

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2301: Heartless Monster

A rush of silence shot through the surroundings, even the Half Spiritual Overlord was stunned. That blast hadn't come from one of her people, their defenses were extremely powerful, but their offenses could only be directed under the hands of a master. This was one of the weaknesses of such large-scale natural formations.

However, she was the only one who could control enough of the formation to threaten Leonel's life, and only one person could use the formation at a time on top of that. And since she most definitely hadn't taken action, then...

She already knew what the answer was. Someone on Leonel's side had actually betrayed him. Despite the situation, she was too stunned to speak, and happiness wasn't her immediate emotion.

There was something sad about seeing a genius like this fall, even during this battle she had mostly wanted to capture Leonel and deal with him, she had some inkling about the kind of trouble that was coming over the horizon and people like Leonel were the kind they needed, it was just that his edge was far too sharp.

But now...

She looked at the hole that had gone through Leonel's chest and watched as his life began to fade. Even after several moments, she didn't know what to do, and because she hadn't done anything, the other Half Spirituals didn't do anything either.

Of course, they didn't feel the same way as their Overlord did, they only didn't move out of respect for her. If it was up to them, maybe they would have acted to cut Leonel's corpse into bloody ribbons just to make sure that he really was dead.

Despite the fact Leonel was now gone, he had left them vulnerable, his death didn't even feel worth it. Just how much effort had they put into making it to this point? And now the formation their Ancestors had put their blood, sweat, and tears into was no more. Would they even have the same standing in the Human Domain any longer? What about when the other races recovered and began their attack once more?

The more they thought about it, the more enraged they were at the dead Leonel. They felt that his death had been too easy. Plus, a man who would be betrayed by his own

people had a character that spoke for itself. If he could be cut down at such a time, how could he have been a good, noble leader?

Whether it was he or his father, neither were good people.

Within the Morales army, the shock was palpable. They had gotten used to Leonel being infallible, they had gotten used to being infallible themselves as well. Even after so many died under the attacks of the Overlord, they felt nothing. After all, Leonel would just resurrect them later and everything would be fine, just like before.

But now that Leonel was dead... Didn't that mean that all their comrades were dead as well? And what about the future of the Morales? This was a Patriarch that had accomplished so much in a short time, was his life really going to be cut short like this?

"Was that you?"

In a corner, hushed voices spoke.

"No, I didn't take action. That kid practically has a thousand eyes, it feels like nothing escapes his vision, I wouldn't try to use such a simple ploy to deal with him. But maybe I just overestimated him."

"Then who?"

The two looked toward a region. The beams were too fast, and they were all focused on the battle. Only the starships in the immediate vicinity would know exactly which starship had fired, and it wouldn't be long before they reacted.

As expected, after a brief pause, the starships in the vicinity all backed away and aimed their cannons toward the same exact location. There was no doubt who had taken action now.

"It's her? According to our intelligence, isn't she the sister of the First Nova's woman? How could she be the one to betray him?"

They had all made the same assumption, it only made sense that Leonel had given such an important task to this person. He was aware that there were hidden means within the Morales family that hadn't exposed themselves to him just yet, so he would only trust those closest to him to act as he wanted them to.

But now...

Yuri gripped the controls, her fury still boiling. In fact, she was furious that she could only kill Leonel like this. He deserved much worse, far worse.

However, just as she was thinking this, the skies crackled and boomed, countless shimmering blue shields the size of planets appearing around the two armies.

Shield Cross Stars had appeared, and even several of their Cross Elders had as well. It was clear what their goal was.

In order to jump so far through space and appear so immediately, it would have cost a significant amount of energy remaining in the Fusion Cores of their starships, upwards of at least 10%, which was worth years of function.

There was only one reason they would make such a big move: they wanted to deal a devastating blow to the Morales.

The Half Spiritual Overlord frowned. She didn't believe for a single moment that they would dare to act so boldly in her territory if their formation hadn't crumbled. In fact, such a large jump through space wouldn't have even worked without it.

She sent a gaze toward Leonel's corpse. Even dead, this boy was causing her so many problems.

The Spirituals Religion was its own thorn in the eyes of the Cult and Shield Cross Stars. It was a link between the Spirituals and the human race that many weren't aware of... but these powers definitely would be.

It seemed that the calamity of her Spirituals Religion hadn't come to an end just yet.

