

Descent 781

Chapter 781

Leonel's vision slowly cleared, only to find himself in a space of endless fog. However, what his gaze first locked on wasn't this eerily familiar setting, but rather the delicate feathers of white gold falling from an unknowable height onto his body.

The moment Leonel saw this sight, he sighed deeply. The sight of this meant that what he had experienced wasn't an illusion, it was every bit as real as any of the other Zones he had entered.

This much he had expected. He had already guessed that there was a better than 95% chance that this would be the case. If even the mere fairy tale of Camelot could become real, he really had no leg to stand on in hoping that these matters were fake.

Each and every one of those lives weighed heavily upon him...

How, then, was Leonel so sure...? It all went back to the fluttering white gold feathers and the gaping pain in his chest that was being closed even now.

Among the new abilities Leonel had formulated in these past two years, one was Dream Counter.

Dream Counter, if explained in the simplest terms, was like Leonel programming his body to complete an action without his input. By assigning one of his split minds to a task, he could trigger an ability, a set of actions, or any sort of response, for any given specific situation of his choosing.

Over these last two years, Leonel had been able to increase his number of split minds from less than a hundred to more than double that. This allowed him to 'sacrifice' one of his split minds for the sake of Dream Counter.

In this case, Leonel assigned Dream Counter to his Snow Star Owl Lineage Factor's Healing Branch ability: Instant Recovery.

Instant Recovery was an ability that Leonel could only use once every several months and could bring him back from the brink of death. With such a valuable ability, wouldn't it be laughable if Leonel died simply because he wasn't quick enough to activate it?

Leonel thus did the logical thing and assigned his first Dream Counter to activate upon his imminent death.

Leonel's hope for Dream Counter would be that he would eventually be able to split his mind so many ways that he could almost auto-pilot his body. Such a Battle State would be even more powerful than his Dreamscape Battle Sense because there would be no need to read and react. However, whether such a thing would be possible in the future was unknown. How could it be possible to form a counter for an infinite number of possibilities?

At this point, the reason why Leonel was so certain was obvious. The fact his Lineage Factor had activated now after Alexandre blasted a hole through his chest meant that he had truly experienced all of that.


Leonel closed his eyes once more, allowing the fluttering feathers to touch and disappear into his body. It was an absolutely beautiful sight he wasn't in the mood to enjoy.

'This burden. I will take it.'

Leonel clenched his fists.

Images of Rollan, Elise, Gertrude, Goggles, Castello... They all ran through his mind. In fact, his near infallible memory didn't stop until he had run through all more than ten thousand of his men.

Subconsciously, they all arranged themselves into their own Dreamscape, their smiling faces hovering in Leonel's Dream World as though his guardian angels smiling down at him.

At that moment, Leonel's heart was reformed and released a beat so powerful that it resonated through the endless fog. 

BADDUM.

A strong surge of violet energies swirled around Leonel. Even as his eyes remained closed, an undisguised majesty made the world around him tremble.

For a long time, Leonel hadn't cared for much. He flew by the seat of his pants and followed a garbled together moral philosophy he probably couldn't express with any sort of coherency.

Why was he the way he was? What did he want to do with his life? When he breathed his last breath, would he be leaving this world with a smile? Or an endless pile of regrets?

Leonel's usual response to such things was to just ignore them all. He didn't have the answer and with his personality, he never felt like giving a half-assed one. He felt that when the day came that he had an answer, it would be the day he truly began to live.

BADDUM.

Maybe up until even the final moments, Leonel still hadn't had an answer. Or, maybe he did have the answer but was just unwilling to accept it.

The burden of accepting it was too heavy. The weight he would have to carry would be astronomical. He would likely have to spend the rest of his life chasing after something he might never catch when, somewhere deep in his heart, he only wanted a small home to share with Aina as he lived out the rest of his days.

BADDUM.

But this... Was no longer something he could run from.

He had accepted their hopes, their dreams. He had heard their last words, the final wills. He had felt their tears and soaked in their blood.

If he continued to run now, could he even be considered a man? Could he continue to wake up everyday and see his face in the mirror? Would he still be able to laugh and smile? Would he be able to look toward himself with any sort of pride? Could he face his mother... his father? Could he stand side by side with Aina with his chest broad and his back straight?

He wouldn't allow himself to fall into such depravity.

They say that everyone had the possibility of having a turning point in their lives, but Leonel had always believed that this was bullshit. No one could simply change on a dime. Becoming a better version of yourself meant making countless little decisions time and time again.

Eventually, those little decisions had led Leonel to this very place.

BADDUM.

He didn't want to be a General. He didn't want to be a soldier, a warrior... He didn't even want to be an Emperor.

He was Leonel Morales. He would be a King.

Chapter 782

A glass barrier shattering resounded. Violent cyclones of violet energy surged, enveloping Leonel's body in what almost looked like a cocoon.

By the time the energy faded and Leonel's form appeared again, he seemed to radiate with an innate sort of excellence, his bronzed body exuding a faint purple light that seemed to make those around him gravitate toward him.

Leonel's eyes slowly opened, a blinding light shooting out from their depths.

He sat up, his face expressionless. But, when he caught a glimpse of his hair out of the corner of his eye, he could only smile somewhat bitterly.

From its bronze sheen, Leonel's hair had become a bright white gold, so bright, in fact, that it almost looked as though it was made out of motes of light rather than hair filaments.

As though this wasn't odd enough, there was a faint violet color emitting from it. From the right angle, it almost looked as though Leonel had extremely pale purple hair.

He had to admit that such a look would be extremely beautiful on a woman. But, on him, it made him look like a pretty boy.

If he could see the fact that his eyes had gone from a pale green to a pale violet as well, he would probably throw his hands up in defeat.

'This should be... A Lineage Factor synergy of sorts...' Leonel concluded.

Leonel's fourth Lineage Factor, unsurprisingly, came from the Fawkes family – his mother's side, and specifically his mother's father, the Emperor.

