

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2221: Who?

Leonel's hand squeezed down, and the quartz in his fingers shattered. The only thing he had done was dig into his memories and replicate the chemical structure of the token of entry, and he had actually been let in just like that. It seemed that he was correct.

His Crafting ability had taken another enormous leap forward. He had already felt that he was no worse than the Life Grade Ancestors of this Incomplete World, but now he felt that he had definitely surpassed them firmly. In fact, they probably couldn't be said to even be in the same class any longer.

And yet, he felt that he had only just entered the threshold of his father's level. In fact, saying so might be overestimating himself far too much.

Leonel closed his eyes and subconsciously took out the dictionary. He hadn't been able to bring himself to even look at it in recent days, but for some reason it now gave him a great deal of comfort. Whereas in the past it was like a reminder that his father was out there somewhere and couldn't be by his side, now that he understood more of how it worked, he felt far more at ease with it in his palm.

When he opened his eyes again, they were sharp, and the dictionary had vanished.

"Since you're here, why don't you say anything?"

A laughter rang out, but Leonel couldn't help but frown. This laughter sounded too familiar. Others might find it charismatic, but he knew a fake laughter when he heard it. It was probably the same fake laugh he had been using ever since he was old enough to know that he should probably learn to socialize properly.

The cadence, the tone, the hidden hint of disdain, all impossibly subtle and yet one that he was intimately familiar with all the same.

Why was there a recording of his laughter here?

"My, my, my, I really am an arrogant prick."

Leonel's gaze flickered. It was richer, a bit deeper, a bit more wizened, but he was certain as well. That was definitely his voice. He would easily remember the voice of a

person he had met just a single time, let alone his very own voice. It was impossible that he wouldn't recognize it.

"I don't seem to like to follow rules either, it seems. You know, you're supposed to wait until all of the roads can be filled before you enter this trial world. Wouldn't it be too unfair if you can just walk through unchallenged now?"

Leonel still didn't respond. For some reason, he found his own voice incredibly annoying. He had already concluded that this person was trying to mess with him. It would probably be trivial for an existence that could create [Dimensional Cleanse] to change their voice.

"When I'm speaking, you listen."

The voice became a biting cold, and a piercing pain threatened to run right through Leonel's chest. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, falling to a knee, his eyes bulging.

"Man," the voice became light and cheery again, "is this considered masochism? Well, I've done far worse to my body in these years, this is probably the least of them, it probably wouldn't even deserve to be ranked last."

Leonel clenched his chest, the pain only slowly fading. It felt as though it had been done on purpose.

"This is the only real way I can communicate with my younger self. Jokes aside, I already expected myself to figure out how to enter this place alone, if I can't do it, then probably no one but my old man could.

"You probably won't believe it, we're stubborn like that, and ironically quite foolish, especially now. You'll probably do many stupid things between now and the moment you snap out of it. Going through a teenage angst at 26 is a bit embarrassing, don't you think? The only stain on my record, honestly.

"Unfortunately, everyone else is too weak. Maybe if I suffered a loss or two, it would have happened sooner, but I can't blame the world for being too incompetent."

Leonel was frowning. This arrogant prick was far too annoying. He remembered the first time he had learned about [Dimensional Cleanse], the introduction practically made him roll his eyes. In fact, he had called this bastard narcissistic back then, those were his exact words. It seemed that he was even worse in person.

"I haven't appeared to give you a boon or anything, in my opinion it would be better if you fall flat on your face soon, maybe even die a few times. I'm really only here to tell you two things.

"First, because of your stubbornness, Tolliver entered this world and is currently fused with the last barrier of this Trial World. I originally built this in to stop most others aside from myself from reaching the final leg, but in usual fashion you've gone and screwed it up for yourself. Since you're smart, you figure out a way to separate them unless you want to kill your own Metal Spirit. Or don't, I don't really care. I'm sure your father would be proud."

Leonel's gaze went red. One of the very first lessons he had learned from his father's dictionary was that Metal Spirits were partners, not tools. But that didn't mean that this person could just casually mention his father like that.

However, the moment his gaze went red, that suffocating pressure descended again, and he coughed up another mouthful of blood, almost passing out entirely.

"Second, you had better take this seriously. Despite what I've said, you think about why I would still make this world to help a far lesser version of myself out."

After this, the voice completely vanished along with the pressure.

His meaning was quite obvious. This was a world filled with Vital Star Force. Though Leonel used it offensively, it was also the reason for his exceptional stamina, aside from his Lineage Factor, of course...

What else could this world be used for if not helping increase Leonel's chances of saving someone?

If his future self had already admitted that saving his father was impossible... then who was he intending to save with all of this effort?

Chapter 2222: Control

Even after the voice had long since vanished, the pain in Leonel's chest dulled just as slowly as before. It felt that he was still somewhere in the background, hiding and slowly turning down his pain as though there was some sort of hidden dial that he could tweak up or down.

It was extremely frustrating, but there was something about being on your knees and being entirely unable to fight back that left one without the same room to grow angry. It was almost as though he had been forced into submission. One part of his body was billowing with rage, and the other part, the part that was still fueled with that pain that was dulling far too slowly, was bearing down like a wet blanket, suffocating his flame.

Leonel was so infuriated that he roared, but as though it had sensed it, the pain heightened and what should have been a mighty roar capable of causing a mountain to collapse and a planet to quake came out instead like a muffled whimper.

This time, the redness in Leonel's eyes came out far different than the past. Tears threatened to spill over, the frustration blowing over to the point he felt like throwing a fit as though he was nothing more than a child. The only thing that stopped them from falling was his pride. That sort of sickening voice in the back of his head that told him that that man might still be watching, and even if he wasn't, he was Leonel Morales.

He didn't know where such thoughts came from. He didn't think himself to have such strong emotions about crying in the past, he never really thought about it, the same way he hadn't really thought about what it meant to kneel. He had definitely cried in the past, but it wasn't something that lingered on his mind, making him feel as though he was less of a man.

But now it did feel that way, though maybe not for the reasons it seemed to be. Rather, it felt like he would be acknowledging something.

Those tears that had fallen when he knew his father had died had dried up as quickly as they had formed. They didn't get the chance to sit and stew, to stir his soul and vent out all the frustration that wanted to rush out from his heart like a swimming tide.

The whimpers that came out in place of his roar were like a rope pulling taut, stringing his throat into a tight tube that caused his neck to spasm. His heaving breaths couldn't seem to bring enough air, and his muscles seemed to have forgotten how to move. A stinging sensation in his eyes grew fiercer and fiercer until they spilled over.

The weakness overcame him, his body collapsing onto the starry roads. Nothing about them seemed to be beautiful any longer. When he had first entered this world, it had felt to him that he had been entering a fairy tale, but now it felt like any normal road. And how would one feel when their face had been pressed into the ground?

Maybe if it was by a boot, one would feel rage or fury... but what if it was by one's own weakness? Somewhere inside, Leonel knew that that man had definitely vanished, he knew that such a man couldn't be bothered to stay in a single place for even one moment longer than he had to, he wouldn't feel the need to pull such petty tricks either, especially with how arrogant he was.

But that only made it worse. He wasn't being pressed down by anything, he even knew that that pain in his chest wasn't even the doing of that man any longer. That was just a darkness sitting in the pit of his chest, overwhelming and latching out like the venomous sting of a cobra. It wasn't a physical pain, but that only made it worse.

Leonel's lip trembled, his fingers digging into the road that removed to move for him. His nails fissured and cracked, a dripping, dense blood that almost shaded black coming

out. He clawed with everything he had, almost as though he could pull it back, to bundle it back up, to stuff it on the inside like he was always able to.

He was Leonel Morales. His emotions had always been a façade, right? He had always been able to compartmentalize with great ease, right? He could easily flip his emotions off with a flip of a switch, right?

So why was that ache getting worse? Why was it overflowing? Why was it getting stronger?

Leonel tried to roar again. It was his final attempt, the last bit of strength he had left to push it away, to wrench his control back, but it once again didn't come out properly.

It wasn't a roar, it was a wail. It echoed into the emptiness, reverberating into the illuminated darkness like a broken record.

Leonel's stomach lurched, his body curling into a heaving motion as though he was trying to get something disgusting out of his mouth. He retched, but his stomach had nothing to give. He couldn't remember the last time he had eaten anything. He didn't need to eat. He was a machine. His Force was enough, it could sustain him.

He retched again, saliva and a croak coming from his mouth.

The feeling of disgust welled up even stronger than before, but this seemed to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

The tears poured out like a flood, blood vessels in his eyes popping in a vain attempt to stop them. And soon after, the wails echoed once again.

He gripped his chest, his bloodied fingers sinking into his skin. His forehead scraped along the ground, his own broken voice reverberating back to him to the point even his ears began to bleed.

But in a way, the pain was a relief. A relief from the grief that washed over him, his tears falling in an endless stream.

There was no one to hear it, no one to witness it. He simply curled up in his own self-pity, his body too broken to control itself any longer.

Chapter 2223: Don't Talk Big

Leonel lay on the starry road. He was a person very much used to being on top of everything. For the past several years, his mind had worked on such a high level that he could even tell how much time had passed without even being consciously aware of it; it

was like there was a ticking clock in the back of his mind, constantly rolling forward with the seconds. After he had woken up from his coma just this past month, he had been aware of exactly how much time had passed without even having to double-check with anyone. But this time...?

He had no idea.

He didn't know whether it had been a few days or weeks, for all he knew it could have just been a few seconds. It was as though everything around him had shut down, and when he came to, he had his dad's dictionary in one hand and his glasses in the other. He wondered if he would have even been able to come to himself if not for these two things.

Even so, he didn't quite feel like he had the energy to stand. Every cell of his body had been wiped clean, moving in what felt like slow motion. His high vitality had no ability whatsoever to help him recover, or at the very least, not any time soon. It was a feeling that he would have called suffocating, if not for the fact he couldn't quite remember if he had breathed, or if he even needed to breathe.

He lay on his back, looking up at the endless depths. He wondered... no, it seemed that this trial world was actually an Incomplete World of its own. But it was completely devoid of life, well, outside of those that would come here from time to time.

It was quite fascinating. He wondered how the creator of [Dimensional Cleanse] had managed to make it so easy to cross from one world to another without an extraordinary power source. Although he could copy the method and rearrange the chemical structure as he saw fit, copying and understanding were two completely different things. It was so far beyond him that he couldn't wrap his head around it, but it was also fascinating for exactly that reason.

What other discipline could allow a layman to copy a master so precisely and execute the same results with repeated certainty? It was unlike anything he had ever seen before.

Leonel's head shifted, and he looked down at the pair of glasses in his hands.

He had squeezed them pretty hard, all of his strength, in fact. But they didn't so much as creak. It was an odd feeling; he was sure that even if there was an Eighth Dimensional item in his hand, even if he couldn't destroy it, it would at least have some give to it. But this had nothing of the sort.

He wondered how much effort his father had put into it, how many hours of work.

Leonel looked away. That was the thing with tears. If you let them go once, the second time would come even easier, and the third even easier than the second. Eventually,

you would be as worthless as a crying baby, curled up on a starry road when there were treasures to be had not too far away.

He thought this, but he still didn't move. "Say something, old man," he mumbled to himself.

[Ping]

Leonel's gaze flashed, but he didn't react as violently as one might expect. In fact, he didn't even look toward the dictionary.

"Finally finished crying? I'm quite touched. What was that, 27 hours? Sheesh, not bad if I do say so myself."

Leonel's lip curled into a slight smile. He knew that it was a message. By now, he understood enough about Crafting to know how his father had done it. The usual mechanical voice of the dictionary, a version of his father's voice without life in it, was done on purpose to lull Leonel into a certain belief. In reality, all of the dictionary's messages could be in just as lifelike of a voice if his father had so chosen. But he preferred the chance at pranking his son instead.