Overlord Veiga stood at the helm of a Tier 1 starship. She was ready for any contingency plans the Morales might have, she didn't believe that they would send a junior to handle all of their problems like this, the Ancestors were probably just a thought away, and truthfully, she hoped they would appear.

That would help her to deal with all of these problems in a single sweep.

The Morales, as presently constructed, didn't need to exist. Their Constellation, however... that was far more interesting.

As for the Spiritual Religion, she knew of their connection to the Suiard family, and she knew that there was another hand making moves in the shadows. It was best if they were crippled as well.

She had to thank Leonel for making things so easy on her.

'You're welcome.'

A voice suddenly echoed in her mind that made her freeze.

Leonel's corpse suddenly gripped its fist and the sparkling streams of golden dust stopped dispersing into the depths of space and formed a barrier that solidified around the entire battlefield...

Trapping Shield Cross Stars within.

Overlord Veiga immediately tried to activate the mass teleportation of the starships, reacting more quickly than even more Ancestors should be capable of, but it was useless. Once again, the spatial lock on the region had returned and they were trapped.

The "dead" Leonel slowly rose, the hole in his chest seemingly not impacting him in the slightest.

He was already a heartless monster. He might as well look the part.

Chapter 2302: Leonel's Web

His plot was quite simple, truth be told. Well, at least it was simple to Leonel. The actual thought required not only a deep understanding of his own people, but also how the enemy might be reading and reacting to his actions, the latter of which probably seemed far more difficult, when in reality both took quite a bit. After all, he had to understand his own people intimately, and often, the closer you were to a person, the easier it was to shroud their true intentions or what their weaknesses were in your mind.

Leonel had known from the beginning that his entering the Dream Plane couldn't be hidden, and this wasn't quite his fault.

For one, in a world where so few had the ability, any new addition would be immediately sensed. Secondly, there was the fact that just by giving him a warning, Maxx was exposing Leonel to the elements.

As such, Leonel had lost the right to work from the shadows from the very beginning, and he had to approach this in a different way. Since everyone thought him to be an arrogant young boy who thought too much of himself, why not play the part?

After just a moment, he made the choice to not only not make a foolish attempt to hide himself from the world, but he also pushed it to the max, leaking out his aura any and everywhere and arrogantly making his presence known.

To Veiga, he probably seemed like a brash idiot whose Dream Force control was limited and crude. Of course, his Dream Force control truly was like that, at least compared to experts like Veiga. He had great talent in Dream Force, but he didn't have the systematic training that those of the Dream Pavilion had, and he was almost entirely self-taught considering just how rare Dream Force affinities were in this world.

That only made his ploy all the easier, but this was only the first part.

None of this was enough to lure Veiga in, or more accurately, none of it was enough for him to lure her into a situation where he had the de facto upper hand, that was where the latter stages of his plan began.

The first leg came from the information he had gathered. He might have released Amery, but that didn't mean that he hadn't gotten anything out of him, and the information he did have wasn't restricted to the Suiard family either. As the fiance to the Heiress of the Half Spirituals, how could Amery not have some information about his in-laws?

Of course, this information was scarce, but it was enough for Leonel to be aware of the large scale formation that protected the Spirituals and also be aware of some of its baser functions... like the ability to lock down space.

And then it came down to how he would use that information.

He had learned from the seven memory wells that he had absorbed just how useful the Dream Plane could be. It wasn't just about gathering up clues and knowledge while others were unsuspecting, but it could also be used to subtly suggest people.

Of course, this wasn't an ability that could be used casually unless one had the Ability Index to match it, and even then it was hard to change a powerful person's mind. That meant you had to prey on their basal instincts, pulling at strings that already existed and make them looser, more susceptible to manipulation.

This was what Leonel was certain the demoness had done with the relationship between his father and uncle. Maybe she found it to be amusing, sealing away the talent of one and making the other the crown jewel of the Human Domain. Maybe she wasn't to see how interesting it would be if they fought it out, and maybe the reason she had stopped Leonel from using his own bloodline to save Aina was because she was unhappy with him ruining her experiment.

Whatever it was, that sliver of understanding allowed Leonel to understand just how the Dream Plane could be used. It wasn't as straightforward as hiding what his plans were, he had to also be mindful of the mental state of his people and which of them could be used for what.

And that was when he thought of the perfect plan. Yuri couldn't have been more perfect for this job even if she tried. In fact, even if he engineered a person to fulfill just this one role, he would just end up with a clone of her.