After years of introspection, Leonel realized that the faint pressure he gave off whenever he focused was exactly this Lineage Factor shining through, and this was why his cousin also had the same ability as they had both awakened it.

However, things weren't so simple as this. It also seemed that his Fawkes family Lineage Factor had resonated with a portion of his Metal Synergy Lineage Factor... The odd purple energy in specific.

This resulted in the two combining to form something quite different and unique.

Leonel sighed. This look didn't feel like him at all. He could just barely accept his bronzed hair because it still remained manly, but this hair made him look like a dainty fairy prince.

Knowing that he would likely fail again, Leonel tried to cut his hair once more. Bringing out his Quasi Silver spear, he hoped for the best and cut across. Who knows, maybe his increased strength would help.

But, what Leonel couldn't have expected was for the cut to come with such ease. If it wasn't for the strands of hair that remained in his hand, he would have thought that he cut across empty air.


'Ah...'

Leonel looked at his clump of hair shocked.

'That was... coercion?'

It was almost as though Leonel told his hair to become easier to cut, so it obeyed and became easier to cut. It was a subtle change that Leonel might not have noticed if he was unable to retrieve his own memories so perfectly.

With narrowed eyes and spinning thoughts, Leonel put his hair away into his spatial ring, feeling that he shouldn't get rid of it.

He stood, ruffling his short hair with a grin. This felt so much better, he felt like he was himself again. All he was missing was his favorite tracksuit and a football. 

The moment Leonel stood to his full height, the world trembled.

'Hm?'

Leonel blinked.

In those final moments he was within the Zone, he felt that he had passed its requirements. It was a subconscious feeling that resonated with his soul, so he was almost certain of it.

If he was on Earth, he would have been transported to a world with Uncle Montez. But, obviously, this wasn't Earth. And, despite the fact this place looked very similar to where he would be transported to on Earth, there was a very clear lack of Uncle Montez.

Leonel thought that maybe there would be someone else here. But, even after all this time, no one had appeared. So, he had no choice but to believe that much like Terrain, Valiant Heart wasn't deemed as important enough to gain support from higher Dimensional worlds.

Then again... This was a Variant Zone. It should be capable of producing its own rewards as well. But, to this point, Leonel hadn't seen anything like that either.

Until now...

As the fog dispersed somewhat, Leonel finally saw an object that made his heart tremble.

This sudden change to himself shocked Leonel. It wasn't that Leonel had never felt his heart tremble before. But... Right now he felt so confident and grounded that he believed it would take nothing short of a galaxy collapsing for him to lose control of his own reaction.

Yet, merely moments after Leonel gained this confidence, this tablet seemed to shatter it into countless pieces.

Whatever this tablet was, wherever it was from, or whatever powers it had... It was so far above the current Leonel that he couldn't even begin to see the base of the mountain it was at the peak of.

After being stunned for a moment, Leonel began to laugh.

“Then from today on, you are mine.”

Leonel reached out as though his shattered confidence was nothing more than a meaningless moment.

The moment his palm made contact with the tablet, his body shook to the core of his soul, threatening to shatter into countless pieces. Yet, Leonel held on firmly, allowing a stream of information that seemed almost endless to flood his mind.

Even for him, it was hard to keep track of it all.

As though it sensed this, the tablet released a surge of energy.

Leonel's mind trembled, his Dream World suddenly explosively expanding as his Dream Force entered the Fifth Dimension.

Such a reality made Leonel's pupils constrict.

In the blink of an eye, this tablet was able to shatter a barrier that he had been at for almost three years. Though Leonel knew that his mind had the capacity to enter the Fifth Dimension long ago, actually doing so was a completely different animal.

This tablet... Just what was it?

## Chapter 783

Leonel soon realized that the breakthrough of his mind in to the Fifth Dimension wasn't as much of a watershed moment as he thought it would be. But, he immediately picked out the reason.

The further away the rest of his body became from his true core Dimension, the less benefits from it that he would receive. If he wanted to truly benefit from a Fifth Dimensional mind, he would have to break into the Fifth Dimension.

In truth, Leonel's combat prowess was confusing to a lot of people, especially those who didn't understand his background. But, these people weren't at fault.



When one saw a young man in the Third Dimension being capable of fighting threats at the Quasi Fifth Dimensional level, taking a pause of confusion was only natural. But, there were multiple things to consider here.

Firstly, the Fourth Dimension in this corner of the universe meant far less than it did to a world with a Sixth Dimensional Peak, and likewise the same was true to a world with a Seventh Dimensional Peak and so on...

Leonel was born from a father from a Seventh Dimensional world and to a mother from a world with Eighth Dimensional potential. Every step forward he took was worth more than it was for another for this very reason.

A child born on a Seventh Dimensional world would start at the Third Dimension just like everyone else. But, only a fool would think that his existence within the Third Dimension was equivalent to a person born on Earth before the Metamorphosis. The fact that this child could even exist on a Seventh Dimensional world without collapsing from the pressure was more than enough to illustrate this.

Simply put, it was likely that if the current Leonel attempted to battle a genius from a Seventh Dimensional world, he would at best be able to match someone at Tier 3 or 4.

This breakthrough thus made it clear to Leonel just how important raising his foundational Dimension was. But, toward such a thing, he could only continue to be frustrated.

Breaking through wasn't as simple as swapping out the caliber of Force he used. He had to follow the [Dimensional Cleanse] technique he chose from the very beginning unless he wanted to switch to a completely new one. And, in order to do that, he would need to use the map Uncle Montez had given him.

The good news was that now that he had entered the Fifth Dimension with his Dream Force, he finally met the minimum requirements to actually read it. The bad news, however, was that he would need to leave Valiant Heart to do it.

Of course, Leonel didn't care about Valiant Heart. What he cared about was Aina...

In the past, this was all he cared about. But, the burden on Leonel's back right now was a constant reminder... He couldn't be as aimless as he was in the past.

