden within.

That was it. The perfect Refinement Stage.

Despite the hint of fatigue between his brows, a grin was spread across his face. His smile beamed, leaving many in a daze.

Even as Beinala was still working on his first few refinements, Leonel had already moved on. His target? The knife.

On the outside, the crowd was left completely stunned, especially the Force Crafters among them. For a layman, what they saw was enough to be shocked. However, for them, it felt like they were watching the work of a deity.

Is that... A Metal Spirit?

Chapter 712

Beinala's two wives, especially, were shaken to their core. They had already decided that Leonel must be of an elite class family just for knowing of the existence of the Craftsmen Duel. However, the scene before them made them realize just how true this had to be.

They didn't have enough knowledge to know whether what Leonel wielded was a True Metal Spirit or a Metal Spirit Embryo, but regardless, an Embryonic Metal Spirit was worth more than even many True Spirits.

Still, after some were shocked that Leonel was actually ahead of Beinala, many realized that he seemed to be quite tired.

“Did he overextend himself trying to show off?” On the top of a distant building, Sael frowned.

However, when she saw Leonel’s grin, something about it made her brain switch off. It was as though it said: “I’ve won.”

...

Jac was completely lost in his own world. He had no idea about Leonel’s progress, nor did he care to know.

He carefully rolled the Polished Glass between his fingers, making sure that there was an even distribution of heat.

Then, with practiced movements, he began to roll the metal within the many wells of his Workbench. This allow him to press the metal out, forcing a new surface to the top. Whenever he spotted a new impurity, he would target it with his Embryonic Flame Spirit, burning it to ash and separating it out.

His hands were a blur. Compared to Kaela who had to sweat every single step, Jac was a master of his craft, plowing through the refinement stage with a deft pace. If it wasn’t for the fact Leonel was contrasting him, his speed would have definitely been a point of shock.

20 minutes after Leonel, Jac managed to finish, moving onto his first Craft.

The knife and the short sword had a thin line of separation between them. However, what was most important for either was their light weight, their sharp edges, and, most importantly, their balance.

Thinking through this, Jac believed he had decided on a perfect path.

By now, though, Leonel had long since begun and was only putting the finishing touches. Despite the fatigue between his brows, his speed didn’t seem to slow in the slightest. In fact, it even seemed to faintly increase.

Leonel knew, much like Beinala, that the knife category also encompassed short swords. Without hesitation, he began to make a foot and a half long blade. Polished Glass was the best for its edges and sharpness. Leonel believed that a short sword could more easily take advantage of this.

However, the striking differences between his actions and that of Jac's once again left the crowd in silence.

Jac had to melt his refined metal down, delicately picking out molds and using the wells of his Workbench to fine tune the final product down to his specifications.

But Leonel...? All he had to do was send a perfect image of what he wanted to Little Tolly through his Dream World. In the blink of an eye, Little Tolly would envelop the appropriate amount of refined metal, and by the time the little guy released, a perfect mold would be left behind.

To the eyes of a layman, it looked like Leonel was cheating. Only the Force Crafters in the audience who were well aware of how difficult it was to control Metal Spirits stood in awe, their hands trembling.

ρ??∫???

Leonel, however, couldn't be bothered to consider the thoughts of those on the outside. Whether they believed he cheated or not didn't matter to him. What was most important was that they knew BLACKSTAR existed and that they knew if he could 'cheat', then how could he possibly have made a faulty product?

'I'll add a Force Art to help its swiftness... If I modify this Force Art like this, it'll be able to gather the wind's momentum behind it with each successive combo it lands, effectively giving it a small wind domain...'

...

'This sword has an incredibly thin blade, but Polished Glass is too brittle in such large quantities. I'll give it a heat treatment and space out some Force Arts to make it more ductile. Most importantly, I'll add an impact dispersal Force Art... I should probably use this dispersal Art on the rest as well...'

...

‘A saber is heavier than a sword, it’ll be more difficult to forge out of Polished Glass. I’ll add a strong curve to it, with that, the force on the blade will be applied in increments rather than all at once. I’ll modify the dispersal Art...’

...

‘The battle ax is actually must easier than the saber in this rare case. The blade of a battle ax would be just as large as a saber, but it has a more defined structure to support it. If I make the blade especially thin as the edge and widen it very gradually, there’ll be a natural force dispersal. It will slice through anything thanks to its weight and sharpness long before the structure fails... Just to be cautious though, I’ll add...’

...

‘Polished Glass has none of the flexibility a staff needs, I need something more than just dispersal Arts for this, I need to change the whole structure....’

‘Alright, I’ll hollow out the center and weave a double helix structure down its middle and fuse it to the inner wall of the staff. I’ll add dispersal Arts at all the joints of the double helix, making the structure even stronger.’

...

Leonel worked one miracle after another, his smile becoming brighter and brighter. If others didn’t know better, they would think that he was actually recovering the longer he worked... But, that was exactly what was happening!

Compared to using a technique reserved for Silver Crafters, this was like a walk in the park for Leonel. His Dream Force was recovering far faster than he was using it at this moment, so how could he not be getting better and better?

The moment Leonel finished his staff, he rose it high with a triumphant pride.

He swung it down with all his force. Under the astonished eyes of all the Crafters present, the staff bowed under his strength. Yet, the brittle Polished Glass showed not a single sign of snapping.

Leonel grinned, satisfied. The double helix structure could be seen through the transparent casing of Polished Glass, it gave those watching on the feeling of watching a work of art rather than a weapon.