That said, there were indeed many things within the dictionary that were pre-recorded, but there were even some pre-recordings within that presented themselves as such that were, in reality, just the dictionary speaking.

This was one such example. The "Finally finished crying" part was pre-recorded. The "27 hours" part was deduced by the dictionary on its own.

The dictionary was definitely a complex system that brought most AI to shame, and if not for his father's pranks, Leonel would have noticed long ago. This dictionary was maybe the greatest invention of his father. It wasn't casually cobbled together as Velasco had made it seem. In fact, if its intelligence were to be measured against Leonel's, it would definitely be smarter, and not just by a small margin either.

If there was one item in the Dimensional Verse that was the equivalent to The Hourglass of the Pluto Race, it was definitely this small silver disk in his hands. Its abilities were simple, but it was in this simplicity that it was so shocking and amazing.

"Yeah, I'm done crying, old man," Leonel muttered.

"Lame. I thought I could at least milk this out for a few more years. Who knew that my seed wouldn't be as useless as I thought him to be."

Leonel remained silent, still not answering.

"If you're hearing this message, I'm dead."

"Shut up," Leonel almost rolled his eyes. "You couldn't come up with anything less cliché? All that brain power, wasted. You should have used it to at least leave me behind a few starships."

"Bah, starships, what useless things. Even you managed to single-handedly down one, what good would they be to me?"

"Don't talk big when you're dead..."

The dictionary fell into silence.

"Some things have to be done. How far you go now will be up to you. Now stop moping, there's only one thing I programmed this thing to tell you because I knew you would be too stupid to ask.

"Whatever you do, do not trust the Demoness. She only wants one thing, and that's to see the world in chaos."

"Why would I trust her in the first place, stupid old man."

"You now have daddy issues, who knows? It might be easier for another member of your family to slip through the cracks. She's your grandmother, after all."

Chapter 2224: Snores

Leonel didn't react violently either. Maybe he was just in a numb kind of mood, but this was also how he always was. He had spent most of his life thinking his mother was dead. Actually, he had felt that that was probably the lesser possibility, the greater of which being that she had abandoned them. It was the only reason he could think of for why his father didn't tell him about her. Of course, now he knew it was just a matter of necessity. Telling him about Alienor would have meant exposing the Void Palace because on modern-day Earth, there was simply no excuse for not being able to see anyone. You could travel from one end of the planet to another in just a few minutes, and even if there was some reason you couldn't, even 21st-century Earth had countless communication methods, let alone modern-day Earth.

If his father had tried to lie that way, rather than being indifferent toward his mother, he would have probably been resentful toward her for making his father have to come up with so many lies.

When he had finally learned that his mother was alive after the Metamorphosis, he had reacted with a shrug; he never really cared. He never cared enough to ask about her, and he didn't care enough to find out the truth about her, so why would he care that she was alive?

It was only after awakening his Dream Force and recalling every bit of his memories did he know that he could have love for his mother without letting her off the hook for something so egregious as not staying in her own child's life.

So, when he learned that this mysterious woman was his grandmother, he didn't care. Even when he thought about the so-called love triangle between King, the Silver Emperor, and her, he still hadn't cared. The idea that his grandfather was potentially a cuckold didn't really move the needle for him at all. There wasn't much you could do against such a powerful woman. Plus, that love triangle was nothing but a folk tale; he had no real evidence for it.

If she wanted to bed you, you could probably only accept it. If she wanted to leave you afterward, well, it was only right. You should thank your lucky stars at that point.

At best, Leonel's thoughts just drifted to the fact that the Lineage Factors of the Morales and the Silver Empire were so similar. It seemed that the connection all along was this woman. But beyond that sort of understanding, he was still indifferent.

However, Velasco obviously knew his son well, so he wasn't waiting for Leonel to ask questions. As he had said, this was the very reason he had left behind such a message, so he wouldn't let Leonel's tendencies stop him from speaking. He rarely explained anything, so the fact he was going out of his way to do this meant that it was important.

"I don't understand much about the relationship between your grandfather and grandmother, but what I know is that she was never of this world. This place was nothing more than a playground for her because something had caught her attention.

"I'm not sure what that something was, but I have my deductions. It's likely related to the simulations."

Velasco spoke this as a matter of fact that everyone should know. It was either he was trying to get a rise out of Leonel, or he simply felt that if Leonel hadn't figured it out by now, he would be too foolish to be his son. Or, rather... his seed.

"That dumbass who calls himself King, who can't even withstand a single spear of mine, most definitely isn't strong enough to create these worlds as they are. Only a race of being far above could allow this to happen. Turning worlds into a playground of breeding just to form a large group of powerful soldiers in a short amount of time is beyond what the Three Finger Cult and their backers are capable of.

"I believe that this is what caught the attention of your grandmother."

"If you hate her so much, why are you still calling her that?" Leonel muttered to himself. Even now, he was still acting as though he was alone. It was easier that way. What would he look like allowing an AI to become his new father?

"I call her that out of respect for my father and nothing else," Velasco suddenly said coldly before continuing as though nothing had happened. "-only something of that magnitude was enough to catch her attention.

"As for why she did all the things afterward, I have no way of knowing why she did. But I know that she has an eye on you, that's something you're going to have to deal with on your own."

"If you hated her so much, you should have tried to kill her on your own."

"She never had a direct hand in your grandfather's death, that was entirely the work of King, and precisely why he is now dead. As for her, she's a puppet master that prefers to be hands-off. Her plans are probably only known and understood by her..."

Silence fell.

"Alright, I'm off. What you do with this information is up to you. Also, stop being such a crybaby, you're a grown man.

"Stop chasing the impossible. Focus on what you can do with absolute certainty. Only fools overestimate themselves. Then there's me, who finds it impossible to overestimate myself, HAHA!"

The voice faded, and Leonel fell into his own silence once again.

Leonel continued to stare into the vast emptiness above him. Himself, and even the endless starry road, and even the enormous Vital Star in the far-off distance seemed to be entirely... too small.

Leonel closed his eyes, and his father's glasses and the dictionary disappeared from his hands. Then... he simply fell asleep.

Soon, his light snores filled the Trial World.

Chapter 2225: Clicked

Leonel woke up quite slowly and casually jumped to his feet. Without much thought, he turned toward the enormous star in the distance and began to walk toward it.

The feeling was familiar. Even with the strengthening of his body, the limitations were all the same. He couldn't access his other abilities, and the only thing that seemed to respond to him was the very same Vital Star Force that was around him. But... such a thing was hardly able to stop his steps.

The avatars he faced fell down one after another, and he didn't even feel the need to lift a finger. They died beneath the rampaging of his Force, a feeling that seemed to carry a hidden sort of anger despite the fact he felt far better now than he had before.

It wasn't long before he had already crossed past the distance he had already traveled before. Of course, there were no human enemies to face this time, so the path ahead was leisurely.

He came to only a brief pause when he crossed the region he had fallen to Amery in, but that was a shadow that he had long since gotten rid of. It was no longer enough to move him so greatly.

Soon, he found himself beneath the enormous blue star. This close up, he could see that the dancing runes on its surface were unlike anything he had ever seen before. It made the runes on his Vital Stars seem insignificant and small, not just in size, but in raw complexity and even in beauty.

Leonel knew with a glance that this was most definitely past the Impetus State, it was likely even past the Life State, though he had no reference to use to make certain of this. If he fused with his Star, his greatest Force would likely no longer be his Dream Force, and it wouldn't even be his Scarlet Star Force either.

Even so, he didn't even want to think about the implications. What kind of stamina drain would it be to try and use such Force? How much focus would it take? Would forming a wisp of it suck his Dream Force dry? It was a joke to even consider it.

That said, due to the words of that man, he had felt that there was another secret stored away within [Dimensional Cleanse], and he finally understood what it was.

[Dimensional Cleanse] was a technique that he had originally chosen because he felt that it matched together with his Ability Index quite well. He had felt that it could strengthen his Dream Force, or rather Soul Force at the time, and help him upgrade his Ability Index from the C- grade Ability he had thought it to be back then.

As he continued on with his practicing of the technique, he had learned quite a lot about it. For example, the oddity of the Sixth Dimensional Layer in forming a complex Natural Force Art that could allow for the breeding of Auspicious Air, or its seemingly odd connection with Universal Force.

But after he had broken through into the Seventh Dimension, and also came to understand some things from that man's words, he understood what the true purpose of Dimensional Cleanse was.

It was a technique that used Dream Force for the sake of polishing one's other Forces. The connection with Auspicious Air, the melding with Universal Force, these were all

foundational layers that could allow one to reach the ultimate goal... The Cleansing of one's Force, its refinement, and its compression into higher and higher states.

It was obvious if one thought about it... how else could it be compatible with every other technique?

That was the ultimate truth. The reason [Dimensional Cleanse] could be used along with other techniques was because it wasn't like other techniques at all... at least on the surface.

Staring at this star, and having reached the conclusions he had, Leonel had thought of a very obvious question: If Dimensional Cleanse was so free and loose with its restrictions, then why Vital Star Force?

To save someone? That's what that man seemed to imply he would have to do, but why would Vital Star Force be the best for this? If anything, of the healing Forces, Vital Star Force would probably be the worst at saving someone.

It was a type of Life Force that could only be used on the body and was useless against the mind. It also couldn't be transferred over to others, or else Leonel would have long since built a Healing Force Art around Vital Star Force instead of the Light Force he always used instead. It just didn't make any sense.

And if he took a step back and took the man's words as skeptically as he wanted to, then it made even less sense for Vital Star Force to appear here when this was obviously a technique best paired with Soul and Dream Force. Using Vital Star Force in place of it wouldn't even work.

But then Leonel thought of something.

[Star Fusion]... [Star Fusion: Combustion]... [Star Fusion: King's Might]...

These were three techniques, though really just one, that he had personally created. It was interesting, he had created these techniques while he was still within the Third Dimension, and he had broken through into the Fifth Dimension in this very place. And yet, despite his inexperience at the time, aside from some tweaking, he found that his [Star Fusion] technique was even more useful now than it had been in the past, and it was perfectly flexible.

But it finally clicked.

[Dimensional Cleanse] wasn't just a technique of the mind. The reason it could be paired with other techniques was because of its innate flexibility, but most importantly because it was never paired with a bodily portion...

A portion Leonel felt that he finally understood now.

The reason [Star Fusion] was so good was because when he had created it, he had been deducing the Fourth Dimensional Layer of [Dimensional Cleanse], a layer that was, ironically, related to the body, and also a layer that he had neglected until now.

[Star Fusion] just might be more related to [Dimensional Cleanse] than he had originally assumed.

Chapter 2226: Useless Ability

'That's right...' Leonel suddenly thought back, trying to remember his exact state of mind back then. For some reason, it felt a bit foggy, something that he wasn't used to. It was as though two separate memories of the same thing were overlapping, but both just slightly different from each other.

But then those two memories became three, then four, then eventually they weren't memories of anything, but rather probabilities and deductions. His mind went blank, and he felt a heavy overflow of fatigue and dizziness that didn't stop until he forcefully stopped himself from thinking about it anymore.

'What was that?'

Leonel frowned. He had never experienced something like that before. It was like he was trying to deduce his own memories, but that was ridiculous.

'No, it's like I was trying to think of other possibilities that might fit with that timeline, but that's...'

Leonel was taken aback. He understood. He was making an attempt to find a perfect string of events that could have occurred in that moment, leading him right back to where he was now. But the number of possibilities was truly infinite. No one in existence should have a mind that powerful, let alone his current self.

Though he understood the what, what he couldn't understand was the why. And even if he had succeeded, what would have been the purpose?