Leonel shook his head. 'Aina is healed now. With her strength before, she was already a match for a Tier 7 genius Valiant Heart. Now, though, even I'm not sure of the limit of her strength, especially since unlike me, she's truly entered the Fourth Dimension.'

Leonel chuckled. His girlfriend just might be stronger than him. He wasn't sure if he could defeat her even if he used his Divine Armor.

But, he wasn't mad about this. After all... What King didn't need a Queen?

'We've outgrown this place. Aina will probably agree to leave with me.'

Leonel was confident in this. Aina's entire focus was on becoming stronger. If she felt that even her current strength wasn't enough for revenge, then that could only mean that the Brazinger family had more secrets than even he knew.

But, this was good. Leonel's goals and Aina's goals didn't diverge. They could rise to the top together.  
p??J??????

Leonel's eyes sharpened as he released a low shout.

In that moment, the tablet finally reached the end. But, at this point, not only had Leonel entered the Fifth Dimension with his Dream Force, he felt that his bottlenecks all the way up to the Tier 9 Fourth Dimensional Metal Body had all been blasted wide open.

'What a reward indeed...'

If this was all Leonel received for his two years of labor in that Zone, it would still be worth it. Yet, from what he could tell, this was just a by product of the true reward which must be this tablet.

Observing the tablet, Leonel immediately noticed something.

‘These patterns... They’re the same...? No, they’re far more complex, but they’re definitely derivative.’

Leonel couldn’t read the ancient markings on the silver tablet. But, he recognized the patterns as being quite similar to the ones on the ring that thrust him into this situation.

To make matters more curious... Leonel couldn’t help but notice that the ring that had been on his palm was nowhere to be seen.

However, before he drew any conclusions, he chose to remain reserved. After all, even now, he still couldn’t sense Little Tolly, so maybe he needed to leave this place first.

Leonel shook his head and began to organize all the information the tablet had flooded into his mind. Due to the fact he had gotten distracted, he allowed all his more than a thousand split minds to handle it while he thought.

But, he had hardly gotten to the first bit of information when he froze completely.

‘What...?’

The moment Leonel ran across this bit of information, he left his Dream World and focused on the tablet in his hand. He looked at it as though it was a cross between the most terrifying things in the world and a treasure from the heavens on high.

It was then that Leonel’s mind was absorbed into the tablet, bringing to another world of fog. But, compared to the one he had just been in, this one was far less bright, oozing out a darkness that made one’s spine tingle.

However, Leonel wasn’t focused on any of this at all.

Rather, all around him, hovering like greyed out, floating spirits, faces he recognized all too well were present.

Rollan... Goggles... Elise...

Chapter 784

Leonel snapped himself back to reality, a cold chill seeping into his heart.

Of these spirits, the majority were 'greyed' out. As though a locked character on a gaming screen, Leonel knew that he didn't have anywhere near the power or strength that would be needed to awaken them. In fact, from the information he received, he might never have this strength.

However, among these 'greyed out' spirits there were several that had color to them. Among them was a face Leonel thought he would never see again... Alexandre.

That 'king' with so much ambition, waiting to conquer the world with this very same tablet in his hand, ended up becoming just one of the many spirits within.

It was then Leonel fully understood.

This tablet, in exchange for a price, was capable of resurrecting those from the Zone Leonel just exited.

Rather than being excited at such a prospect, Leonel suddenly felt the need to vomit.

Just what was this tablet? How could it gamify the lives and deaths of living, breathing people? How could it set a price on them and a cost for them to see the light of day again?

Leonel felt a gut wrenching urge to throw this tablet away. No, he wanted to destroy it with every fiber of his being, shatter it into a million little pieces and incinerate it with the hottest star in the universe.

Seeing the sacrifice of his men being twisted in such a perverse and sickening way made his pale purple eyes redden with unshed tears.

Was this all a joke?

Had this tablet fabricated such a world for the sake of finding Leonel? Or had it cursed an already existing world for the same purpose?

Leonel couldn't decide which was worse. Both possibilities felt like a knife twisting through his intestines, gouging him from the inside out.

Leonel took several deep breaths, his hands falling to his knees and his chest heaving. His mouth began producing saliva at a rate that made it seem he really might vomit any moment now.

It wasn't until several long minutes later that Leonel managed to calm himself, that sinking weight on his back acting as a counterbalance to his emotions.

Leonel almost wanted to laugh at himself. He had just gained this newfound confidence, yet in just a few minutes, it had already been shattered not just once, but twice. In fact, this second time, he almost fell apart completely.

Others might see this tablet as some sort of work of God, but Leonel found it hard to look at it as anything other than the hand of a Devil.

Leonel closed his eyes, sealing away his emotions. He found it far easier to do this the more ways he could split his mind. Now that he had reached more than a thousand, it was even simpler now.

'The greyed out souls are of those who are died. The tablet needs to be fed a certain amount of sacrifices in order to even prepare to resurrect one of them. ρ??√??????

'The colored souls are those that didn't die. The cost of recovering them is far less. In fact, the tablet already has enough to do so for one right now.

‘In terms of sacrifices, Invalids have a good exchange rate, especially Variant Invalids. Talented humans are another good exchange, especially those with Innate Nodes, and even more especially for those that have Innate Nodes related to Life Elemental Force.’

These were the main rules Leonel was able to piece together, but he could tell that there were several exceptions.

For example, someone with a Life Elemental Innate Node like Normand’s fiancée didn’t need to be killed, taking her blood over a longer period of time would even be more beneficial. After all, killing her would be like killing a goose who laid golden eggs.

In addition to this, though Leonel didn’t believe Aina had an Innate Node, at least as far as he knew, he could tell that her blood to this silver tablet would be even more valuable than Normand’s fiancée’s.

Of course, Leonel had no intention of bleeding his girlfriend dry just for the sake of this tablet. In addition, Normand’s fiancée was greyed out like the others. But, rather than this being due to her dying, it seemed that it wasn’t easy for the tablet to reproduce what could give it life.

That said, considering Leonel’s personality, he had no intention of using her even if he could resurrect her now.