Then... Leonel sat with his five weapons before him, a calm smile on his face.

However, those who knew the rules of the One Ore Weapon Medley suddenly had warped expressions.

Why did he stop? Wasn't this too arrogant?!

Chapter 713

Jac had not a single clue that Leonel had finished. His hands continued to move at their same steady and quick pace, his expression unhurried, and his brows focused. However, it wasn't long before everyone began to realize that something was wrong, even those who were completely uninformed on matters of Force Crafting.

Everyone had expected things to come to a conclusion after Jac completed his staff. But, rather than doing this, Jac continued on to diligently and calmly complete a spear, then a glaive, then he even completed a halberd before he came to a stop.

His brows furrowed in thought for at least a half hour before he shook his head. He couldn't think of any way to complete a bow with just a single ore.

He might be able to apply some principles he used to forge his flexible polearms to make the main body of the bow. But, not only did he feel like it would be no good, he couldn't even begin to think of a method to forge the bowstring out of Polished Glass. Any attempt he made would end in failure, that he was certain of.

Realizing this, Jac finally allowed his gaze to regain focus. He stretched his body, feeling only a slight tinge of fatigue. But, if he needed to, even doing this ten more times wouldn't be much of an issue. After all, he was a Fifth Dimensional existence while this was nothing more than a few Tier 6 treasures.

Jac looked up for the first time to find Leonel sitting in silent meditation. His lip twitched. Had this brat really finished before him?

But, when he saw the mere five weapons before Leonel, his brows raised.

His first thought was that Leonel had been stumped when it was time to form his spear much like he had been stumped at the forming of a bow. After all, Leonel was just a kid, it didn't make much sense for him to be proficient in so many weapons.

Compared to the sword, the spear was a much rarer weapon in terms of how many used it. The learning curve needed to learn it was far more difficult.

However, when Jac's gaze landed on Leonel's staff he froze. A moment later, fury lit his features, a wild Force whipping out from his body.

"BOY!"

Leonel, who had been in meditation, frowned and opened his eyes. Though he seemed to be mostly able to ignore Jac's pressure, he still didn't like the feeling. It made him feel as though a bucket of honey was being dropped over his head. The stickiness and discomfort was about the same.

"You're finished?" Leonel said plainly.

"Are you trying to humiliate me? Do you think that I'm so simple to handle?!"

Leonel's frowned deepened. "If you want to take it that way, I can't stop you from doing so."

Jac's chest bellowed, heaving up and down. It might have been a nice side had he been a woman, but unfortunately, he was just an old man who had lost himself to his rage. ρ???

If before Leonel wasn't already certain that Jac had some terrible memories surrounding Craftsmen Duels, he was certain now. This man was usually much too good at hiding his intentions to be acting like this due to what he thought was a single slight.

However, Jac thought he had a reason to be infuriated.

The spear was indeed more complex than the staff, but the principles behind their creation was almost identical. The main difference was in the blade and in ensuring that the spear was properly balanced even with such an addition.

Seeing that design of Leonel's staff, Jac's immediate thought was... genius. For several seconds, the equivalent to an eternity for a person with his power, he couldn't take his eyes off of it.

At that moment, he understood that Leonel was looking down on him. For him to complete exactly five weapons, just enough to claim victory in a Medley with nine rounds... It was nothing short of abject humiliation.

How could he not be furious?

Leonel could only sigh. This sort of disrespect was something he would never do, especially when Jac was giving him a high level of respect back. The two most important pillars of Leonel's life were Respect and Persistence, concepts his father had long since ingrained into his very being. How, then, could he slap Jac's face when it wasn't warranted?

He would always return the same energy he was given.

Unfortunately, though, this time, there was really nothing Leonel could do.

Creating a weapon meant embodying its spirit at every step. If there was a way Leonel could circumvent this, he would. But, for a Spear Master like himself to create a spear, it was impossible for his Spear

Force to not take center stage. The moment this happened, whatever he was working on would shatter no matter what step of the process he was at.

Trying to force this not to happen would be akin to trying to use the Silver Grade technique on a much higher level than he was currently. Such a thing would drain him completely.

Even if he did succeed, the product would be faulty since he didn't put his heart into it. And, beyond that, his stamina would have been completely drained in the attempt, meaning he wouldn't be able to continue to make more anyway.

No matter how he looked at it, it simply wasn't worth it.

“Bring out your knife!” Jac restrained his voice, reining in his emotions. Since this brat wanted to play, he would play. He would make sure he was crushed so thoroughly that he could never raise his head again.

Leonel reached out a hand, causing the short sword to zip into his palm. He swung it lightly, causing the wind in the surroundings to sing.

Before the first round even began, just looking at this scene, Jac's expression sunk.. At that moment, his heart trembled uncontrollably.

Chapter 714

Jac's face turned completely ashen. The crowd on the outside hadn't even gotten to say a thing when they noticed his uncontrollable trembling.

However, the process had already begun.

Elder Beinala's badge, which was still on the ground beside Leonel's Force Crafting glove, suddenly began to glow. With a subtle sweep, a gentle energy rose Leonel's short sword up to meet Jac's knife.

Jac gripped his fists, calming his breathing.

Polished Glass was used to refine edges of blades, normally. As a result, it was known for its sharpness, but lacked in other important qualities like ductility. Due to this, it could become extremely brittle when used in large quantities.