He had a dark thought, but he didn't even want to go down that road. It threatened to make him frustrated once more and it almost brought him right back to that broken state. The words that El'Rion had spoken echoed in his mind, and the supposed uselessness of The Hourglass was put on full display.

Wasn't it obvious? He could think of thousands, tens of thousands, billions, even, of possibilities that would lead him right back to this very same state... as though the present was a rubber band fixed at two ends, no matter how much the past changed, the beginning and the present would stay the exact same.

Leonel clenched his fists. He had thought of many useless abilities of the Ability Index in the past, but this one was most definitely at the very top.

He took a breath, steadying his beating heart and going back to his original thoughts. He made himself calm down and focus. Then, he finally completed the loop on his initial thoughts.

'It goes right back to the soul again. It seems that I don't need Cleansing Waters after all; from the very beginning, [Dimensional Cleanse] was capable of doing it for me. Not just this, but it should even be able to steadily increase the state of my body as well. That man is an arrogant prick, but this technique... is truly genius.'

It wasn't that Leonel didn't understand the man was implying that he was himself. Only a fool wouldn't understand, and Leonel was probably the furthest from.

He didn't acknowledge it for one reason and one reason alone. If even that version of him couldn't bring his father back to life, he didn't want to be him. He would become someone else.

That was all the thought he needed on the matter. He didn't care about anything else, and now that he had understood how [Dimensional Cleanse] truly worked, he didn't have the time to think of anything else either. But first...

The star path beneath his feet rumbled, and the star before him quaked and then suddenly split right down the middle as though it was hiding a ship within. But out from within, tendrils of white gold shot out, piercing toward Leonel like roaring vipers.

Leonel's body flickered, and he danced out of range.

He had never thought that tentacles could be beautiful, but that was precisely what was before him, a gorgeous sight. The movement of this enormous tentacle beast was like watching streams of golden light descend from the sun, peeking through the misty beauty of a day right after rain.

Unfortunately, it was just as gorgeous as it was deadly.

There were two problems that Leonel needed to figure out, both of which were probably quite important.

If this was Little Tolly, why was he attacking him? While he was in El'Rion's body, he had had full autonomy, and that was a Pluto. Why didn't Little Tolly? Or did that mean that Little Tolly did have autonomy and simply chose to attack him anyway? Had the mutation failed and was his Little Metal Spirit still rampaging? Or was it something else?

The second problem was, obviously, how to separate Little Tolly from this... beautiful creature? The Void Race entity had done it with a simple shout, but Leonel obviously wasn't at that level, so what could he do?

Surprisingly, Leonel had only just thought of the question when he had thought of an answer, for the second, anyway. As for the first. Well... he would just have to find out.

Leonel came to a grinding halt, the tips of his toes gliding along the starry road until he came to a stop.

With a pulse of light, his Divine Armor manifested, his halo bouncing to his feet then back up.

Before his armor could even solidify, he had already surged forward, his speed impossibly fast.

He weaved through countless golden tendrils. The creature felt sluggish for some reason, as though it had yet to wake up properly. If he wanted to do this, he had to do so swiftly.

His body shot into the splitting star, looking for something that could be considered to be a core. But for a creature that could fill up the insides of a star, just how large was it?

'I've seen bigger just this week alone,' Leonel thought to himself, flashing forward and appearing in a mass of tendrils so deep he had to continuously move about just to avoid being crushed to pieces.

By this point, he almost believed that this creature didn't even know he was here, he was too small and insignificant. But there was no telling what would happen if it truly awoke.

'There.'

Leonel dove in and crashed down, his body suddenly lighting up with a roaring Vital Star Force.

Chapter 2227: Especially When...

Leonel had deduced something quite profound.

From the very beginning, [Dimensional Cleanse] had had three aspects. The first Three Stars were meant to be related to one's most confident Forces, the second Three related to one's body, and the last three in relation to one's mind.

Leonel had done this in an inappropriate order. His first had been formed from his mind because that was all he was thinking about when he was forming his techniques. Forming his Stars had been so easy in comparison to others that he had been able to easily skip steps that others had to worry and slave over.

But it was also precisely because of this that he had always considered [Dimensional Cleanse] as a supplemental technique, a technique that was most useful on the mind. The most shocking part was that his mind was so powerful that he often didn't use the benefits of [Dimensional Cleanse] either.

How infrequent was his use of Auspicious Air? How much time did he even spend meditating on the Natural Force Art of the Sixth Dimensional Layer of [Dimensional Cleanse].

The truth was almost no time at all, and that was more of a shame than anything. Now that he had put it all together, it slotted into place nicely, and everything seemed to make perfect sense.

From the Third Dimensional Layer that laid the foundation of the Force, to the Fourth Dimensional Layer that laid the foundation of the body, to the Fifth Dimensional Layer that opened up one's mind and made it sharper, faster, to the Sixth Dimensional Layer that opened one up to the universe, linking one with Universal Force and forging a path that transcended the God Path... Forming the Universal Path...

To the Seventh Dimensional Layer that finally stood tall upon this foundation, linked them all as one, and began to unearth the truest, deepest secrets of [Dimensional Cleanse].

[Dimensional Cleanse] was exactly what it sounded like; it was always a cleansing technique, one that existed even beyond the scope of Cleansing Waters. Using your Stars as a foundation, and the Universe as a cauldron, one could refine not just one's body, but one's very existence toward the limit of perfection.

To make a complicated matter simple, the problem of humans and their fused souls could be fixed by [Dimensional Cleanse]. Not only could you break free of the restrictions, but with enough effort, you could even transcend your original limits.

Many months ago, when Leonel had spoken with Little Nana's elder brother, he had said that the reason the Four Great Families hid the matter of Force Manipulation from "lessers" was so that they could maintain control. If one had enough comprehension, it would be possible to break free of talent constraints, so they had to keep the restrictions in place...

But even when he had said that, he hadn't thought that the changes that one could make were actually so substantial.

Not only were they substantial, but just understanding a portion of them would be enough for Leonel to free Little Tolly. Hidden deep within the enigma that was [Dimensional Cleanse], there was a foundation that allowed the soul to not only separate from the body but one that allowed the soul to be used as a foundation to refine the body into a more perfect state as well.

What better technique was there to accomplish his goal?

Almost the instant his Force blazed to life, he could already sense Little Tolly within. He and Little Tolly had a strong connection with each other. Maybe if it had been another existence, it wouldn't have come so naturally, but for his Metal Spirit, it came as easily as breathing.

'COME!'

Leonel found Little Tolly and pulled hard, but very quickly his expression changed. Something was wrong; Little Tolly was fighting back against him.

Leonel's heart couldn't help but skip a beat. This creature was quickly waking up quicker and quicker; if he couldn't separate Little Tolly and use its momentary daze to kill it, he would definitely die here. He didn't know what this creature was, but it was beyond his understanding, and he didn't have a way of facing it.

It would be fine to continue to let Little Tolly control it if the little one was of its right mind, but very clearly, his Metal Spirit wasn't on his side right now.

Leonel took a breath and exhaled. 'There's only... [Assimilate]!'

Leonel had never tried to use this one two living existences right now, but he thought that since they were already of one body, it had a great chance of working. But, there was immediately bad news. Well... Good news and bad news.

The good news was that it had worked.

The bad news was that it had worked far too well.

His Dream Force was sucked dry in an instant, and he almost directly passed out, even his hair and eyes completely dimmed from a vibrant pale violet to a sickly, flat white.

'How?!'

Leonel's expression changed. The only explanation was that this creature he was trying to forcefully [Assimilate] to Little Tolly was far beyond him. In fact, saying things like that didn't quite do it justice. He even vaguely felt that this creature had to be close to the level of the Void Beast corpse, if not on its level.

Leonel's gaze sharpened. 'In that case...'

Face pale and breathing haggard, Leonel began to move again. He truly hadn't been bluffing when he said that he could give Little Blackstar the strength of the Void Beast, and now it seemed that he would have to prove it.

With a wave of the hand, an illusory Force Art appeared, so large and all-encompassing that it looked like a twinkling starry sky within the waving tentacles of white gold.

This formation was none other than the Dream Star Gathering Beast Formation. It was a formation that Leonel had exchanged for the sake of passing on Force Mantras to Little Blackstar and any other beasts he might rein under his control. It was meant as a shortcut to help elevate beasts past their usual talent as they couldn't just learn like humans did.

But how could such a formation be useful in the current situation?

Especially when the beast beneath Leonel's feet now was a legendary beast more rarely seen than even the mighty Void Beast...

The Infinity Beast.

Chapter 2228: Another

The Dream Star Gathering Beast Formation was one that used Dream Force as a Foundation to communicate deeper concepts to a beast, concepts that couldn't always be explained by word of mouth. It was akin to translating the abstract into the manageable, at least in layman's terms.

In reality, what it did was convert, extract, and transfer thoughts in their most perfect states, allowing a beast's more subtly manipulatable minds to understand things that they otherwise wouldn't be able to. It was akin to bolstering the talent of a beast in a certain aspect, and it was made easily digestible to them in the same way their talent usually allowed.

Beasts in the Dimensional Verse, or any Verse for that matter, were able to progress extremely fast. This was part of the reason why Earth's oceans were still so shockingly dangerous despite all the time that had passed. In fact, there were still beast tides from time to time that threatened the Empire. And every time Earth evolved, these beasts would get stronger much faster than their human counterparts did.

Even so, there was a price to pay for this as well. Beasts could progress extremely quickly, but their talent was decided at an early age and abstract matters like Force Manipulation were beyond them. Essentially, while humans and other humanoid Races

could somewhat change their Fates based on hard work and other factors, the talent of a beast was immediately decided by their Ability Index and Beast Crystals from birth. Once they reached whatever that pre-decided limit was, progressing would be impossible for them.

Little Blackstar was extremely talented, and this only became more true after absorbing so much Void Beast blood. However, Leonel had already seen some flaws with Blackstar's progress, especially since he had someone else to compare the little guy to: Mordred.

Mordred, or Em as Leonel liked to call her, was a Shadow Sovereign just like Little Blackstar, but the flexibility and unique flair she added to her Ability Index was unlike anything Leonel had ever seen Little Blackstar perform.

Of course, there was a simple answer to why, and that was because of Camelot's Magic System. But that was precisely the point, beasts couldn't even learn techniques and magic systems in the usual sense.

This was where the Dream Star Gathering Beast Formation came into play... But this was a lengthy explanation for something that seemed entirely useless in the situation. What good was a formation like this? What would he do with it? Ask the Infinity Beast to kill him swiftly and make it painless?

The secret lay in the mechanism with which the formation worked... taking complex concepts, simplifying them... making them easily digestible.

When Leonel broke down the fundamentals in how this formation worked, he immediately realized that it could do more than he had given it credit for.

To make a complex matter simple, the formation could become a proxy through which he applied his abilities. But this wasn't the important part.

The Lineage Factor of the Fawkes had been refined across countless generations. There was even a generation of them worthy enough to have the Pluto Race owe them a favor. This simply wasn't the kind of Lineage Factor technique that could be so easily simplified, especially not by the likes of the people of the Four Great Families and the Dream Pavilion.

What was important wasn't a modification of the Lineage Factor's technique, but rather that the formation could be powered by external items, one, and secondly, whereas in the past he would have to first filter what information came from the items he was Assimilating through himself, and then pass it on to the target, now the filtering and passing on process became one and the same, lowering the energy requirements by a large factor.

In order to use [Assimilate], Leonel's Lineage Factor had to break down a target into its component Force Arts, making them easily digestible, binding them with his Dream Force, and using said Dream Force as a binder to his body, thus altering his talent, or that of his souls for a short while.