‘I can only resurrect one person for now and there’s no telling when I’ll be able to accumulate enough energy to resurrect another. So, I need to choose a person who puts me in the best position to lay out the next portion of my plans...’

Leonel had already decided.

In the past, he had no intention of joining the Morales family’s Heir Games. But, now, things were different.

Leonel had no intention of not taking advantage of the luck he had been given in this life. If he wanted to reach his ultimate goal, even given how impossible it was, he would have to take hold of whatever leg up he had.

In that case, not only would he become the Successor of the Morales family, he would become the Successor of his grandmother's Luxnix family and he would most definitely snatch Earth away from his grandfather.

This Dimensional Verse... He would change it.

In that case, there was one person here who would facilitate that better than everyone else, one person that would make Leonel's next steps far simpler... And this one person also happened to cost just as much as the remaining energy the tablet had.

Choosing this person would most definitely piss the people of Valiant Heart off. However, when it came to the future he envisioned, Leonel wouldn't allow anyone to stand in his way.

Leonel's eyes snapped open, their pale violet hue shimmering through the darkness.

With a thought, the young man he was looking for appeared before him, carrying with him a handsome face that most definitely rivaled Leonel's own.

"Elthor Umewraek, Third Prince of the Oryx Kingdom. You will be the first."

[End of Volume. I've chosen to change Volume 4's title from Milky Way to Valiant Heart. Many more adventures to come! This is where Leonel's journey truly begins... His journey to stand atop the Dimensional Verse!]

Chapter 785

Leonel appeared in the world of white fog again. But, this time, there was an extra light.

The silver tablet began to vibrate, glowing with a fierce white that made Leonel squint.

Soon afterward, a figure began to form and the lights began to wane. It didn't take Leonel much thought to recognize this figure, especially since he had consciously chosen this person to begin with.

Still, at that moment, Leonel couldn't help but be slightly in relief. If who he was resurrecting was based on what he wanted and not what he needed, then it would most definitely be Rollan. Though they had only spent two years together, Leonel felt a sort of comradery that he hadn't felt in a very long time.

Whenever Leonel looked at Rollan, he couldn't help but think of James, his partner in crime for over a decade... Even though they had always had diametrically opposed personalities, they had always fit well together. Yet, after all this time, Leonel still didn't know what caused it all to change.

Leonel's thoughts on James, though, somewhat scared even himself.

When he remembered James, what he felt wasn't an unwillingness or an unfortunate emotion. Rather, it was simply a fleeting memory almost as though he was remembering a city he had visited before or a car that had caught his attention on the side of the road.

He felt so detached from his former days with James that the recalling of the memories had become less of a function of emotion and more about just how good his mind was at recalling events. It was nothing more, and nothing less.

That said, Rollan was different. Leonel felt that he was the sort of man he would fight with to his final breath. And in those last moments, he had proved that without a shadow of a doubt.

'Sit tight, Rollan. Soon I'll be able to introduce you to my someone special too...'

This way, Leonel wouldn't have to worry about the guilt he'd feel. Whether Rollan was available to be resurrected now or not, Elthor was still the correct option.

At that moment, the figure finally formed and Elthor's face became clear.

All of Leonel's excess thoughts stopped right then as he observed Elthor. The truth was that he wasn't sure how this would go. He didn't know if Elthor would still have his memories from the previous world or if he would be a blank slate.



The worst part was that even if Elthor did have his memories from the Zone world, there was no telling if he would view Leonel the same. After all, during these last two years, no one had called him Leonel even once no matter how many times he introduced himself. It made him feel as though he was playing a separate character other than himself. Leonel wouldn't have even been surprised if this 'character' was available somewhere within the tablet to be resurrected.

Then there was the last potentially unfortunate circumstance. It was also possible that Elthor had his memories, remembered what happened, recognized Leonel, yet chose not to follow him.

This was a very real and distinct possibility that Leonel might have to face. Should it happen, he would have to simply accept it or do his best to convince Elthor.

Leonel's eyes steeled with determination. If he wanted to be a King yet couldn't even convince his first General to follow him, what kind of King could he possibly be? He might as well give up this impossible dream right here and now.

The lids of Elthor's eyes opened. He looked around in confusion for a moment, a strong cognitive dissonance hitting him from all sides as though he couldn't figure out what was going on.

When he saw Leonel before him, his eyes shot up in surprise. p??J???????

“... General...?”

Elthor's frown deepened. For some reason, he felt that calling Leonel this now felt inappropriate. Something had changed, something so fundamental that just that form of address alone left him with a bad taste in his mouth as though he had said something unforgivable.

“King.”

Elthor almost immediately changed his words. It felt subconscious, like the world itself was whispering it into his ear.

Leonel grinned. “I'm no King yet.”

“But...” Elthor’s mind still felt foggy.

The last he remembered was being dragged away by his Kingdom’s Generals. He had tried scratching and clawing, yet no matter what he did or what he tried, they were all too strong for him.

Ultimately, he had even lost to Leonel, and quite easily at that. Despite having access to Chaotic Particle Force, he had yet to truly grow into his ability. In addition, he was born in a Fifth Dimensional world and was the same age as Leonel.

After stepping out of the Zone, Leonel realized that the time had been one to one with the outside world. So, he had to accept at this moment that he was now truly two years older and had missed his own 21st birthday.

To Leonel, 21 was already an age he should be growing into true adulthood. But, to the Dimensional Verse, especially to a Fifth Dimensional world, even 60 was still considered young.

It was safe to say that if Elthor wanted to follow Leonel to the very end, he would have some growing to do. But, Leonel was confident that he’d be able to do it.

“What do you want in life, Elthor?”

“I...” Elthor struggled, remembering his father’s words.

Shouldn’t he be a King? He had to take on the burden of his people... He couldn’t disappoint his father.

However, just when he was going to say these words, he met Leonel’s light violet eyes and felt his heart tremble. For some reason, meeting this gaze, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t bring himself to lie.