As an expert Crafter, Jac, of course, knew this. So he tried his best to limit the size of his Crafts.

When he saw that Leonel had made a short sword, he almost snorted in contempt. In fact, he would have had he not instantly been shocked by Leonel's staff.

But at this moment, he couldn't find the heart to sneer.

The gentle energy exuding from the badge rose up both short sword and knife. Soon, both weapons began to tremble.

The weapons medley tests all came in two parts. The first testing the structural integrity of the Craft while the second tested its strength. This trembling was a part of the first test.

Different frequencies of energy would be poured into the two weapons at varying speeds. Gentle and long streams of Force, fast and choppy, large and abrupt...

The integrity of the blades would be put through a gauntlet. However, this gauntlet was only a preliminary test. The threshold that needed to be met would be decided by the level of the badge of the Craftsmen. As such, both Leonel and Jac were being tested by the standard of a Tier 9 Crafter.

Unfortunately, for Jac, this round was nothing short of torture because he knew that the true test was only coming.

In that moment, the trembling finally came to a stop. Jac felt his heart was in his throat as the two weapons were raised against one another.

CLANG! CLANG! CRIP! TSSS! DING!

Jac's sword only lasted two strikes.

DING!

His saber only lasted one.

DING!

His battle ax managed to last three.

Two staffs rose into the air.

On one side, there was Leonel's double helix encased structure. On the other, there was Jac's cut out spine design. Much like each of the clashes before, Jac's weapon was only a fraction the weight of Leonel's... And it showed.

After a single strike, Jac already heard his spine structure crack. The sound was so jarring that he felt for a moment as though it was his own back that had snapped.

The second strike bent Jac's staff out of shape. If it wasn't for his spine structure, the weapon itself would have already long since collapsed.

But... This only meant that it didn't stand a chance on the third strike.

Five weapons. Five losses.

Jac was so shell shocked that he wasn't even sure how to react. Shouldn't it have been close? Shouldn't there have been some suspense? Some intrigue? Some small bit of face left for him?

'This... This must be the power of a Metal Spirit... It must ... It must...' Jac's pupils flickered between greed, rage and another emotion... He might not have recognized it himself, but his wives most certainly had...

It was sadness.

'Hm... Seems I overestimated him a bit...' Leonel couldn't help but think this to himself.

This was the first time he had seen the standard of a supposed expert that was meant to be on his level. Though Leonel was close to the skill of a Bronze Crafter, he had still yet to actually Craft one so it could be said that he and Beinala were at about the same level.

If he had known the gap was so large, he wouldn't have wasted time using a Silver Grade technique that took so much out of him.

"Are you convinced?" Leonel asked.

Jac, however, didn't seem capable of responding. He stared blankly at Leonel.

The silence of the crowd was palpable. From the very beginning, most never breathed a word, watching this all play out in complete silence.

The freshmen, and even many white belts and blue belts watching on felt as though something had clicked in their minds. Something about their demeanors shifted... Though it was subtle, it was there.

However, before they could fully grasp onto that feeling, Jac finally spoke again, his eyes almost reddened with a tinge of madness.

"Your Metal Spirit... Give it to me... Give it to me now."

Chapter 715

Kaela's expression changed, a strong worry taking over her heart. Yet, at that moment, Jac's aura was so stifling that she couldn't speak even if she wanted to.

For Arte who had been caught up in the mess since the very beginning, he could only smile bitterly. Was this really how things were going to end? Leonel would have had a better chance if he didn't allow Jac in at all. At least in that case, he might be able to argue that his shop was razed to the ground and get himself some compensation.

However, even with all this worrying around him, Leonel didn't seem to react much to Jac's demand nor his fiery gaze.

"This seems to be a running theme with those of you who hold power in this place." Leonel replied. "You all believe that you can just do anything you want."

Jac took a step forward. If it wasn't for his own Workbench blocking his way, his hand would already be on Leonel's throat. But, this sort of small obstacle wouldn't hold him back for very long, if at all.

The only reason Jac was still showing a modicum of restraint was because he was well aware of how dangerous True Spirits were, especially Metal Spirits. Though he could protect himself with his Force, he also knew that this wouldn't last long.

What would ultimately happen is that the Metal Spirit would eat through him and enter its overeating phase. If that sort of frenzy happened here, it would be a wonder if anyone could stop it.

He needed Leonel to hand it over willingly and without a choice, making the little spirit believe that this was just another part of its tasks. After that, brainwashing and making the Metal Spirit forget Leonel was just a matter of time. With how gluttonous such spirits were, it would only require a large amount of food.

As for the idea that Leonel wouldn't hand it over? Jac didn't even think of such a thing. Did a Third Dimensional ant have the right to resist him?

Unfortunately, Jac had no idea that on the outside of the shop, the faces of his two wives were growing uglier and uglier by the second. At this point, the two didn't even dare to look around for fear of meeting a gaze they didn't dare to match.

The silence of the audience was just the same, but the atmosphere was completely different. Maybe in the past many wouldn't react like this seeing someone powerful assert their dominance. But, for some reason, many in the crowd felt a discomfort down to their very bones at that moment, as though something fundamental about their ideologies was shifting.

"Give me the Metal Spirit, boy." Jac practically growled.

Leonel indifferently remained in his seated position.

"Do you think the reason I defeated you is because of my Metal Spirit? Don't you think your actions right now are a bit sad? Even an Elder can't take their loss in stride?"