[Breathe] worked on this principle by taking it a step further, sacrificing some of the immediate strength in exchange for more permanence.

The two worked together like a pair of peas in the pod, but the more troublesome the target, the more difficult it was. Doing it to himself was the easiest, although he couldn't use [Breathe] on himself as he was a living being. Doing it to his souls was an extra layer of difficulty. Doing it to a living entity like Little Tolly with its own thoughts and will...? It was an even more difficult task.

Ultimately, this formation would be what allowed it... but the true core to it all...

'Anastasia, I need your help.'

"Of course you do. At least you said something and didn't just expect me to act, it seems you've woken up a little bit. I am a mighty World Spirit you know, more mighty than you know!"

Leonel shook his head, now wasn't the time for showing off, but luckily Anastasia had already gotten to work.

At that moment, a large amount of Vital Force surged forward, being converted to Dream Force through Anastasia's means, and then being filtered right into the formation.

The star that had just split to reveal the beautiful monstrosity within became the fuel through which Anastasia worked.

That was right. From the very beginning, as early as Leonel could remember, Anastasia had had an ability he didn't quite understand until just now. It was an ability that could only be described as one of a God's.

To be able to freely turn a Force of one kind into any other you cared to.

At that moment, the slumbering Infinity Beast felt its strength being whittled away. But it had been asleep for too long, and its mind was groggy and unresponsive.

In the end, it took this as a sign that it was still tired, not realizing that its life was being devoured by another...

Chapter 2229: A Better Pairing?

What Leonel didn't know was that this Infinity Beast was more than just tired, it was old and worn. For a creature to be so beautiful, and yet so close to the end of its lifespan, was probably something a human like Leonel who was destined to grow old and wrinkled could never truly understand.

It was tired of life, tired of existence, maybe it was fully aware of what was happening and simply couldn't be bothered to care anymore. That was all it had done in its life... care... and it cared too much.

It wasn't like the Void Beast that destroyed all things, because it was, in fact, all things. It was all Forces, all beings, and as such it understood all Forces... all beings. Its sympathy was boundless, but this was like a curse, one that ate away at its very being and suffocated it for all that it was worth.

Marred by this beauty, no one had ever seen its true self, that hidden interior awashed with darkness and suppressed by its own care and concern.

In its final moments, it exhaled a breath of relief. Someone else would have to hold onto its burdens from now on... It was no longer its cross to bear.

Leonel began to fall from the skies, the Infinity Beast's body having vanished into a clump of silver he held onto. He couldn't fly at all in this dense den of Force Arts, because even though the entire Vital Star had vanished, the runes that had once colored its surface were only released from their shackles, unleashing onto the world a wide range of changes that made an Eighth Dimensional World's pressure feel like child's play.

However, Leonel couldn't focus on the fact that he was falling right now, because it wasn't the time to. He still needed Anastasia's help to cast [Breathe].

Even now, Leonel didn't know what kind of beast he had just killed, nor the kind of weight that had been on its shoulders.

When he had looked at the Void Beast, although he had reacted indifferently, he had still felt that mighty pressure coming from even its corpse. He couldn't imagine what that beast would have looked like if it had been alive.

Knowing that, how could he know that this creature that he felt nothing from could possibly be its counterpart? When looking at the Infinity Beast, he felt that it was somewhat forgettable aside from its gorgeous exterior...

As though he had never seen its true self.

Due to this, the only thing he was focused on at the moment was making sure that the impermanence of [Assimilate] didn't ruin Little Tolly's chances. Of course, he was also worried about Little Tolly turning on him, and the best way to deal with that was to use the excess energy that Little Tolly would have now and turn it into the little guy's future potential instead.

With that move, he would both weaken Little Tolly significantly and make any potential rampage manageable, and he would also secure his Metal Spirit's future. It was a win-win situation, so he acted immediately.

This time, Little Tolly didn't resist. Leonel could sense a faint bit of the little one's intention to devour the power itself, but it immediately realized that it simply had no ability to and left matters in Leonel's hands.

Leonel almost laughed when he sensed this, one because this was the most complex thought that he had ever heard come from Little Tolly so he was certain that the maturing process had gone well, and two because this little guy was exceptionally greedy.

While he didn't know what kind of beast that beautiful creature had been, he was certain that it was at least beyond the level of the Ancestors of this world. So, the fact that it could be so strong, and yet not dealt with by the Regulator, made Leonel feel that just maybe... it might be closer to the entity of the Void Race than not.

Whatever the truth was, Tolliver was truly too greedy thinking that he could devour something like that on his own after only just entering the Sixth Dimension.

Anastasia helped Leonel with the Force conversion once again. Luckily, this burden was much lower because much of the energy came from the residual Force of the Infinity Beast itself. So, even though the Vital Star was gone, there was plenty left to deal with this situation.

BOOM! Leonel crashed to the ground and coughed out a mouthful of blood. It had been a long while since he had been worried about gravity of all things, but looking at Little Tolly, he grinned, feeling that it was worth it.

In truth, he had been a bit worried. That beast didn't look like it had metal attributes, and Leonel had learned long ago that more abilities wasn't as good as abilities that coincided with your current path. For example, with the Silver Tablet, he had been able to steal the Ability Indexes of others for a long while, but he never had. That was because he knew that he could very easily cripple himself doing so.

But looking at Little Tolly... It seemed that he had worried too much. He didn't know why, but he felt that Little Tolly had reached a level he couldn't imagine, a level that reminded him of... those two God Races he had just seen. Despite being of the Sixth Dimension, the pressure the little one gave him was suffocating.

Little Tolly was still that same adorable little silver blob, but within that silver there were densely packed runes of white gold that looked like the ancient markings of a long forgotten temple.

Leonel looked up toward the floating and fading Force Art Runes in the twinkling skies and immediately sat upright. He had to study these as much as he could before they faded away completely. Comprehending them himself was far better than just assimilating them, that way he wouldn't have to worry about anything else.

In his focus, he forgot about Tolliver's changes for a moment...

Of course, Leonel had no idea that he had just helped his Metal Spirit Assimilate one of the strongest beasts in all of existence...

What better pairing could there be for a Crafter's Partner than the Beast of Creation itself?

Chapter 2230: Harmony

Leonel's gaze flickered again and again as it danced across the floating runes. Part of his senses were focused on Little Tolly, just in case the little guy still felt that it was necessary to attack him, but outside of that, he was entirely focused.

Right now, his Vital Star Force was the weakest of his Force, most probably. Even his Void Star Force was able to keep up because he could use it as a reflection of his Scarlet Star Force. It hadn't even stepped out of the Unfurled State in, and that was quite pathetic.

If his Vital Star Force was at the same level as his Spear Force, for example, just the strength of the lowest level of his [Star Fusion] technique would be hundreds of times more powerful, and by extension, his Divine Armors would be as well.

Honestly, even that might still be an underestimation. The potential of [Star Fusion] was probably beyond what he knew it to be now that he could subtly feel its connection with [Dimensional Cleanse]. They could feed into one another and he could use it to strengthen himself far more with [Dimensional Cleanse] as a foundation.

That said, the importance of Vital Star Force was beyond just this alone. If Leonel was correct about the true purpose of [Dimensional Cleanse], then it along with his Dream Force would be the foundation upon which he brought his body beyond its current level and shed past the original weakness of the Human Race.

This was more important for Leonel now than it ever had been, especially since he had learned who his supposed grandmother was.

Someone had messed with his uncle, this was one of the few things he was able to recall from his experience as his enlightened self. It was also possible that someone had messed with him as well, though he wasn't certain.

What he did know was that the reason he was only able to spend such a short amount of time in that enlightened state was for one reason only: his body could handle the strength of his soul.

This made sense because he was a human. What didn't make sense was how such a soul was born into such a weak body in the first place, and the answer to that question was exactly why he felt that someone had potentially messed with him just like they had his uncle.

Thinking back to how his father had also placed some sort of seal on him, Leonel felt that this matter likely still wasn't as simple as he thought. But he didn't want to waste time asking the dictionary questions now. There would always be time for that. His only goal right now was to increase the State of his Vital Star Force.

His body shook and his eyes blazed with a blue light that calmed quickly.

'First Layer...' he mumbled to himself before focusing once again instantaneously.

His mind split countless ways, analyzing each one of the rules one by one, splicing them together and forming a complete picture. The more he did this, the more the back of his mind rumbled with a certain thought...

This feeling, wasn't it similar to his current Mage Core? Those branches, those leaves, each one adorned with a partial rune, separate, and yet whole. It was quite a fascinating feeling.

Second Layer...

Leonel's progress sped up as an Auspicious Air formed around him. [Dimensional Cleanse] was actively aiding him in comprehending faster and faster, and in a reverse sort of scenario from what he had expected, comprehending seemed to get easier rather than harder.

Then it clicked.

While he was analyzing all of these runes one by one and piecing together the ones that made sense, he was also discarding many of them at the same time. The ones that he discarded didn't just vanish from his memory, they were recycled and then used again when it made sense.

'Recycled and then used again...'

The words reminded Leonel of nature, of how the death of one being could easily become the fuel for another, a fertilizer of the earth... a fertilizer that could grow plant life, sustain wildlife, to give... trees life.

Within Leonel's Ethereal Glabella, and ancient tree with rainbow colored leaves stood at the center of it all, looking as though it held up both the skies and the ten Stars that surrounded it. It was gorgeous, and looked like a being that existed beyond imperfection, beyond stain and impurity.

A gentle wind blew by and its leaves lifted, rustling. This common feature of nature came with a gorgeous sound, a resonance that could enlighten buddha and force devils to turn over a new leaf.

Beautiful in its bearing, simple in its grace, peaceful in its presence.

Leonel's own hair seemed to rise up and the complex Force Arts of [Dimensional Cleanse] began to grow as well.

For as long as he could remember, the Natural Force Art that he had formed at the Sixth Dimensional Layer of [Dimensional Cleanse] had been buried within the soil. It didn't seem to matter to him as where it was was hardly relevant...

Until now.

The Magic System of Camelot and [Dimensional Cleanse] seemed to fuse into a single being. Leonel didn't know how to describe it, but as the skies of his Ethereal Glabella fell into darkness, and then slowly brightened, only to fall into brightness once more and continue to cycle, but it felt as though his Ethereal Glabella had reached a state of absolute harmony...

As though a collection of images had become one beautiful painting, perfect and whole.

His hair gently waved in this mysterious wind and the undersides of their filaments radiated with a familiar rainbow color.

The speed of his deduction became even faster and he slid into the Third Layer, and then soon the Fourth.

By the time the last of the sparkling runes had vanished, he stood at the Quasi Impetus State, his body thrumming in harmony.

Chapter 2231: Bad Taste

Leonel opened his eyes slowly and exhaled. His strength hadn't improved in a tangible way, as he was still in Tier 1. But if one was to say that his power was the same, they would be sorely mistaken. In fact, he felt that staying at Tier 1 was the far better decision as well. If he could, he might even choose to return to the Sixth Dimension. He had been too hasty in progressing.

The more powerful you were in terms of Tiers, the more difficult the hurdle to clear was if you wanted to improve your Forces. Leonel could also feel that within [Dimensional Cleanse], the best state for him to improve his body the most would have been in the Sixth Dimension as well. While he could still feel large progress in the Seventh, he felt that he would have gained even more had he been weaker.

There was no use in regretting it, but it was something that he kept in mind for the future. It would be a harder path, but he could still reach the end.

He also couldn't help but note that the creator of [Dimensional Cleanse] hadn't given him the Eighth Dimension Layer or the Ninth Dimensional Layer. The meaning behind this was obvious; he wanted Leonel to deduce the rest just like he had the first several layers. It would benefit him far more to do this.