“... I want to be a True King’s Saber. I want to live on the battlefield and become the weapon that shatters all obstacles. I want men who’ve soaked in a river of blood to run at the mention of my name!”

Leonel's grin only became wider and wider.

“Elthor, are you willing to be my Saber?”

Elthor's eyes glowed with a furious light.

“YES!”

## Chapter 786

The tall walls and pillars seemed to sing, a radiating bronze light that shone down.

A singular hall opened up wide to a circular room that spanned an almost 500 meter diameter. Valiant warriors with statues over a 100 meters tall lined the walls, all looking toward a four sided prism of stairs.

At the bottom of these marbled steps, etched with delicate rune patterns and reflecting the bronze lights that shone from all around, a group of bloodied figures lay gasping, barely holding onto their lives with whatever energy they had left.

Those from Valiant Heart would only be stunned by such an outcome.

Two years was simply far too long of a time. No one had ever expected for the Zone to remain open for so long. Realizing that so much time had passed without their geniuses returning, the elders had no choice but to open up the projection once again.

But, what they found was a long and grueling battle. So long, in fact, that they couldn't afford to keep it open continuously and could only check in once a month.

And yet, what they saw time and time again was something that left them numb with shock, and it all seemed to relate back to the only figure who wasn't collapsed on the ground. In fact, she was the only figure that had climbed the four sides stairs and was the only one who stood at the very top.

She was a beauty gorgeous beyond words. Her delicate features carried the valiance of a Valkyrie and the elegance of a Queen. Even while her face beaded with sweat and her long, flowing hair stuck to her cheeks and forehead, her image didn't seem marred in the slightest.

Several cuts and bruises dotted her body, her black, military uniform drenched in dried, flaking blood and still drizzling crimson.

And yet, she stood tall, the only one of her peers that had reached this step.

Down below, the likes of Raylion, Apestus, and Sael couldn't even move an inch. It could even be said that the only reason they had reached the end of the hall to begin with was because of Aina leading the charge.

In the past two years, despite how murderous Aina was, it became very obvious, very quickly, that this trial wasn't one they could pass alone. As powerful as Aina had become, there had still been a limit to what she could do.

But in the end, none of it mattered. She stood here at the peak... And yet, her eyes felt somewhat vacant.

"... What are you moping about for?"

The sudden voice made Aina freeze.

On the outside, those who had still been following the events of the last two years were absolutely stunned. The appearance of this person, a person many had assumed to have died long ago, was the very last thing any of them had expected. ρ???(???????)

At that moment, Aina's head whipped back, only to find Leonel strolling out from the hall she had been forced to cut a bloody path through over the past two years.

A pair of massive white gold wings spread from his back. Yet, as though he was trying to look as cool as possible, his hands were in his pockets and a casual smile hung from his lips.

He wore a black tracksuit and a pair of sneakers. His hair was a bright white gold with a faint violet hue that seemed to radiate with its own light. Even his eyes had completely changed, carrying a pale purple light that bordered on a pinkish-grey.

At that moment, though, Aina could tell that Leonel wasn't just trying to be cool. The aura he exuded was so confident that it almost made her reach a point of intoxication.

As much as her mental coercion worked on Leonel, the opposite seemed to be so true that he became like a magnet she was being violently pulled toward.

Leonel took a single step forward and vanished. When Aina blinked and cleared her vision, he already stood before her, looking down into her eyes with the same care and affection she had been missing for so long.

Aina could feel that Leonel had changed. His eyes carried a charisma she couldn't ignore, even his smell was something she couldn't get enough of.

The emotions were so much that she couldn't handle them after a certain point.

At that moment, the valiant woman who had blazed the path of a warrior in these last two years broke down into tears, her trusted battle ax falling to the ground as she dove into Leonel's arms.

Her sobs seemed endless. Even though she tried to speak, she couldn't form the words. Every time she tried, it only made her cry harder.

No one knew but her what kind of emotions had been running through her mind all this time, what kind of turmoil had wrecked her heart.

As hard as Aina had cried that day she almost lost her virginity to Leonel in the Bathhouse the first time, this time she cried even harder.

Back then, Aina had only thought she might lose Leonel, causing her to try everything she could to hang onto him however naïve that was. But, this time, she really thought she had lost him forever.

Two years. Two entire years.

Leonel smiled somewhat sadly, wrapping arms around her waist. If he could melt her into himself, he would do so. He was certain that she was the woman he wanted by his side for a lifetime.

Leonel raised his hand to Aina's cheek.

When she looked up at him, he could see her golden eyes red from crying, her little nose sniveling with snobs, and even her lip quivering as she tried to form the words she wanted to say.

"It's all fine now." Leonel smiled, wiping her falling tears with a thumb. "I'm here."

Leonel kissed her lightly. It was soft and slow, but it conveyed all his emotions in a single, simple action.

Chapter 787

Aina wiped her tears away, finally regaining her composure after several dozen minutes.

By this point, she was quite embarrassed. She had been trying to stop for a while now, but it kept flooding outward. Even she hadn't realized how much she had ignored until now. But, somewhere deep inside, she knew it was deeper than just this.

It wasn't just the emotion of not seeing Leonel for so long, but she could also feel it. She could feel that Leonel had finally truly stepped into the Dimensional Verse. Whatever it was that he had experienced in these last two years had definitely been no lesser than her and it had changed him.

She knew... There was no going back for him now.

Aina forced a smile as she wipe the last of her tears.

“You finally cut your hair?”

Leonel scoffed. “Are you trying to say you didn’t like my long hair?”

Aina giggled, a girlish charm twinkling in her eyes.

Ironically, though, at that moment, Leonel could tell that she had truly become a woman. In these two years, Aina had truly grown into her own. He found it hard to believe, but her curves were even fuller and her charm just a measure greater.

Even covered in blood and sweat, Leonel was certain that he had never seen a woman as beautiful as her, nor would he ever.

“You look much better like this.” Aina skirted around the question. “Much more handsome.”