Leonel's words seemed to hit Jac's sore spot. However, this time, Beinala didn't answer, he took another step forward, even sliding his own Workbench out of the way.

Leonel sighed and shook his head.

Jac's footsteps suddenly froze. An image of what was being projected to the outside alongside an image of the crowd appeared above him, causing his face to twist and distort. He suddenly realized now why Leonel felt so calm.

How could he actually not notice that he was being recorded? How long had this been going on for? How much had they seen?

When Jac locked onto the faces of his wives, he realized that the situation wasn't good. However, wasn't it already too late? Since these people had already seen his true face, who cared anymore?! What was a position in Valiant Heart worth in comparison to a Metal Spirit? Just a single Metal Spirit could probably buy out this entire world! ρ???)???)???)

“Give it to me!” Jac growled, his patience had run thin.

A swirl of endless emotions threatened to erupt outward as he took another step toward Leonel. But, it was exactly this step that made him freeze once again. He didn't even manage to take a second at all.

He felt his aura disperse as a strong spatial Force locked onto him. He realized in that moment that no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't move a single inch.

Leonel continued to sit with an indifferent look on his face as though he always knew Jac wouldn't be able to take those final steps.

“You should be embarrassed to call yourself an Elder.” Leonel continued coldly. “Since you don't seem to be convinced, I'll make you convinced. Little Tolly.”

Blop *Bloop*

Leonel snatched a refined piece of Polished Glass. His fingers began to move, gradually picking up steam as though they were doing nothing but warming up.

In what felt like not even ten minutes, the arc of a bow appeared before all their eyes. It curved along an elegant path and stood at two meters tall. In addition, it had the very same double helix pattern Leonel had used for his staff sparkling and reflecting the gentle blacks of the second floor.

“You must have felt that it was possible to make the bow's body, but its string is what you couldn't figure out how to do, correct?”

Leonel seemed to be asking a question. But, judging by the fact his hands never stopped, it seemed he didn't care to receive an answer at all.

Jac clenched his jaw, his eyes reddening. But, even to this point, he couldn't move a single inch.

“Here’s the difference between you and I.”

Leonel took what remained of the refined ore and separated them out in small fingernail sized balls in the blink of an eye. Snatching one, he had one of Little Tolly’s many parts envelope it completely.

Pinching his fingers, Leonel began to oscillate them back and forth, slowly pulling his hands apart as the ball quickly became a long string so thin it could hardly be seen.

Leonel repeated this exact process over a hundred times. His precision was so perfect that each and every thin string of Polished was exactly five atoms wide. But, they were simultaneously as brittle as glass. Just a single touch could make any one of them snap.

Just what was he thinking?

Chapter 716

Little Tolly split into over a hundred small pieces, coating each and every one of the fragile pieces. For a moment, it looked as though Leonel had a hundred long lines of silver stacked before him.

Then, with a thought, they began to twist relative to one another.

First they combined in groups of five, twisting into a thicker line. Then, those groups of five combined with three others like them to form groups of four. Finally, those full bundles of twenty came together, forming a final line.

All the while, Leonel’s quill moved like lightning. His movements were so controlled and precise that he didn’t have to pause Little Tolly’s actions even a single time. He was absolutely perfect.

When Little Tolly finally slipped out from and revealed the final product Jac felt as though his eyes were about to bulge.

However, as though he didn't notice, Leonel calmly attached the newly made bowstring to its body and lightly pulled.

The twang of a bowstring seemed to pluck at the hearts of all those who saw it.

Bloop *Blop*

Little Tolly's many parts came together as one and happily landed on Leonel's hands, snaking around his fingers until it snuggled around his wrist.

It was only at that moment that Jac realized that Leonel hadn't used his Force Crafting Gloves from beginning to end. He clenched his jaw, but still couldn't move an inch.

"I'm not one to be bullied in silence." Leonel said. "Seniors like you can't be considered my senior."

Who knows whether it was by design or coincidence, but Leonel didn't call Beinala Elder this time. His message couldn't have been more clear.

"I was lucky this time because my Force Crafting saved me. But it's impossible to tell what would happen if I was on the outside. I can only hope that there's a swift and justified punishment."

Leonel's plain words were like hammers to Jac's heart. Unfortunately for the latter, he was soon forcefully teleported out.

Jac appeared on the outside, finally regaining control of his body. His first instinct was to blast all the energy he had been holding in toward the shop. But, before he got a chance to, he felt like several eyes had landed on him.

Jac's aura completely deflated. His rage had nowhere to vent itself and his embarrassment seemed to have only increased by several times over.

Without a word, he turned and sliced through the crowd on his way out just as the picture above BLACKSTAR reverted back to its silver and black emblem.

The crowd all watch silently as Beinala, followed by his two wives, departed. Though none of them said a word, somehow, the silent condemnation was even worse than receiving a verbal barrage.

On a distant rooftop, Sael watched on in silence. She didn't even notice when her eyes had begun to brim with tears. ρ???(???????)

“What are you crying about?” Gersan frowned, looking at Sael as though she had lost her mind. What was wrong with this senior sister of his?

Gersan didn't like Leonel very much to begin with for obvious reasons. Plus, he also didn't know much about Force Crafting. He just barely knew enough to know that it was impressive for Leonel to defeat Beinala, but he didn't quite know how impressive.

What he felt, though, was even if this was a pinnacle achievement, it definitely shouldn't be anything worth crying like this over... right?

The only thing that truly shocked Gersan was the fact Leonel was actually able to send a Fifth Dimensional existence packing without lifting a single finger.