Leonel stood to his feet. To his surprise, Little Tolly reacted, squirming up his arm and spreading across his hand, wrist, and up his shoulder and even part of his chest. He coated Leonel like a sleeve, turning his left arm into a gorgeous pattern of silver and white gold.

A slight smile spread across Leonel's face. He could feel that the little guy was trying to say sorry; it seemed that it was still forming more and more complex thoughts. He felt like a parent watching his little toddler grow up.

After a while, his expression grew more serious and his gaze became cold. He could feel the Forces singing around him, so he also knew that this world was going to collapse soon. The unfortunate part was that he didn't know how to go back.

He had to actively enter this space by clearing the puzzle, but when you were sent out, it was automatic. There obviously wasn't the same clear process. He had to figure something else out.

Suddenly, he felt movement from Little Tolly. The little guy was just messing around, feeling happy that Leonel didn't blame it. But the movement and the strong connection between the two of them made Leonel suddenly realize something.

'I'm thinking faster, but my Dream Force didn't increase. The only explanation...'

Little Tolly was acting like something akin to an Innate Node, but this time for his Dream Force.

Leonel's eyes widened, and he suddenly remembered something. That was right, one of the paths for Metal Spirits was related to Crafting Stamina and helping their partner to be able to craft for longer periods of time.

But this felt like it was beyond that. Leonel subconsciously felt that it wasn't just Crafting stamina that Little Tolly could help with, but there was a noted improvement to all of his Forces. Though not as exaggerated as improving an entire stage, this was surprising.

Leonel knew that helping Little Tolly breakthrough like this would give him access to all of the Spirits' Paths, but what he didn't expect was that the power would be so immediate.

Taking this path was supposed to be like making your Metal Spirit a jack of all, and master of none. But for Leonel to be able to feel this change so intimately, it felt more like... Little Tolly was already a master of all.

'It could only be that beast, that's the only explanation.'

Leonel shook his head. He had to think about this less and more about how to survive.

The obvious answer was to reverse the chemical structure he had used to get here, but that was stupid. He knew it was, so he didn't even try it. He didn't even know what "reverse" would mean in this context. What surface would he use to reverse the chemical structure? Up and down? Left right? Across all planes? He didn't even know.

The truth was that returning would likely have its own unique chemical structure, one that he wasn't strong enough to even begin deducing. There had to be something else.

Leonel's gaze flickered again and again. How to return home, how to return...

Suddenly, Leonel's left arm raised into the air on its own and tapped. Little Tolly did a small happy dance in him mind as though it had done something great, and Leonel's brows raised.

'Well... Even if he leads me into the middle of a blackhole, I might be able to live a few more seconds.'

Leonel jumped into the portal, but to his astonishment, he stood right where he had left, right beside El'Rion, and the latter even seemed to still be talking.

"-I'm not sure why you did that; quartz has an interesting structure, yes, but it's ultimately still a Third Dimensional material without any Force to speak of. It's only useful here because the target is Earth itself..."

El'Rion trailed off, looking at Leonel for the first time since he began his "payback." He could feel just how different Leonel was, and when he looked at the silvery white gold sleeve on his left arm, his pupils constricted.

From his words, it was clear that El'Rion was most definitely not a Crafter. But he was still a Pluto. He knew the aura of an Infinity Beast when he saw it.

No, it was more accurate to say that those of his family line would. Even weaker Pluto, though still far beyond the human race, wouldn't recognize what they were seeing. That was because the Infinity Beast... was the rarest creature in all of existence.

But how did Leonel change in the blink of an eye? And that quartz crystal... Wasn't it just in his hand; where had it gone?

"You..."

Leonel gave the boy a glance. At this point, that was all he could be bothered to see him as.

"Your Pluto Race is quite strong, right? Then you should probably be able to understand what's supposed to happen in this Zone. How about you tell me?"

El'Rion's brows shot up. He almost subconsciously answered as though he owed Leonel a response. This sort of feeling shouldn't come from a human. And why did him saying the Pluto Race was powerful leave such a... bad taste in his mouth?

"Of course, you could not tell me. But then I'd make repaying this favor of yours impossible," Leonel said with a bright smile. "How embarrassing would it be if the mighty Pluto Race couldn't repay their benefactors?"

El'Rion's expression darkened.

Chapter 2232: He Did

Leonel's words hit a sore spot, but it was also probably the easiest deduction he had made today. One didn't need to be nearly as smart as him to understand what was going on here.

The Pluto were in a strained situation, that much was obvious by the conversation between El'Rion and Shan'Rae, and even further by the actions of that Void Race entity. Leonel also now knew the value of these Incomplete Worlds. This world was valuable enough to be used as the top currency of these God Races, and more importantly than that, as the currency of the most powerful among them.

And yet, in order to repay this favor, the Pluto not only made the decision to use these Incomplete Worlds that could have been of great benefit to helping them out of their current situation, but they had also offended the Void Race and supposedly several other God Races. As though all of that wasn't enough, El'Rion, a junior of the Pluto Race, albeit of high standing, was given The Hourglass to command.

No matter how you sliced it, repaying this favor was so important to the Pluto Race that they were willing to make sacrifices to do so.

Of course, Leonel was very curious as to why this was. He didn't believe that there was anyone with such a good heart, and the current Fawkes were far too weak to demand anything of the Pluto Race. In fact, Leonel believed that they had never been even remotely strong enough, and it was instead a unique set of circumstances that allowed them to have the ability to cash in such a favor to begin with.

That meant there was a deeper reason, a more fascinating one, one that he probably wasn't even of high enough standing to be privy to. But whatever that reason was, it didn't matter to him for now. All that mattered was that this could be used as the leverage he needed to make this matter far easier on him.

He had already failed this Zone, that much was inevitable. However, his current understanding of Zones was beyond what it had been in the past, far beyond. Just because he had failed, didn't mean that he couldn't still reap the rewards, and it also didn't mean that he couldn't force the Zone to recognize itself as being cleared.

Ever since he had entered the Dwarven Race's Zone, he had come to understand that Zones were large constructions of Dream Force. That said, Eighth Dimensional Zones like this one were very different.

It had to be remembered that from the Seventh Dimension onward, treasures would be taken out of Zones, that meant they had a more physical form, a form that transcended beyond what could be expected of lower level Zones.

While this would make them more difficult to manipulate, Leonel was still quite confident. He wasn't even worried about returning home, all he was worried about was maximizing his chances here, and in order to do that he would need information.

He could gather this information himself, but it would likely take months, and time wasn't something that he felt like wasting if he had other options. As for dealing with this ... rather large baby here, he felt that it was as easy as turning over a palm, especially since he doubted it would cost El'Rion anything to speak of these things.

Thinking back to The Hourglass, Leonel believed that it was exactly because it existed that El'Rion and the other Pluto were so free here, and it was also because of this that he was confident that El'Rion would be able to meet his demands. That said... none of

this meant that the Pluto would be very happy about it, especially when he had just believed himself to have the upper hand.

"I don't-"

Leonel shook his head and sighed. "Let's skip the back and forth, shall we? You'll say you don't believe me, when in reality you already do. Then you'll ask me to prove myself, which I inevitably won't. And then you'll take action and do something to piss me off, and then I'll do the thing you claimed I couldn't that you already believed I could, and then we'll both be unhappy.

"So how about instead, I just say: Sorry for my rudeness, oh great Pluto. If you'll allow this humble human a chance to see his mother and future wife again, I'll be ever so grateful."

Ei'Rion's lip twitched. He had had more changes in facial expression today than he had in his last 14 years. His mother had always said he came out a deadpan baby, but now all of that seemed to be getting thrown out of the window.

Leonel's "praise" was even more grating on the ears now than when he had called the Pluto powerful. He had never thought that hearing positive affirmation would be so... disgusting.

He could tell that Leonel didn't even mean a word, and worse than that, he didn't even try to hide that he didn't. He could understand if Leonel was ignorant to the matters of the God Race, but it was impossible for him to be so after all of these events, and especially not with...

He looked down at the coat of silver and white gold runes that had taken over Leonel's left arm, feeling the annoyance within him growing.

After a moment, he simply stopped and exhaled a breath. It was as though he chose to not be annoyed anymore and simply wasn't.

Leonel smiled. He found that action to be somewhat familiar. He wondered when it would be Ei'Rion's turn to boil over and lose it.

"What do you want to know?"

"Don't you already know? This Zone, what is it, what's its purpose, which other bodies were taken over by the... two other entries, and how can I get the most out of it?"

Ei'Rion's expression flickered for a moment, but then he took out The Hourglass once more. The seconds ticked by and Leonel remained silent, he didn't seem to be impatient in the slightest. He was quite confident that Ei'Rion would answer.

And then he did.

Chapter 2233: Mistake

"... This ... Zone seems to be related to a so-called Silver Empire. It's facing destruction at the hand of outside forces. It seems that you were given my body because these forces include those from outside of this Incomplete World."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. When he realized what this meant, he almost smiled a bit bitterly as well.

These so-called "outside forces" could only be those from the Cataclysm Zone. Compared to the Pluto Race members, what were they worth? Had Leonel been able to keep El'Rion's body, this Zone wouldn't have been able to be any easier, it might even be the easiest Zone he had ever completed.

That said, there was no going back, and the matter also wasn't as simple as it seemed either. That's because without El'Rion, he wouldn't be able to understand this Zone so easily. He had gained El'Rion's body, not his memories, so he hadn't even known that a treasure as valuable as The Hourglass had been on him, he couldn't remember El'Rion holding any spatial treasures.

Setting aside those feelings, this explanation didn't feel complete, and there were too many questions. Was he supposed to save the Silver Empire? But with how real this Zone felt, wouldn't that change the timeline of the future? Or was the goal something else entirely?

"The Silver Empire is meant to be destroyed, but there is a tablet that you must recover before it can be. From my understanding, your... future wife is currently the Emperor, while your mother is the current leader of a family that goes by the Luxnix, she is called... Northern Star Order."

Leonel frowned.

Northern Star Order was one of the Hegemonic Titles of the Luxnix. Northern Star Order, Wise Star Order, and Snow Star Order, these three represented great things. The problem was that according to Wise Star order, there had only ever been one Northern Star Order in the history of the Luxnix, the rest having all been fabrications by him, all 13 of them.

Knowing this, the problem was obvious.

That one Northern Star Order should be his grandmother. His grandmother was old, but she wasn't this old. This timeline at best should be around the time Wise Star Order was born, at worst it was a generation before even Wise Star Order's father was born.

From Leonel's understanding, Northern Star Order should have been one of the very first Luxnix, so this didn't make any sense either. The only explanation was that Wise Star Order didn't even understand his own family's history, or... that old man had tried to con him again.

Now that he thought about it, basically everything he knew about Luxnix family history was told to him by that con man. But even worse than that, even if he had gone to the family record directly, Wise Star Order had already manipulated them so that it would appear as though 13 Northern Star Orders had appeared in their history, effectively weakening his grandmother's influence on the family. Why wouldn't he have altered everything else?

This was why Leonel hadn't even bothered to double-check. There was nothing to double-check against... until now.

Wise Star Order was an ambitious man, and it wasn't easy to whittle that ambition down with just a few chains. He was a man who had experienced countless years and generations, he had even survived in the Spiritual Domain, his patience was far greater than Leonel knew.

At the same time, though, the current Leonel wasn't the same Leonel of the past. Wise Star Order couldn't think faster than any longer, and even without his father's protections, he could kill Wise Star Order him...

Leone's thought came to a halt.

His father's death had taken quite a toll on him, and it had also exposed the fact that he was a far more caring man than Leonel knew, but that didn't change the fact that his old man was very particular about the kind of help he gave him.