Her smile grasped onto Leonel’s heart. It was as though the two were in their own world, oblivious to the several geniuses bleeding out below and the hundreds watching them from the outside.

In truth, Leonel might have been inclined to at least help the geniuses below if it wasn’t for the fact he was certain that no small number of the wounds on Aina now had been caused by them. The fact he wasn’t killing them all one by one, especially Raylion and Apestus, was an act of kindness in his opinion.

After a moment, though, Leonel feigned hurt.

“At least I’m not as smelly as a certain someone else.”

“Ah!” Aina looked down at herself, suddenly embarrassed. “Do I really? Go away, take a few steps back!”

Aina was suddenly flustered, especially since she found Leonel’s scent to be particularly good right now. It was fine if they both smelled bad, but if it was just her she would rather find a hole to crawl into and die.

Leonel erupted into a burst of laughter, bringing her into a tight bear hug.

“It’s okay, I’ll take you and all your little imperfections. You have a good, earthy smell to you. Almost like a hibernating bear.”

“Leonel!” Aina shouted out his name in embarrassment, but that didn’t stop Leonel from burying his nose into the hook of her neck.

Her body was suddenly filled with a hint of lust and ticklishness, followed by a flood of mortification.

Aina pushed Leonel away, her hands pressing firmly against his chest.

“People are watching!”

Leonel had half a mind to say let them. But then he realized that such beautiful sights should be left to him and him alone. Who were these bunch of peeping toms to take advantage of his Aina?

With a wave of his hand, Leonel and Aina suddenly disappeared from public view. The elders could only looked toward each other with bitter smiles. ρ??∪???????

They had no idea where this young man had gone for two years. But, in all this time, they had begun placing all their hopes and aspirations on Aina, especially as their Valiant Heart’s situation became more and more precarious.



But now it felt like they were all watching their daughter being snatched away right in front of them and there was hardly anything they could even do about it.

It wasn't until 30 minutes later that the screen hiding them both finally reappeared. Yet, somehow, Aina was wearing a completely new set of clothes. She had ditched her military uniform and even ignored her Valiant Heart uniform to wear a tracksuit that was almost the exact replica of Leonel's.

"You planned this, didn't you?"

Leonel blinked innocently. "Couples wear matching pajamas during the holidays, right? What's wrong with matching tracksuits."

"The problem is that it's a little... small..."

Aina wrinkled her nose, moving her waist as though to check whether the material would hold up.

"..."

Leonel was speechless. It should be a crime to make such an innocent movement so seductive.

"Are you trying to give me a nose bleed? It's not my fault that you've... grown so much in the last two years."

Aina rolled her eyes, but she was still inwardly smiling.

"Ah! I forgot!"

Aina looked back toward the center of the prism they stood at the peak of.

Right there, a large orb of bronze sat. It was clear that this was the ultimate reward of the Zone. At the very least, it was the ultimate reward for this part of it.

As for how the ring was related to all of this, Leonel still wasn't absolutely sure. He only had two guesses he had no way of verifying.

The first was that the ring and the tablet were connected in some way and were actually an outside influence. In this case, the tablet would have originally had nothing to do with this Variant Zone and was instead just using it as a convenient medium to accomplish its goals.

As for what those goals were, Leonel had no way of knowing.

The second possibility was that the ring and tablet were related to the Morales family and thus an extension of the treasure used to keep this Zone opened indefinitely in the first place.

Which of these were more true? Leonel was leaning more toward the first, but he couldn't confirm.

Aina smiled. "I saved all the rewards, we can share them later."

Leonel looked at Aina like she was crazy.

"Don't be ridiculous. Keep it all, I'll be just fine."

Aina opened her mouth to respond. But, seeing the look in Leonel's eye, she simply nodded. She felt, for some reason, that she'd never be able to change his mind.

"Okay..."

Aina touched the bronze orb.

It was then the Zone was filled with a blinding light and they all vanished.

## Chapter 788

A flashing light swirled between the two Valiant Pillars.

By this point, the crowd of individuals watching was considerably smaller than it had been two years ago. And though this was in part due to the fact it had been so long, it was also obvious that there was an air of heaviness around Valiant Heart that hadn't quite been there before.

When the group of geniuses appeared, the only two who were still on their feet were Leonel and Aina. But, on the 'bright' side, only three of their twelve geniuses had died. One was Sael's partner, the other two were both geniuses from Severed Heart.

Somehow, Radlis had managed to survive until the end, but Leonel hadn't really gotten around to asking Aina what had happened to her in these last couple years. They had both decided that things would be less annoying if they handled whatever these Valiant Heart elders would throw at them first.

As expected, the elders seemed to swarm the group the moment they reappeared.

To Leonel's surprise, though, after getting the other medical attention, most of their attention was focused on Aina, something that made Leonel laugh inwardly.

There were any number of reasons they were acting like this. But, it was likely a combination of them being consumed by Aina's talent and not having actually seen him in action. The final cherry on top was that these elders truly didn't dare to question Leonel and by extension didn't even consider asking Aina for her things.

As far as they were concerned, as long as they could win over Aina, wouldn't they win over Leonel as well?

Still, humans were also creatures of recency bias. It had been too long since they had seen Leonel in action. And, even if they remembered what he had shown, it was still nowhere near as impressive as what Aina had done right before their eyes.

That said, from the very beginning, Leonel's sights had been far beyond this Bronze Organization. And now, this truth was only truer than it had ever been before.

Even beneath the onslaught of questions from the elders, seeing that this was going to take forever, Leonel ignored them all and pulled Aina away. He hadn't suffered through two years just to suffer some more under such conditions.

The two soon vanished over the horizon, leaving the elders at a loss.

The elders looked toward Head Hutchin, trying to understand what it is they should do.

"Give them some time." Hutchin said evenly. "Make sure that the others are well taken care of, they too have made great progress. As for the two of them, we can only hope that they are willing to help."

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"What?"

"What? Bad timing?" Leonel replied.

"You think?" Aina rolled her eyes.