Sael wiped her eyes with a forearm and smiled, not bothering to explain in too much depth. Gersan didn't quite get it because he was one of the few who would have fought for his rights against his seniors regardless. Even when he found out Leonel had a great background, he disdained him more than respected him.

In the mind of a talent like Gersan, he could already fight for everything he wanted, so Leonel's words made no difference to him. However, if everyone was like Gersan... The organization would have never fallen to this point to begin with. By now, it had little to do with him and everything to do with those below.

She didn't know what Leonel had done, and she had a strong feeling that this was definitely not the first time he had planted such seeds, but the result was something she was seeing right before her eyes now.

‘He’s doing all of this just for revenge toward a person who didn’t even dare to say his name... How good would it be if he was doing all of this for less petty reasons...? What result would there be if he did it because he loved Valiant Heart...?’

...

In another distant building, Raylion finished the last of his meat, leaving behind nothing but an exceptionally clean plate of bone.

“... These petty tricks are meaningless if you don’t have the strength to back them up. As quickly as you can light a fire in their bellies, they can just as quickly be extinguished.”

...

Leonel collapsed to the ground the moment the images disappeared. Compared to his previous appearance, his current look was pitiful. In fact, he looked as though he had placed a step into a long since prepared coffin.

He had really outdone himself this time. He could have just sent Jac out right after locking him down, but he had insisted on making his bow first. If it wasn’t for the fact that Jac had been so focused on his Craft and forgot to struggle with all his might, Leonel really would have collapsed first.

Leonel was able to rely on a combination of his Divine Armor and his prepared Force Arts to barely deal with a single weak Fifth Dimensional existence in a prepared environment. But, in order not to reveal his Divine Armor too early, he put even greater strain on himself that he needed to. Now, the world around him was completely blurry.

Even as Leonel’s consciousness faded, his lip still curled.

He could consider phase one over. Now came the fun part.

His fists were really itching.

Chapter 717

If there was ever such a thing as rolling in merit points, Leonel had definitely reached the epitome. The sales his shop reached day in and day out could make even some elders bleed.

Of course, much of these merit points went toward buying more materials to sell even more. However, even with this being the case, the profits alone were astronomical.

There was simply no other place in Valiant City where they could get such cheap high level weapons. It could be said that Leonel single handedly raised the strength of all black and white belts by at least a level. As for blue belts, due to the fact he never sold weapons above the Tier 7 level, their strength remained about the same.

When BLACKSTAR truly began to pick up steam, the Ore Factions made their move, each signing contracts with Leonel. Like this, Leonel didn't even have to worry about acquiring Ores himself. Every week, he would receive a large supply of his own.

It was no surprise, then, that the ones who suffered the most were the King of Ores faction.

Not only had Leonel used their foundation to build the impenetrable BLACKSTAR, but they obviously couldn't sign a contract with Leonel who was now effectively holding what amounted to about a 10-20% share of the Ore Market.

This didn't seem large, but when it was considered that most of the customers the Ore Factions had came from merchants of the Milky Way, the fact Leonel managed to swallow up such a large share was enough to make anyone mad with greed.

All of this said, there was only so large such a small shop could grow. Even setting aside the fact that 70% of all the sold weapons, armors and consumables were crafted by Leonel personally, Valiant Heart was only so large and there were only so many students.

Of course, the consumable and repair market kept the merit points flowing in droves. But even with this accounted for, there was a cap.

This cap, however, wasn't a bad thing. In fact, Leonel had accounted for its existence.

What Leonel wanted the most out of this place was a method to cure Aina. That was his main goal. His so-called revenge against Raylion and Apestus was nothing more than a blip on his radar, he hardly took them seriously.

In order to do this, he needed to bring the Segmented Cube to Phase Three. If the shop kept growing to infinity, it would be difficult for him to find time to do any of this.

Up to now, the Cube had been slowly absorbing the Fifth Dimensional Force in the atmosphere. However, at this pace, it would still take several years to finish. If it wasn't for Leonel running into a Force Eruption, the Segmented Cube might very well still be in Phase One.

There were two methods that Leonel could think to accomplish this.

The first were Force Crystals. It had to be remembered that the cause of the Force Eruption Leonel faced was a Force Crystal mine. Each Force Crystal presented a high concentration of Force. This might speed up the process.

The issue with this, though, was that Valiant Heart Mountain keeps a tight lid on all Fifth Dimensional resources. Whether it was Ores, Herbs, or anything of the like, students like Leonel would never have a chance to lay hands on them. ρ???(?????)

And this made sense from Valiant Heart's perspective. After all, what would Fourth Dimensional brats do with such resources? They'd probably end up selling them off to their enemies.

To the elders of Founding Peak, Fifth Dimensional resources were all strategic. It was they that decided how strong or weak their Valiant Heart would be. They couldn't possibly be allowed to reach the hands of others.

Of course... It wasn't necessarily impossible for Leonel to lay hands on a Fifth Dimensional Force Crystal.

He was certain that Valiant Heart had at least one vault of such treasures. In order to access them, he just had to become a Bronze Crafter. He didn't believe he couldn't exchange Fifth Dimensional weapons for these resources. In fact, the elders of Valiant Heart might fight over him just like their students were.

However, there was another issue with this.

In order to practice with Bronze Crafting... Leonel needed Fifth Dimensional Ores.