Even when he was in the Rapax Nest, his father hadn't done anything to help him, and there had been countless Seventh Dimensional experts present. It could even be said that Velasco had made the situation worse. Because Velasco had appeared and killed all the Scholars, the Rapax Elders were freed from their battles and were able to close in on Leonel and the others.

Of course, in the end, they did so to reward Leonel with the black rod, but that could have very well ended badly.

If Velasco's glasses had told Leonel anything, it was that while his old man was soft at heart, he was hard in his actions. He wouldn't help Leonel with such a thing... unless he had to.

Back then, Wise Star Order had run circles around Leonel. Speed of thought or not, Leonel wasn't a fool, but he felt like a toddler. Could Wise Star Order be stronger than he knew?

And what was his purpose, exactly? Why did he feel the need to hide the history of the Luxnix?

And also, beyond that, his grandfather and his grandmother... Emperor Fawkes didn't seem like the type to randomly fall in love. As cruel as it sounded, Leonel had believed his grandmother to be a pawn in his grandfather's schemes for as long as he couldn't remember.

But at the same time, his grandfather seemed to be restricted to staying within Earth's territory. How had he even met his grandmother? And if he could leave Earth for a price, then why did he insist on paying it to meet his grandmother?

As Leonel was lost in thought, thinking of countless possibilities, he suddenly realized that El'Rion had fallen into silence despite not having explained everything quite yet. He looked over toward the young boy to see that his expression was actually quite solemn.

It wasn't a normal solemn, it was the kind that only appeared when one felt that they had made a mistake, a huge mistake... a mistake they couldn't reverse easily, a mistake they'd have to stay true to toward its ends.

And that expression had come right after mentioning the Luxnix family.

Chapter 2234: The God Beasts

Leonel didn't say anything, but he felt that he should have known after seeing that enormous Void Beast corpse in the skies, ridden by a race of beings he couldn't even fathom until this very moment.

It was easy for Leonel to ignore the legends of the Void Beast because this world was so weak. Even a reasonable person could conclude that the Void Beast and Infinity Beasts were only legends in this Incomplete World.

However, what was becoming clearer and clearer to Leonel was that... if not for the appearance of the Pluto Race, leading to the appearance of the Void Race and their corpse battleship, this Incomplete World wouldn't even know about these questions.

This wasn't the only matter to consider either. The Luxnix family was a mere Sixth Dimensional family in his eyes. Although they had gotten stronger after his grandmother's return to the Fawkes family, they were still subordinate to the Fawkes. Even though they only had the lowest level of the light side of the Northern Star Lineage

Factor, why would he assume that they had the capability to have access to anything at this unconscionable level?

Suddenly, Leonel's pupils constricted.

Who had told him about the highest levels of the Northern Star Lineage Factor? Wasn't it Wise Star Order? He wouldn't have even known otherwise.

The more Leonel thought about it, the more he felt that something was off.

Ei'Rion suddenly opened his mouth. Just when Leonel thought English would come out just like it had every time before, a language that sounded like the roar of dragons, with punctuation akin to claps of thunder, came out instead.

Leonel felt his eardrums burst and begin to bleed, but he didn't cover them, even circulating his Force so that he could heal them and hear more.

It only lasted a brief few seconds, but Ei'Rion turned to Leonel soon after. "I will go with you."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. It seemed that his previous assumption was incorrect. If Ei'Rion insisted on coming then his thoughts that this would be an easy matter with him wouldn't be even remotely true. It seemed that there were no cheat codes to Eighth Dimensional Zones.

"Are you going to tell me why? Or are you going to just do as you please?"

"This isn't a simple matter to explain," Ei'Rion said, somewhat exasperatedly.

"You seem far too concerned for someone with that hourglass on you."

"That isn't "that hourglass" it's "THE Hourglass", this distinction seemed very important to Pluto Race boy who was growing more agitated by the second. "Also, that item can't be used as freely as you think."

"You used it on me just fine."

"You're insignificant. The ties of Karma and the wear of time and space are almost non-existent on you. The more prominent the target, the deeper the Folds of Reality, the more effort it would take. Judging by what I've understood, it would take one of my seniors coming for The Hourglass to still be effective."

"And are they?" Leonel didn't react as though he cared about Pluto's slander at all. He was far more interested in the answer to this question.

"No, we've already paid too high a price for this. It's up to me."

"And me," Leonel added, in a playful mood. The more agitated he saw this Pluto boy, the funnier he thought it was.

El'Rion looked at him as though he might try to strangle a chicken. He was really running out of rope to give. He knew that Leonel was doing it on purpose, but that didn't make it any easier to deal with. Maybe God Races were too prideful to use such tactics, but he had never met a person with such a foul mouth before.

He still didn't know how Leonel seemed to have changed on a dime, but he didn't have time to think about it.

"Just come," he eventually said, placing a large hand on Leonel's shoulder and taking out The Hourglass.

Leonel didn't resist, but he still raised an eyebrow. "You're obviously taking me because you need me, if not you would have already left. So are you going to ruin your chances by not telling me what's going on?"

El'Rion's jaw set as the two vanished into thin air.

Leonel didn't ask again. He understood people quite well, even if they were God Race beings. He only needed to say it once and then let enough time pass by that El'Rion could pretend that it was his idea to explain.

Sure enough, the explanation came.

"You don't know why the God Races exists. The management of the formation of worlds is something that's done out of necessity, not out of a will for power. There's only a limited amount of resources that Existence can provide. Worlds need to die off, and you can't allow too many Worlds to sprout up in their place.

"Before the God Races, there were the God Beasts. They were the embodiment of Creation and Destruction, and they were able to keep the balance. Though, they were also at constant war.

"This was the natural path of evolution, a path that Existence allowed to occur. But for reasons unknown... Existence also tends toward chaos, towards disorder, towards death... Due to this, the God Beast of Creation has always been at a disadvantage.

"The greatest embodiment of this disadvantage are... The Regulators.

"They're born with every World and their responsibility is only to make sure that a cap of power is never exceeded and the rules of practice are followed. However, the problem is that they work using the very same Force that the God Beasts of Destruction use... Anarchic Force.

"The more Regulators do their job, the more Anarchic Force a World is filled with, and the closer to death it approaches. Eventually, a balance will be tipped once the concentration of Anarchic Force reaches a certain stage. At that point, just as quickly, a world will die, like a house of cards...

"If things continued like this, the God Beasts of Destruction would eventually win, but the process would be slow, too slow for them. The God Beasts of Destruction were not known for their patience. So, they created henchmen, henchmen that shared a small portion of their Bloodlines to spread chaos to the worlds."

Chapter 2235: The Northern Star

Leonel's pupils constricted. He could tell what El'Rion was getting at immediately.

He had only reacted like that after he mentioned the Luxnix family, and it was the Luxnix family that had access to the Northern Star Lineage Factor, the very Lineage Factor that ended in the Void Beast and the Infinity Beast, or in other words... the God Beast of Destruction and the God Beast of Creation.

The so-called henchmen of the Void Beasts had to be those of the dark side of the Northern Star Lineage Factor, that was the only conclusion. And sure enough...

"The God Beasts of Destruction realized a problem, though. Their bloodlines were far too powerful. Even the current God Races couldn't take them without dying agonizing, slow deaths. So they took a different approach, splitting the aspects of their Bloodlines into five pieces and building them up like stepping ladders.

"They created a legion of beasts, the Shadow Tail, the Dusky Steel Bat, the Aurora Black the Crimson Clawed Ape and the Death Pulse Deer... Each one took up a position in the armies of the God Beasts of Destruction and they were powerful. They were enormous beasts with wings that could crush the planets of this Incomplete World of yours and claws that could sever Stars into countless pieces.

"In the beginning, the God Beasts of Destruction felt that this would be enough. Their envoys were more powerful than they thought they'd be, and far more helpful as well, so it no longer seemed necessary to pass down their bloodline. They were haughty creatures to begin with, impatient, disdainful, and arrogant, if they didn't have to share their bloodlines, they wouldn't.

"But the God Beasts of Creation didn't roll over. Seeing the state of things and how the God Beasts of Destruction were acting, they realized that they could fight back in the same way, and it might even give them a chance at reversing the tide. So... they created their own Beast Envoys.

"The Snowy Star Owl, the White Stone Elephant, the Starry Tailed Fox, the Twinkling Light Bear... the Golden Tiger.

"The God Beasts of Destruction were on their back foot. Their Beast Envoys were incredibly powerful, but they couldn't compare to the Beast Envoys of the God Beasts of Creation. After all, they were beasts of destruction and chaos, how could they compare to God Beasts of Creation in... creating?

"Having given the God Beasts of Creation such an idea, the God Beasts of Destruction regretted their action, but it was already far too late to reverse things. At the same time, the God Beasts of Creation felt that they could seal things, to put a final nail in the coffin, to finally end things, so... they did what the God Beasts of Destruction couldn't and passed down their Bloodline.

"At first, they looked through the various God Races, or what they had once been, and realized that they couldn't do what needed to be done, and neither could the others, but interestingly enough, there was one race that was able to do so... and an unexpected race...

"The Human Race."

Leonel fell into silence, he knew that there was much more to this story and that El'Rion was far from finished, but his mind couldn't help but spin at a thousand miles an hour. It was suffocating the number of questions he had.

"The Human Race is born with a birth defect, but it's also that defect that allowed them to take on the power of the God Beasts of Creation. Their souls are born fused to their bodies, but this also makes it so that there's only one variable to consider from start to finish, as you change their bodies, you can easily change their souls at the same time given that you have enough power.

"Like this, one of the weakest races of Existence gained maybe the greatest power and Existence gained itself prosperity... a golden age the likes of which had never been seen before and would likely never be seen again.

"Unfortunately... this didn't last."

El'Rion fell into silence, looking toward Leonel with a darker expression than usual. Luckily, his rationality seemed to win over and he managed to calm himself. As for what his rationale was telling him, Leonel could guess by the way the story was going.

It seemed that the palpable disdain of the human race didn't just come from their weakness. He had vaguely felt that Shan'Rae's vitriol whenever she spat out the word human was much deeper than it seemed to be on the surface, but even when he realized this, he just chuckled.

What was this? A cliché line about how corruptible humans were and how much better other races were in comparison?

What a joke. How about they be granted infinite power first and see how they dealt with it. From what he could see, these God Races weren't much better. An entity that attacked his junior out of rage... what high horse did they have to sit on, exactly?

"As I said, Existence tends towards chaos, it's just a simple rule of law. Absolute Chaos must be formed first before everything can return to step one. The more energy Existence expends, the closer toward death it grows. Existence is the only Immortal in all of reality...

"The pressure of the golden age wasn't missed by Existence, but it did nothing, it could do nothing. Existence isn't an entity, it's simply an arbitrator of rules, and the God Beasts of Creation didn't break any rules, they simply followed their instinct. In fact, they did exactly as they were meant to and created...

"But, as Existence is the only Immortal, it is also the only infallible being in all of reality as well. They went overboard, spreading too much wealth and prosperity. Existence was quickly becoming overwhelmed and worlds began to collapse. Death and destruction spread ironically without even the God Beasts of Destruction doing a single thing.

"And that was when it appeared...

"The Northern Star."

Chapter 2236: Unchallenged

El'Rion looked up, his expression solemn, a touch of sadness and forlornness on his expression. It wasn't the kind of face that a child should make, but Leonel felt a hint of subtlety within it, the kind that told him that this expression wasn't perfectly his, but rather one that had been passed down.

It was an interesting feeling. But he felt that if the future could impact the past, then it wasn't too unacceptable. That said, he felt it was more complicated than that.

A race like the Pluto had abilities he couldn't fathom. Even turning back time across Existence wasn't outside their purview. Maybe they had a method of passing down important thoughts and feelings to their highest priority descendants...

"... The Northern Star is quite beautiful, isn't it?" El'Rion suddenly said.