She thought that her man had become far more confident and attractive, but she didn't think that he would also become more tactless.

At that moment, the two were both naked. Aina sat on Leonel, her breasts even touching his chest. She could very clearly feel his member pressing against the cheek of her ass. And yet, he chose this moment to talk about Oryx? Couldn't he pick a better time? Her eyes were still glazed over from the orgasm she had just felt.

Leonel laughed. "It's already been like half a day."

The two had already been rolling around in bed for more than ten hours. Even Leonel didn't bother to count the number of peaks Aina had climbed to in that time, yet she still wanted more. It seemed that in these two years this girlfriend of his had become insatiable. ¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶¶

“That still leaves you with 729 and a half more days to make up for!”

Leonel sputtered with laughter. He had to admit that he didn't hate this clingy version of Aina at all. It seemed like she wanted to stay attached at his hip and he loved it, quite honestly.

Though the two were still subconsciously ignoring the topic of sex, still feeling as though that portion of their relationship hadn't quite been sorted out yet, Leonel felt closer to Aina than he ever had before. And at this moment, he felt that that was enough.

“I'm serious, this is important.” Leonel finally said.

“Fine. Tell me what about the Oryx is so important.”

“Well, it isn't that the Oryx are important, but rather what I want to do with them that is. Our relationship with Valiant Heart could become quite contentious, especially when I succeed.”

It was only after Aina heard this that her hips stopped subconsciously gyrating and she focused on Leonel's words.

“What do you mean?”

“I plan on taking over the Oryx Tribe and ruling them.”

“Huh?”

Aina was stunned by Leonel's words.

From her position, her gaze was slightly higher than Leonel's. Looking down into his eyes, she could tell he was completely serious.

Aina blinked. She found the dauntless confidence in Leonel's gaze right now to be fatally attractive. She even faintly wanted to drop everything and simply follow his lead.

"How do you plan on doing that?" She asked.

"I have a talented Oryx General under my charge. I've already sent him to their Tribe. He's not powerful enough yet to take full control over them, but his talent is enough to do most of the work for him."

"An Oryx General?"

Seeing Aina's confusion, Leonel began to explain everything he had experienced and for the first time since the two reunited, they did something other than tease and embrace one another.

When Aina learned about the tablet, though, her expression changed. Such an object... Could it bring her mother back to life?

Having such a thought, she couldn't help but bite her plump, pink lips, her bad habit shining through once again.

"... And what do you plan to do with Valiant Heart? If you want to take over the Oryx... What does that mean for this place?"

Leonel's light violet eyes flashed with a cold light that made Aina shiver with an uncontrollable excitement.

"The Oryx are the far more talented group and their potential will be useful to me. The same cannot be said of Valiant Heart. If they get in my way..."

“I’ll destroy them.”

## Chapter 789

Aina looked deeply into Leonel’s eyes. Once again, she saw that look – that look that told her she wouldn’t be able to change his mind.

This was something she hadn’t been used to seeing from Leonel. She felt that on some level, she always had a chance to shift his line of thinking. Whether it was by coaxing or logic, she felt that she always had such a possibility even if the likelihood was small.

Yet, this was twice now in less than a day she had seen this look. She could feel a higher purpose coming from Leonel, one that came with no less determination than her will to see the Brazinger family brought to its knees.

“... Leonel.”

“Hm?”

Despite their sexually charged position and state, the couple seemed to enter a serious exchange.

“What is it that you want to do? Say it to me clearly.”

Leonel looked into Aina’s eyes, seeing himself reflected within her golden irises. Eventually, his gaze became so intense that he could even see two floating balls of violet within them.

“I will change this world.” Leonel said evenly.

Aina’s gaze narrowed. “... How?”

Change this world? Was such a thing even possible? That would practically be trying to change human nature. At such a point, one might as well say that they wanted to become a Deity.

“By having the largest fist.”

“You...”

Aina was speechless. She was quite well aware that as a girlfriend, her duty, at the very least, was to support Leonel in all his dreams and aspirations. But, wasn't it also her job to tell him when something was impossible?

Aina's view of the world had been jaded for a long time. With her disposition, it was a miracle that she had even opened herself up to a relationship with Leonel in the first place. It could be said that it was a mixture of Leonel's timing being perfect and her having suppressed her feelings for him for too long.

Right now, though... Even though the look in Leonel's eyes made her heart tremble, even though his confidence made him far more attractive than he had ever been, even though she really wanted to smile brightly and say that she would support him to the very end...

She couldn't bring herself to do so.

She found herself wanting to pull Leonel back, to stop him from treading down an impossible path. She almost wanted him to go back to his old self. Even if she had to deal with his long hair. Even if she had to deal with him being aimless. Even if the shadow of his grandfather still lingered over head.

However, she could see it once again for a third time... That light in his eyes that said it was impossible...  
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Inwardly, she felt disgusted with herself when she had such thoughts.

How long had Leonel spent unselfishly following her wishes? Even now, she could tell that he had no intention of abandoning her. In fact, he might even be more determined and confident now to help her than he ever had been before.



But at the moment, she felt like Leonel was running on a path to infinity. She couldn't see the end of it, but what she could see were all the pitfalls that dotted even the first stretch, let alone the abyssal blackholes that lay ahead.

Aina suddenly felt her heart constricting again, her breathing hitching as though there wasn't enough air in the room. She was already in the beginning stages of another panic attack before she even truly understood what was happening.

It was at that moment that she felt two sturdy hands tighten on her hips.

Aina looked into Leonel's eyes, still finding it a bit difficult to calm down. But, every time she felt like she might slip into another fit, she would always sense those sturdy hands.

Aina collapsed on Leonel's chest, seemingly having been sapped of all her strength.

The soothing feeling of Leonel's hand stroking her hair and the sound of his heartbeat against her ear seemed to help her own heartrate calm.

"I... Don't want to lose you." Aina said softly.

Leonel didn't respond. He didn't know if there was anything he could say to this.