Theoretically, thanks to his ability, he could Dream Sculpt such Ores and practice in his Dream World. But, to do that, he would need to actually lay eyes on them first.

By now the problem was obvious.

Leonel had a work around, though... If he Dream Sculpted the Bronze Spears in his Spear Domain, then broke them down to the ores that made them up, he could then practice enough in his Dream World to breakthrough. But, the logistics of that were more difficult than they seemed.

Luckily, there was another option.

The more Leonel learned about the Valiant Heart Zone, the more intrigued he became.

According to Kaela, the training rooms that Valiant Heart were so proud of, even the one Leonel took his white belt exam in, were all products of treasures taken from the Zone. The rewards for bringing such things out were most definitely not stingy.

Knowing this, Leonel was already certain in his choice to enter the Valiant Heart Zone. Who knew, maybe he would find something to directly boost the Segmented Cube to Phase Three without having to trade anything in.

BLACKSTAR already ensured that Leonel would reach the merit point minimum for entry into the tournament. This tournament would have spots of entry on the line. So, Leonel's only task at this moment was to make sure he was strong enough to snag these spots.

Though Leonel had won his battle with Arte, it also taught him that he was still beneath the blue belts in raw strength. With something like Aina's life, he would never let the shave be so close.

With those thoughts swirling in his mind, Leonel prepared a training regimen for himself, consulting with the dictionary.

His first step was to raise his Metal Body to its next bottleneck.. And now, he finally had access to more Ores than he knew what to do with to accomplish exactly that.

Chapter 718

Leonel sat in a private room, looking at piles of ores that dwarfed his body in size. He had long since finished his work for the day, so he was focused entirely on himself.

Of course, with Leonel's level of skill, he could complete even a Tier 7 weapon in barely ten minutes. As for weapons below that level, he was even faster. Considering how few could actually afford a Tier 7 weapon, he only needed to make a small number a day. So, after about three to four hours, he had already wrapped up.

'My Metal Body is at the lowest Tier 1 right now...'

The meaning behind this was simple. Leonel's body, when his Runes were activated, was as tough as a Tier 1 Fourth Dimensional Ore. Since his foundation was built upon Urbe Ore, the strength of his body scaled along with it.

Normally, it would be very difficult to raise his body beyond this. However, Leonel had the Puppet Master to thank for why this was not the case for him.

After absorbing the Puppet Master's Force and healing his body, Leonel's senses picked up on the changes to his body. Though there was no great change to his strength, the bottlenecks he would have experienced all the way up to the Tier 4 level were completely cleared. All Leonel had been missing to improve were the Ores themselves, and now he had them.

What Leonel had left was a choice of how to progress his Metal Body.

Ultimately, all Metal Bodies were excellent at defense. How could they not be, metals and their ores were among the toughest materials in all of existence. However, this didn't mean that there weren't certain choices to be made.

It had to be remembered that from this point on, Leonel could give himself affinities through his Metal Body and his Divine Armor. His Divine Armor could be considered to be a temporary boost until he switched to a new one. However, his Metal Body was permanent and had to be slowly grown over time.

But, in this way, much of Leonel's choice had already been made for him.

Without a doubt, Leonel's strongest asset was his Innate Force Node and his Scarlet Star Force. However, he couldn't even use it without burning himself from the inside out. The best way to deal with this was obvious:

Leonel needed to refine his body with Star, Light and Fire Elemental Ores until his body could withstand his own strength without imploding.

After consulting with the dictionary and using some of his own deductions and speculations, Leonel came to a decision.

Ores that carried three Elemental characteristics were too rare and often wouldn't appear in lower Dimensions. As such, he could only choose three separate Ores.

The first was Blazing Night Ore.

Right from the very beginning, if others knew that Leonel actually wanted to absorb such a thing into his body, they'd believe him to be a maniac. ρ??(???????)

The Ore looked like a crystal with a dancing red-black flame within. Just gazing upon it made one feel as though a shiver was crawling up their spine.

Blazing Night Ore was a Fuel Type ore. Much like how ancient Earth used coal and crude oil, Black Night Ore could fall within such a category of combustible energy as well. It was a favorite of Force Crafters and Force Pill Crafters who might need an extra boost of heat during crucial moments.

The method of using this Ore was quite special. Rather than actually combusting them, they would be rubbed against an abrasive material until the Ore began to give off fine dust particles. These fine dust particles could then be added to a flame in intervals to explosively increase its destructive capability and its heat.

Though a flame seemed to be dancing within the crystal-like exterior, it was nothing more than an illusion. The danger wasn't hidden within, it was the entire Ore itself. If it came into contact with any heat source... BOOM!

Yet, Leonel had an entire pile of them stacked up in front of him in what could only be said to be far from a controlled environment.

The second ore might be even more dangerous than the last. It was known as Refractive Gold.

Living up to its name, Refractive Gold was an exceptionally beautiful ore. Beneath the dark blacks and silvers of Leonel's private room, it seemed to dazzle all the more. But, even Leonel didn't dare to bring it out into the sunlight casually.

Refractive Gold looked like one might imagine a golden crystal to look like. Much like the previous Ore, it too looked a bit transparent. But, whereas Blazing Night Ore's danger was an illusion of the eye, Refractive Gold's danger was completely invisible... until it wasn't.

There was no dancing fire within it, but Refractive Gold had a special structure that could turn even the most benign of light sources into a laser beam capable of obliterating a Tier 4 existence.