Leonel's heart skipped a beat. Why did he suddenly feel that the Northern Star El'Rion was mentioning was the very same Northern Star he was so familiar with?

The Northern Star was the hope of sailors and adventurers of Earth, no matter how lost you were, so long as you pinpointed that Star in the skies, you could find your way home. It was the single constant even when death had you by the ankles.

However, these were mostly just folktales. The Northern Star couldn't even be seen on half of Earth, so most of the fanciful tales around it were just overblown and exaggerated. But... that didn't change the fact that even the smallest child of Earth knew of the Northern Star and the kind of hope it represented.

El'Rion couldn't be talking about the same star... right?

He was.

"It can be seen from everywhere, it's the constant in all of our lives, no matter where you are, it can orient your direction. But what most people probably aren't aware of is the fact that the meaning of the Northern Star is far more real and simultaneously philosophical than just that alone.

"The Northern Star is the central point of all of Existence, but it isn't at the center of all things, it's rather at the end of all things. It's the point that we all go toward, it's the final flash of light, the penultimate representation of life before only death is left.

"In the past, it didn't have a prominent name because it was too far away. But the closer we get to the death of Existence, the more prominent it is in the skies, the brighter it becomes, the more... hope it seems to spread..."

El'Rion fell into silence once again, trying to gather himself. His solemnness retreated and his deadpan expression took hold as he looked forward. The calmness he feigned only seemed to make the previous agitation all the worse in comparison.

"The source of all Star Force comes from the Northern Stars, and it's also the greatest center of death. Not many understand what Star Force is or what it represents, but I can tell you there is really no point in trying to in the first place. Just think of it as the fabric of reality, it's what gives Existence substance, but more importantly than that... it brings balance, or rather, a relative balance

"The more success the God Beasts of Creation had, the closer the Star became, the stronger by comparison the God Beasts of Destruction became. Star Force fueled them and they began to make a comeback, fiercer and stronger than before.

"This time, the God Beasts of Destruction succeeded. They passed down their bloodlines to the human race and suddenly one of the weakest races of Existence became the center of a blood war that ravaged reality.

"The details of this war are murky, but ultimately there was no winner. Although the God Beasts of Destruction had become stronger, the head start of the God Beasts of Creation was substantial. At the same time, it wasn't yet time for Existence to collapse, so the Northern Star shifted the balance once again when the time came, whittling away the strong advantage the God Beasts of Destruction had... but not before they had sunk their claws into every aspect of Existence.

"The Gods Beasts practically went extinct after that war, but Existence continued toward destruction, getting closer and closer. Everyday, the Northern Star grows larger, and as it does, the Void Beasts of destruction grow as well and soon they'll likely make a comeback of their own.

"Unfortunately, the time of the Infinity Beasts has passed. There isn't enough Momentum of Creation left."

Ei'Rion fell into silence.

Leonel didn't say anything. He felt that he was beginning to understand how important these Incomplete Worlds were now; they might very well be among the last worlds that Existence could create before everything collapsed. In fact, the fact there were so many incomplete Worlds might be a sign in and of itself. If not for the slow weakening of Existence and the approach of the Northern Star, there might have been far more Complete Worlds in this batch than what had actually occurred.

Even so, Leonel had more questions than answers right now.

Ei'Rion still hadn't explained how these two separate Lineage Factors had suddenly become linked. Was it because of the Northern Star? In that case...

Leonel's eyes narrowed. Could the Northern Star be the constellation of the Lineage Factors, forcefully linking them and causing the strength of one to be dependent on the weakness of the other? In that case, what happens to Leonel when the two are fused like this?

Also, how is even possible for Leonel to fuse them? It can't be that he's the first if the people of the Cataclysm Zone had both tablets as well, right? That doesn't make sense?

More importantly than that, how are even the likes of the Pluto allowing such tablets to circulate at all? Why haven't they gathered them all up yet? More dark side henchmen would only speed up the descent toward chaos, while more light side henchmen would only exacerbate the problem, no? Both should be eradicated?

And there was something else that Ei'Rion had conveniently not mentioned...

If even the human race could be disdained for a now faint connection, then how were the Void Race allowed to prance around unchallenged? What was their relation to all of this?

Chapter 2237: Timeless Event

Leonel frowned. There was something obvious that he was missing, and that was El'Rion's reaction. Since he had reacted so violently, and even insisted on joining himself, then it likely meant that he would do something about this and they weren't ignoring the problem. But... Wasn't this too nonchalant? If this was such a big matter, why were the Pluto sending a junior? Something was off here; he was missing large bits of information.

"If this matter is so important, why are they sending you?" Leonel asked.

El'Rion looked slightly offended when he heard this, but he quickly settled down.

"You don't understand."

"So politics," Leonel answered simply, and El'Rion seemed to be quite embarrassed because Leonel's answer was spot on, so much so that he didn't even want to continue explaining. But, in the end, his better judgement won out.

"There are many factions among the God Race, each one with different thoughts on how to deal with this situation. Most believe that passivism is the best choice. The last time the scales were tipped, the timeline toward destruction was accelerated."

Leonel nodded. The "good guys" won, and instead of that being a win, it ended up being a loss. And obviously, they couldn't side with the "bad guys" or else they'd just be shooting themselves in the foot. Indeed, it did sound best to just sit back and ignore everything, hoping that the natural path of balance would extend their lives for the longest. But this... also seemed quite defeatist, no? The mighty God Races were just waiting for their deaths? It was almost amusing.

Then again, maybe they were just like humans. El'Rion had said that the only Immortal in all of reality was Existence itself. That meant that even these "Gods" had finite lifespans. Maybe they felt that they would long be dead by the time the Northern Star was the only Star in the sky, it would be someone else's problem by then. They just wanted to hold onto the power they had for now.

As expected, El'Rion's expression was quite dark when he said this. Clearly, he wasn't resigned to this sort of Fate either. Leonel found it to be a bit cute. Then he felt that maybe he was being a bit too nonchalant about this. He didn't know why, but he couldn't quite drum up the momentum to... give a damn.

El'Rion took a breath, steadying himself. He really was all over the place today; just what was happening to him? He was better than this.

"... Their thoughts have some logic to it. The humans that could reach the highest realms of the Northern Star Lineage Factor all died in the war. Those that are left can at most reach the level of the highest envoys, but those bloodlines within humans are far weaker than they would be in the real deal. This is also true for the God Beast of Creation and Destruction as well, but even a fraction of their power was enough to place humans on the same level as us God Races. Well, at least near the middle levels of us God Races."

Leonel thought about the visions of those massive beasts he had seen whenever he progressed his Lineage Factor, and then he thought about the power he had in comparison to that, and he couldn't help but nod to himself.

The Snowy Star Owl he had seen when he awakened his Lineage Factor initially had been able to cross an entire galaxy with a single flap of its wings. The Dusky Steel Bat could envelop a planet with its wings. But in Leonel's eyes, they were "mere" Sixth Dimensional and Seventh Dimensional Lineage Factors, they weren't even worth much in this Incomplete World, let alone in the outside world.

So staying hands off... made sense. Their existences were inconsequential while they risked the end of everything if they interfered with the wrong matter.

Seeing Leonel be so amused with himself, El'Rion gave him a glance.

"There is also a minority faction who think the best thing to do to remain neutral is to eradicate all humans from the face of Existence."

El'Rion unfortunately didn't get the response he wanted out of this.

"Let me guess, the Void Race?" Leonel asked with a laugh.

El'Rion's gaze flickered. "... No."

"Oh?" Leonel responded, seemingly somewhat surprised, but not really. He felt that a Void Race wanting to commit mass genocide was too on the nose.

"-They're even more extreme. They believe that the best way to extend the life of Existence is to erase most of the Worlds that remain. If there's a second faction after those that want to remain perfectly neutral, it's them. That's because the Void Race had evolved into a Race that seemed to have an ability that might be able to... reset Existence."

Leonel raised an eyebrow.

"You saw it. They can destroy worlds and absorb them into their being. Just this action alone maintains the balance exactly as is. Every time a world is about to be destroyed, one of their Ancestors absorbs it instead. That action hides the destruction from the Northern Star and everything remains the same. The Northern Star hasn't moved any closer in the last at least several generations."

Leonel chuckled. Wasn't there an obvious weakness to this "solution"? What happened when one of their Ancestors died? The worlds they had absorbed would surely be noticed by the Northern Star then, at that point it would just be delaying the inevitable.

"You seem to have thought of the problem as well, but they feel that they can find a solution, it's just that their Ancestors haven't grown powerful enough yet to break through that final barrier, to exceed the limits of the... Ninth Dimension. They want to sacrifice as many worlds as they need to toward that end."

Once again, El'Rion didn't receive the response he wanted.

"So they want to be the universe's janitor, how noble of them."

El'Rion was truly speechless this time. He really didn't know how to deal with this man.

"You still haven't told me, though," Leonel changed the subject. "What's got you so agitated this time?"

"... There's a Timeless Event that's about to begin."

"Timeless Event?"

"It's an event that will occur no matter what changes in the past or the future."

Chapter 2238: Why Bother?

"A Timeless Event, huh..." Leonel said softly.

"Timeless Events usually happen when the Northern Star reached a new stage. Existence won't allow anyone to reverse such a thing, or more accurately, it's impossible to reverse. The one thing that can't be fought against is Existence itself. And this time..."

El'Rion came to a stop. The stream of stars and galaxies that had been blowing by them came to a stop, and they stood above a familiar huddle of three planets, but they were much different than what Leonel remembered.

The Three Pillar Sector was the home of the Luxnix family and two others, namely the Viola and Montex. The other two seemed to be irrelevant to the matter at hand, but Leonel still kept their names in the back of his mind because he felt that none of this was as it seemed.

If all of this was really a scheme of Wise Star Order, then in all likelihood, everything had been done for a very specific purpose. Of course, Wise Star Order was also a master at sleight of hand and could very easily make him focus on something that he shouldn't be focused on at all, but his mind now was on a completely different level than it usually was. He wouldn't be tricked so easily.

In the past, the three planets were in a perfect sort of harmony. One golden with swirling white clouds, another violet with dark hues of black, and the final with countless mountainous regions that could even be seen from the depths of space.

Today, this territory was that of the Silver Empire, and the planets didn't look like what he remembered at all.

"This Force, how can it be here?" El'Rion's expression changed once more. "I've made a mistake, I shouldn't have come so casually. This really isn't something that I should interfere in."

El'Rion's expression settled down, and his words came out in a calm and calculated analysis. He had clearly seen something that he didn't like in the slightest and wanted to back out as soon as he could.

Leonel didn't say anything. He felt that he understood what El'Rion was trying to get at, or more accurately, he seemed to have instantly understood what Force he was talking about. A spark went off through his Dreamscape and it all pointed toward a single person... Rychard of the Viola family and his Violet Force.

And if that was the case, it explained everything he was seeing below.

It was like he had been transported back to the 19th century Earth. There were billowing columns of black fumes, projected out from factories that looked as though they had been pulled out straight from a black and white movie.

Workers moved around like slaves, transporting things in and out of these large factors that took up all three planets. They seemed to cover every inch except for a single patch on the former Planet Luxnix, or rather soon to be. This patch was vibrant with greenery and a river of... Violet.

This violet, though... he felt something far different from it. Even when Rychard used that Force, he didn't feel moved. But now, he felt a great amount of danger.

If he had been there when Rychard lamented his Lineage Factor, maybe he would have understood somewhat...

Rychard had said that it felt like someone had played a sick joke on his family, giving them a power that they couldn't make proper use of at all. It was like a tumor within their soul, leeching away their lives with every passing moment. It was a truly devastating chain to be burdened with.