He realized that while these last two years had brought him great changes to his character, the same couldn't be said for Aina. But... He should have expected as much.

He had spent these last 24 months in an entirely new world, meeting people, forming relationships and ties... Taking on responsibilities he never had before.

But, in Aina's case, she had spent the last two years in that very same constant battle. Though her body had grown and her strength had become greater, there was no such opportunity for her. If anything, she only sunk further and further into her fear of losing him.

Leonel could easily see how his decision could make Aina feel as though she was jumping out of a frying pan and into a fire. She had just got him back but she felt that she was losing him again.

But, Leonel didn't see it this way. Was there really a problem if they simply took every step together? If they grew as one, rose to the top as a pair, would she still have to worry?

Leonel continued to run his fingers through Aina's hair. There were some things that words couldn't fix and only actions could show. So, he would show her.

The couple fell into a light sleep and were only awakened two days later by Leonel sensing someone trying to reach them.

"Yip! Yip!"

Little Blackstar hopped into Leonel's arms after he got dressed, causing the latter to laugh.

"Yes, yes. I missed you too buddy." Leonel smiled, stroking the little guy's fur. "I've got big plans for you Little Blackstar, are you ready?"

The little mink blinked curiously at Leonel. But, he only smiled mysteriously toward this curiosity.

Not long later, Leonel and Aina both left the Segmented Cube, only to find a group of elders led by Magnaril waiting outside the small shop.

Chapter 790

"Elders." Leonel smiled as though he hadn't just been talking about destroying them all. It seemed he had already gained the two face nature of a politician.

Leonel didn't see it this way, though. As long as Valiant Heart didn't get in his way, there wouldn't be any need for them to lock horns.

Of course... He was planning on aiding their mortal enemies for what must have been several millennia already. So, maybe his thinking was still a bit green, albeit more forceful than it had been in the past. Even Aina couldn't help but give him a side eye.

"I see that the shop is still going strong even after so long." Magnaril tried to open the conversation up with some small talk.

Leonel nodded in return. "My partners from the former Polished Glass Faction have improved greatly in my absence. I'm quite proud of them."

Leonel had left Kaela and the others without much guidance or instruction, not expecting his departure to actually be for so long. He had never thought that they would end up grasping the opportunity and growing so much in his absence, especially Kaela.

Long before he left and before even building BLACKSTAR, Leonel had given the group material and information they needed to greatly improve their Crafting. However, in the end, an opportunity was just an opportunity. Often times, people even took such things for granted to the point of squandering their chance entirely.

But Kaela, Rum, Madia and the others most definitely hadn't. In fact, their improvement even impressed Leonel.

Leonel knew that he needed strength to achieve his goals. But, his foundation couldn't be built without a layer of trust, respect and loyalty first.

Though they were weak, this group had more than proven to him just what kind of people they were. And to Leonel, this was far more rare than just an individual with talent or power would be.

So... he had already given them even more resources and knowledge. As far as he was concerned, they were his people now.

The group exchanged some more pleasantries, something that would have been weird to any outside observer. It seemed as though they were having a talk of equals rather than a talk between seniors and juniors. But, at this point, the elders had no choice.

Let alone what they had seen from Aina in the past couple years, Valiant Heart had practically been turned upside down in their absence.  $\rho\tau\sigma\int\tau\tau\tau\tau\tau\tau\tau$

The longer Raylion spent away, the more and more backlash his system received. The Freshmen seemed to only become more and more enraged with each passing day. As the pressure from outside sources also increased, no small number of people had withdrawn from the organization entirely.

Hearing such talks, Leonel could only rub his nose lightly, pretending to be completely oblivious despite knowing that he probably had the largest hand in all of this. But, was it really his fault? Who asked Raylion to piss him off?

The moment Raylion had given that speech, Leonel had laid down the ground work to cause the collapse of his system. Unfortunately for Valiant Heart, though, before he could rein things back in short of their collapse, he became trapped in another world for two years. The result was seeds he had lay years ago growing and festering to the point the situation could hardly be handled with any sort of ease.

Of course, the only ones who knew that Leonel had intentionally done such a thing, causing an uprising amongst the freshmen against their seniors, were Leonel and Aina. So, feigning ignorance was quite easy despite the fact Leonel felt a little bad.

‘Forget it, things are better this way. The weaker they are, the less inclination they’ll have to get in my way... It’s either that or they’ll react like cornered beasts. Hopefully it’s the former and not the latter.’

Since the elders didn’t want to have such a talk out in the open, they eventually chose to go to a nearby restaurant. Leonel still had a rule up that only a single Fifth Dimensional entity could enter his shop at once and he didn’t feel like changing it quite yet.

Not long later, the group sat down. Once again, Magnaril took the lead. Maybe because they believed her familiarity with Aina would help, she seemed to always be the one who headed their talks. As for the others, they were clearly here purely for support.

“I will get right to the point.” Magnaril spoke after a deep breath. “Valiant Heart is in trouble and we’ve reached a point where the strength of our elders isn’t enough to stave it off.

“As things stand now, Valiant Heart still has the strongest Fifth Dimensional experts in our quadrant. The problem is that this is hardly meaningful if multiple choose to target us at once. The power of a few will never be able to match up to the power of the many.

“By paying a price, Valiant Heart has been able to receive the support of a neutral third party. However, after mediation, the only chance we have to protect our territory will be our Gathering.

“Unfortunately, because you all were stuck in the Zone for two years, we’ve been forced to make concessions to buy more time and have thus been forced into an even deeper corner. The odds are even more unfavorable for us now than they were before.”

Leonel listened to this from start to finish, not interrupting.

“The Gathering will be exceptionally dangerous, so dangerous that we have chosen not to make it mandatory any longer. We cannot guarantee the lives or deaths of any of our students. We as teachers cannot take the burden of this choice from you. But, we still hope that you will choose to fight by Valiant Heart’s side.

“Toward this end, we would be willing to give you no small amount of compensation...

“What do you say? Will you fight with us?”