If a light was trapped by the Ore just right, it would bounce around its inner mirrors, before concentrating into a beam that would rival even the best of lasers even the current Earth had to offer.

It was safe to say that whoever pioneered the use of this ore as the Vessel Type Ore had to be a powerful individual unafraid of such things.

Finally, there was the final ore. This one was the rarest of the bunch, and though it was nowhere near as dangerous, it was definitely by far the hardest for Leonel to get his hands on despite also being a Fourth Dimensional Ore... Technically.

This Ore was known as Star Core Ore. And, like Urbe Ore, it was not only a Foundational Type Ore that could form the base of any Craft, it also had the same name regardless of its stage of evolution.

This Ore was produced at the Core of any dying star at and above the Fourth Dimension. As one might expect, it could be found in large quantities. But, even still, due to the difficulty of mining this Ore, its price was still sky high.

This Fourth Dimensional Star Core Ore would be the foundation of Leonel's Metal Body.. He would absorb three parts Star Core, two parts Refractive Gold, and one part Blazing Night and shoot to Tier 4 in one sweep.

Chapter 719

Leonel began to absorb the Ores one after another, without a care for how dangerous they were. No matter how volatile they were to others, to Leonel, they only represented strength. In that way he was much more like Little Tolly than maybe even he knew.

What Leonel most looked forward to, though, wasn't just the strengthening of his body, but rather the synergy his Metal Body had with his Mage Core.

Under normal circumstances, the absorption of these Ores would result in the following changes.

Taking in Blazing Night Ore would increase Leonel's ability to suppress the volatility of his Scarlet Star Force. The Ore itself had an uncanny ability to remain inert without the presence of flames. When this Essence was taken in by Leonel, he too would gain this ability to suppress.

Taking in the Refractive Gold would give Leonel the ability to better control and concentrate.

Finally, Star Core was known for its heaviness. It was a Foundational Type Ore well known for increasing the weight of a weapon far beyond its proportional size. At the same time, this added weight would both stabilize and increase structural integrity.

It could be said that by absorbing Star Core, Leonel was heavily increasing the density of his body and also its defense. This would offset the volatility of Black Night perfectly and stabilize Refractive Gold to give him even more control.

However... This was only if Leonel hadn't grasped Camelot's magic system for himself.

When Leonel formed his Mage Core, his Variant Earth affinity did not appear as one of the petals despite the fact space – his weakest affinity should he not use his Divine Armor – had a flickering black-silver petal for itself.

The reason for this was simple. Leonel had made his Variant Earth affinity the stem and roots of his Mage Core.

This didn't seem like a big deal and even seemed to make sense. After all, what better stabilizing Element was there outside of Earth? This was only more so for its metallic variant.

However, when Leonel's Metal Body is taken into consideration, the fundamental nature of this choice comes with implications far more than something so simple.

A Mage Core is the representation of a Mage's magic. In Camelot's magic system, it roots a connection between body and spirit, allowing Magic to be controlled more like the extension of one's body rather than requiring the use of a Force Art every time. $\rho\omega\sigma\tau$

This was why, after the formation of his Mage Core, Leonel was able to wield the elements and bend them to his will even without evoking any spells or Mage Arts. And, it was also why even the most basic of spells had gotten a massive boost even without Leonel modifying them.

This would be the same for anyone who formed a Mage Core as long as their affinities were high enough. So what was the difference with Leonel?

The core lay in his Metal Body.

Due to the characteristics of his Lineage Factor, Leonel's Mage Core and Metal Body formed a symbiotic relationship where one could feed off the other in an endless feedback loop. This was the fundamental change that occurred when Leonel made his Metal Variant affinity his root and stem.

This meant that whenever Leonel absorbed Ores, the changes would occur not just in his body... but in his magic too!

To put things as simply as possible, while Leonel's body gained all the aforementioned boosts, his magic subtly changed as well... Or, maybe the changes weren't so subtle at all.

First, Leonel's Flames gained an explosive characteristic thanks to Blazing Night. If before they could just emit heat, now they wrought destruction. Even a simple fire ball spell from a Tier 4 Leonel would manifest like a nuke being dropped from the skies, maybe not quite so much in strength, but most definitely in feel.

The second change to Leonel's magic would be his ability to concentrate his Mage Arts into incredibly fine beams, this would be especially so for his Light Elemental Magic. Though this effect would be less prominent than the explosive characteristic he would gain, if used properly, it could be even more dangerous than the first change.

The third change would be in thanks to Leonel's Star Core. Though Leonel had yet to learn any Star Elemental Mage Arts, not having had the time to research just yet, this wouldn't change the fact that he could still bend the Element to his will with just his body alone. He could effectively add an impossible amount of weight behind his every strike with a thought.

Yet, as amazing as these changes were, none of them touched upon the most fundamental and most drastic change. And this is where the prowess of this Synergy began to show itself.

With just a thought, Leonel would be able to cast Earth Elemental Force Arts that manifested the character of any one of these Ores he was currently absorbing. In fact, if he wanted, he could even form any one of these Ores from thin air no differently from how he might have formed an Earthen Arrow from a Mage Art in the past!

In the past, Leonel's Variant Earth affinity would add a slight metal sheen to his Mage Arts. This change would increase the strength of his casts by a measure to be beyond that of a normal Earth mage.

However, the effect of this was limited. It would strengthen an offensive attack like [Earthen Spear] or a defensive Art like [Grand Bell Construct]. However, when it came to other more unique Earth Elemental Arts, it would be useless and even sometimes become a hindrance.