Leonel's smile faded, and the coldness of his gaze returned. He still didn't understand what was going on, but there was one person who could give him an answer. He looked within the Segmented Cube.

He probably should have expected it. The script practically wrote itself.

Wise Star Order was nowhere to be found.

In fact, if Leonel thought back, he had been nowhere to be seen ever since his father died, he just hadn't bothered to take note of it because he didn't care. And why would he need to appear at all? If this was a Timeless Event, then that meant that he didn't need to put his hand on the scale anymore, he had already done his job and victory was his.

"You shouldn't have come at all if you thought it was a Timeless Event," Leonel said casually.

Ei'Rion froze, but he didn't know how to respond to that. Indeed, he was far too impulsive. What could he do to change a Timeless Event?

"No..." he said, somewhat forced. "Timeless Events are variable in that no one knows exactly what aspect of them definitely has to happen and what parts can be tweaked. A bomb might have to explode and kill many people, but the word many might be variable. It could be that only a select combination of people have to die, while the rest can be saved."

"You made resurrecting people sound like it was impossible, but now you want to save people who should die?" Leonel asked blandly. He didn't seem to be accusing Ei'Rion because he had never taken his words seriously in the first place.

"You... are a truly aggravating individual."

"Thank you," Leonel said. "Now can you tell me what this supposed Timeless Event is?"

"... Soon, many citizens of this Silver Empire will be gathered up and slaughtered for their... parts. They'll be brought to this factory and will be refined, and it will be allowed because they are... demons."

"Sounds simple enough to stop, just destroy the factories."

"What about TIMELESS EVENT do you not understand?!" El'Rion's voice nearly came out in that dragon's roar once again. "If we destroy these factories, they'll come up with another method, a different approach, a different path that leads to the same thing."

Leonel smiled. "Then tell me again. Why did you bother coming?"

El'Rion saw red and suddenly punched out at Leonel, his fist carrying the weight of worlds. He had completely forgotten to hold back.

Chapter 2239: Dream Step. Dream Shock.

Leonel's expression was already cold, but it was even more calculating than that. He had already felt the twitch of the start of El'Rion's action before he even moved with intention. Inwardly, he still found it amusing, but there was nothing amusing about the power of the fist approaching him right this moment. There was no facing it, the only option was to dodge. And luckily, he was ready to do so.

His steps moved at the same moment El'Rion did, his head tilting to the side, and his body narrowing from El'Rion's perspective.

For a long while, Leonel had thought about maybe learning a dedicated technique for his movement, thinking that it might help boost himself to an all-new level. But every time he entered a situation like this one, he realized why he never had. Calculating which step to take was far better than any movement technique he could learn from someone else.

'Let's call it... Dream Step.'

His hair fluttered as the roaring beast that was El'Rion's strike flashed by his cheek, leaving a searing heat on their surface, but when had he ever feared heat?

BOOM!

Even in the depths of space, there seemed to be the boom of wind and the collapse of the sound barrier, but Leonel realized that it was far more devastating than that. It was more like reality itself, the fabric of space, the Folds of Reality, had collapsed. It was truly ridiculous that a 14-year-old had such power. What would he be like after finishing puberty?

Leonel reached forward with two fingers and jabbed them into the Pluto youth's ribcage. The latter was so large compared to him that his fingers would easily fit through the gaps, but slipping through was one matter, actually piercing through this tough, greyish-blue skin was a different matter entirely.

However, Leonel didn't plan on piercing El'Rion's skin. He had been in the latter's body already; he knew that it was very similar to that of humans aside from some "small" difference. He had not one stomach, but four of them. He had not one heart, but two of them. His muscle fibers made what Leonel was proud of seem like more of a joke than anything else. But... the liver was still the liver.

Spear Force raged to life on the tips of his fingers, growing pointed and flashing with a bright gold.

BANG!

Leonel's two fingers pierced into the right side of El'Rion's body, his timing perfect.

El'Rion was slow to react, having regretted his punch the moment he threw it out. That was when he felt a sudden jarring pain. At first, he hadn't felt that it was anything; he only wanted to let Leonel hit him out of apology... or that was what he told himself. He didn't know if he could dodge even if he had tried his very best.

But right then, his nerves seemed to have been fried, and his entire body shut down. He shuddered and fell to a knee. He would have even fallen to the planets below if not for Leonel grabbing onto his shoulder with a palm, squeezing down.

Even with him kneeling like this, he was still much taller than Leonel, and the latter had to reach up to grip him. Even so, he suddenly felt very small, and somewhat embarrassed. He looked down like a child that had done something wrong, and for the first time, Leonel felt that this behemoth actually looked like he was 14 years old.

Leonel actually felt somewhat bad for a moment. In truth, he had cheated as well. In the last moment, he realized that his strength wouldn't be enough to pierce El'Rion's defenses, so he had added something unexpected to his Spear Force... Dream Force.

His Spear Domain Lineage Factor was perfectly designed to accept the power of other Forces; that was maybe its foundational strength. So, it had happened seamlessly.

He used his Dream Force to amplify the feedback El'Rion felt from his strike, amplifying a dull quake into a flood. He had never been able to emit his Dream Force in the past, but now that he had his Emulation Spatial Force Innate Note, not to mention his Domains, it was no longer that difficult for him. He had gotten much more used to the feeling after Assimilating Lionel as well, though that power had already faded.

El'Rion's body had shut down, but it was just a trick of the mind, one that he would have probably shrugged off quite easily if he wasn't a child who felt that he was in the wrong.

Leonel let El'Rion rise after the latter had recovered.

'Two new abilities in just a short few seconds, not bad. I should spend more time on my Ability Index. Let's call this one Dream Shock.'

"Better?" Leonel asked.

El'Rion didn't respond. He felt bad, but that didn't mean he had stopped thinking that Leonel was a bit of an asshole. That said, he realized that this man was doing this on purpose, and getting frustrated was only playing into his hands.

This time, he would truly take his time to calm down. He was a Pluto; he couldn't keep allowing this to happen.

Leonel smiled but he didn't say anything. An agitated Pluto wasn't a useful Pluto; how would he make use of him if he was a loose cannon? Things were much better like this.

At that moment, a Starship suddenly flashed from the distance, coming out from a spatial tunnel. The markers of Shield Cross Stars rose to the skies, and those familiar cool uniforms were lined across the bow of the ship.

Leonel's senses pierced by them and into the ship, finding several barriers. But with a release of his Dream Domain, seeing through those barriers was as easy as breathing.

He froze.

Initially, he didn't care very much; there were just a large number of prisoners, likely being taken to those factories down below. However, deep within, he saw a man chained up, wearing broken silver armor that was all too familiar with.

Then El'Rion's words flashed in his mind.

'Aina?'

Leonel vanished before El'Rion could react.

Chapter 2240: Crushed Slowly

Leonel didn't spare the time to think about what relation Shield Cross Stars might have to this matter, nor did he think about how this might be tied to the Timeless Event. His body moved on its own, and his speed was blazing.

Why should he be surprised? It was a deduction he felt was obvious, even though he had never thought about it too clearly, especially after he had decided to crush the Human Domain. After he had thwarted the plan of "God" and the Bishop, then continued to do so once again in the Camelot Zone, he had offended a mysterious organization.

Then, not long afterward, Shield Cross Stars targeted him, leading him to become a Fugitive.

Could there even be such a coincidence in this world?

He could feel his Mage Core rip Force from the surroundings, forcing the Spatial Force to bow in obedience as he crossed into the flying space of the Starship instantly.

Those of Shield Cross Stars didn't expect to suddenly be attacked like this. Their flags were flying high, and who of the Human Domain didn't know of their standing? Such a standing had only solidified further after they had crushed the Silver Empire beneath their boots. Who still dared to attack them?

"Spatial Force user! Deploy the barriers!"

Cross Elder Avan had yet to be born yet, maybe even his grandfather hadn't even been born yet. This current mission was being led by a certain Cross Elder Cristal, a woman built like a behemoth, standing with hulking shoulders and an even fiercer face. The way the patented metallic skirt of Shield Cross Stars swayed between her legs beneath the forceful nature of her Force made it seem as though it was made of silk rather than metal.

She spotted Leonel with a sharp gaze. Although she could tell that Leonel was only in the Seventh Dimension, she felt that something was off about this matter. While it was possible that he was a straggling member of the Silver Empire taking a long shot at revenge, having lost his head to fury, anyone who knew Cross Elder Cristal knew that she did everything by the book.

Even though she could crush a Seventh Dimensional expert with a single look, she still forced them to deploy the shield, solidifying the Spatial Force in the region and ripping away what she thought was Leonel's greatest advantage. But soon enough, she realized that her caution actually wasn't enough.

At that moment, the pull of Leonel's Mage Core surged and shredded the barriers apart. The restrictions that had once been able to hold him in place were torn apart, fueling his Spatial Force further and allowing him to jump forward even faster.

Cross Elder Cristal's eyes narrowed. The defensive barrier was already up, so one could say that by deploying a spatial lock she was doing far more than was necessary. This wasn't a Tier 2 Starship like the ones in Leonel's possession; this was a tried and true Tier 1 Starship. Its power wasn't just a small bit greater, and its size was at least that of ten planets.

"Ready the cannons."

Another crew might have questioned why their commander was taking things so seriously, but this group had long since learned that questioning Cristal was a quick path to death. They aimed the cannons that could kill even Overlords with a single stroke toward the swiftly approaching Seventh Dimensional expert, already ready to fire.

"Fire."

Leonel vanished. He appeared before the defensive barrier, his hand stretching out. Under the astonished gazes of the crew and the almighty Cross Elder, the barrier crumbled beneath Leonel's palm as though it was nothing more than ash in the wind.

Leonel's current Craftsmanship was on a level even Life Grade Crafters couldn't fathom. If he still allowed this sort of barrier to stop him, creating as the peak technology of a race not even capable of being at the peak of an Incomplete World, what breakthroughs he had made would only be worthless.

With a step, Leonel crossed the shattered motes of light, a sort of deathly beauty surrounding him as his spear appeared in his hands and his third-tier armor surrounded him.

"Morales?!" Cross Elder Cristal barked. "State your name! How dare the Morales interfere in the matters of Shield Cross Stars?!"

Leonel's abilities weren't exactly like she remembered the Morales to be, and she had also never seen a Morales without dark hair and eyes, but it was also hard to deny what she was seeing before her. She instantly decided to probe to see if she was correct about her assumption, but all she got in return was a blade.

No. it wasn't a blade. It was a raging tornado of swirling Spear Force.

Cross Elder Cristal went pale. When had the Morales produced a spearman with this level of skill? She didn't even realize that she had already forgotten that Leonel was only in the Seventh Dimension.

The Spear Force didn't even touch her, but the instant it vanished, her subordinates fell to the deck one after another, and Leonel had already crossed by her, vanishing into the ship.

She was violently shaken awake. "ALERT!"

Leonel, who had already entered the ship, found that all the high lights were turned off, replaced by flashing, deep rouge warning lights, supplemented by a blaring sound that made the ears want to scream.

To his back, he sensed an oppressive aura pressing down on him.

His Spatial Force felt more useless in this place than anywhere else. The best barrier was dense Force of all kinds, it made it unstable to teleport anywhere, and unfortunately, the walls of this Starship were flooded with Force pouring in from the core. Leonel could only run the normal way, and obviously, he couldn't outpace an Ancestor.

But he could outsmart one.

His gaze flickered with a dense cold light as his stance shifted, dodging out of the way of a strike coming from his back and cutting a corner.

He understood this ship like the back of his hand, and he had a feeling that even this Cross Elder wasn't intimately familiar with this maze-like ship.

At the same time, this Ancestor couldn't attack with her full force for fear of injuring her companions.

He would crush her slowly.