However, now Leonel had more control over exactly what Variations would occur because he could now evoke specific Ores, bringing his Earth magic to an entirely new level.

With his Metal Body as his foundation, and his Mage Core as an equal partner, Leonel believed that should he ever learn how to perfectly integrate his Spear Force with his Magic... He would be undefeatable even amongst those several levels higher than himself.

Chapter 720

Leonel felt his strength sore. Beneath his closed eyelids, his eyes flickered with all sorts of colors and even his hair began to dance with a mysterious light.

Leonel's skin shimmered like polished metal even beneath the dim lights of his private room.

When his eyes opened, though, his gaze was surprisingly calm, albeit far deeper. Looking at the emptiness in front of him, Leonel sighed. Improving his Metal Body was definitely not cheap.

And, even though now he could probably swipe at the air and make more Ores, that obviously took stamina. How foolish would it be for him to sap his energy just to gain more energy? Though, it might be useful in battle to heal himself. But, even then, it would be better if he just carried around a store of these Ores for those kind of situations.

The cost effectiveness of creating these Ores wasn't worth it. However, if it was a matter of using them in a strong attack or defense, that was a different matter entirely.

The new Mage Arts Leonel wanted to create would be centered around these Ores. This was why he hadn't gone out of his way to start formulating new Mage Arts on the level of the Fourth Dimension just yet. Only this way would he be able to maximize his strength.

'It seems that now is a perfect time to take Aina's advice and visit the Valiant Hall training rooms. Maybe I can finally get something out of this organization then. But first...'

Leonel took out a familiar ring. But, he was instantly surprised by the feeling he had when he rolled it in his palm.

'It feels... different?'

Leonel was certain that this ring hadn't changed at all. His Dream Sculpt made sure that he wouldn't make such a mistake and he had long since stored this mysterious ring into his Dreamscape. So, the difference was definitely not due to a change in the ring itself, but most definitely a change in Leonel.

'So it's like this...'

Leonel's eyes glowed.

The moment he touched the ring, he pinpointed many things.

First, it was made of Fifth Dimensional Ores. Second, it was formed of seven different types of Ores on this level. Third, he was able to pick out the exact Ores used with a simple touch. Fourth, he was even able to see through some of the smelting and Crafting processes the ring had undergone.

Leonel felt like if he were to Dream Sculpt the ring now, it would take him a fraction of the time it did before.

What was shocking about this change wasn't the information, because Leonel's Dream Sculpt had long since informed him of all of this. What was shocking about it was that the information had been transmitted to him in a completely new way.

Leonel was certain. His Earth Affinity had taken a massive leap forward. He had neglected such a simple thing.

As Leonel refined his Metal Body, it seemed that his Earth affinity would also increase. But, this increase was far more than what Leonel was expecting. The only explanation, then... was the synergy between his Metal Body and his Mage Core.

At this moment, Leonel felt that he had the equivalent Earth affinity to a Morales family genius who had stepped into Tier 9 of their Fourth Dimensional Metal Body. And the feeling was like standing high up on the clouds.

Before, Leonel could only control a ten meter range of space in this Fifth Dimensional world. But now, he felt that controlling even a hundred meters wouldn't pose much of an issue.

Leonel took a deep breath and cleared his mind. Now wasn't the time to get engrossed in such things.

"What is this ring?" Leonel finally asked. 

[*Ping*]

[Replying to Seed, it is a key]

Leonel raised his eyebrows.

“A key to what?”

The dictionary didn't respond. Leonel had experienced this once before in the Camelot Zone. It seemed that the dictionary didn't know the answer to this. Though the dictionary somehow knew about the Oryx and their Hyper Evolution, but not about this, Leonel wasn't too surprised.

From Leonel's understanding, the dictionary didn't 'know' anything like one might expect a database to. In fact, Leonel was certain that the only 'data' within the dictionary were the messages left by his father and his lesson plans. Aside from this, everything else the dictionary 'knew' was based on deductions and scans.

If it couldn't scan something to understand it, then it wouldn't have an answer.

Leonel was quite astonished when he came to this conclusion because it meant that his father managed to create a device that was even better than his ability at doing what his ability was meant to do.

Shaking his head, Leonel recollected himself.

“Where are the engravings from?”

[*Ping*]

[Engravings are from a language not yet evolved]

Leonel's pupils constricted. At that moment, he understood.

A language not yet evolved? That meant that this language already existed, but it had not gained the dialects or quirks of the engravings placed on the ring.

The ring deduced that there was a language similar enough to these engravings, but not similar enough that they could be called the same. Almost like a comparison between English and Old English.

That could only mean one thing: This ring was from the future.

It sounded absolutely ridiculous when Leonel put the only logical deduction into tangible thought. But, often times, the things that less intelligent people couldn't accept were things that those who were could easily.

How difficult the concept was to accept didn't matter. All that mattered was that it was the only logical conclusion. As long as this was true, Leonel didn't care even if the dictionary told him that this ring was his son. He would accept it.

What he needed to focus on was not how ridiculous the conclusion was, but rather on how to make it make sense. This was what separated the laymen from the experts.

And for that, Leonel already had an answer. In fact, he thought of it almost instantly to the point it made the original premise far easier to accept.

This ring. It was from a Variant Zone.

The only questions that were remaining was if this ring was from the Valiant Heart Variant Zone or another. And... How the hell had 'Senior' Lu of all people, gotten his hands on it?