The specialty of the Spirituals array was that it was meant to protect the freedom of Half Spirituals. Due to this, it couldn't be used against anyone with Spiritual Bloodline within them, and the formation ignored all those with that lineage.

That said, Leonel couldn't just strap a rocket to Yuri's back and send her in. What good would that do? She was far too weak in comparison to Overlords. Let alone an Overlord, she wasn't even a match against the weakest of Ancestors.

However, if she was the one to act, the formation wouldn't retaliate, and thus she was perfect as a tipping point, a final push to get them over the hump.

So he gave her a simple task. Once he collapsed the outer ring of the formation, she would take action. While shrouded in the power of the formation, the Half Spiritual Overlord wouldn't even sense Yuri before she acted. With a single strike, the Overlord would fall without even realizing what happened, and then the rest would be easy.

It was the perfect plan, and it took advantage of the greatest weakness of the Spirituals.

From Veiga's perspective, it was also perfect. In fact, she would find it amusing how Leonel would try to mask his attentions by giving everyone in his army different decoy orders. With her skill, she could easily tell what was true and what was false...

But that would be her downfall.

She targeted Yuri immediately, peeling away the layers of protection on her mind. It was all too easy, especially since she knew that Aina was nowhere in this world, where else could Aina be if not dead?

And in the end she won... Or so she thought she did.

All the while, she had been intertwining herself further into Leonel's web.

Chapter 2303: End Result?

Leonel didn't seem to be in a hurry to make a move. He had the whole world in the palm of his hands, they moved to his rhythm, not the other way around. He gave the hole in his chest another glance before his Force rumbled, and Instant Recovery activated.

Being far stronger than it had been in the past now that he had evolved it to an Eighth Dimensional Lineage Factor, even a beam that could kill Ancestors instantly wasn't immune from his abilities. Quite quickly, the hole in his chest was fixed, and he finally gave Veiga a glance.

The Cross Elder still didn't look like much had changed on the surface, but what good were her facial expressions to Leonel any longer? He could see her very soul in the Dream Plane, and he knew exactly how shaken she was.

"I don't believe I've had the pleasure," Leonel said with a smile. "Though, I can't say that it is one even now. I've lost count of the number of times Shield Cross Stars has tried to kill me."

The Half Spiritual Overlord frowned. She could feel that the formation had returned, but it was most definitely not in her control any longer. She suddenly felt like she was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

On one side, there was the enemy that had come to take her down, and on the other side... well, there was an enemy that had come to take her down. Now, one of them was trapped within the formation she had thought was largely shattered, and she was trapped with them.

Leonel gave her a knowing glance, but ultimately didn't say anything. This formation in his hands, especially now that his mind had connected to the Dream Plane was more than enough to deal with all situations. Of course, he didn't plan on destroying the Half Spirituals, and they were just another pawn in his game. But they didn't need to know that just yet.

He had learned quite a lot in his short life, not the least of which was that people often didn't appreciate the things that were given to them on a silver platter. The Spirituals had to understand that he was doing them a favor.

The other races might be afraid of what the Vast Bubble had in store for them, but that hadn't stopped them from teaming up to attack his father, now had it? It was clear and obvious to him that many of them were trying to play both sides, trying to thread a needle that would allow them to live beyond their usefulness to the humans that ruled them from the Complete World above.

He didn't need fence sitters. He needed people that would follow his orders properly. If he had to adjust for every possible betrayal like he did today, even he couldn't guarantee whether he would succeed or not.

If he suddenly gained a bunch of people who had second thoughts about everything he did, just how much pressure would he be under to keep them all in line? He would be much better off just directly killing all of the people so that they wouldn't be a problem for him in the future.

Leonel turned his attention back to Veiga, but it seemed that the latter didn't want to speak.

"LEONEL!" The shriek was filled with rage, but Leonel only sent a glance toward it. "Shut up."

A violent pressure descended toward Yuri, and even the outer hull of her starship almost shattered to pieces as she shuddered. She almost felt as though her soul was

about to be ripped out of her body and she seemed to snap out of her daze, but Leonel had already ignored her.

He had been doing a lot of that recently. He didn't care to deal with Yuri, and she had always felt like a great annoyance to him.

Of course, he understood her perspective and where her thoughts came from... He just didn't care. His own emotions were already wild and unfettered; he didn't have the time to help out someone else deal with theirs.

The instant he looked back toward Veiga, he raised a hand, and the starships all aimed toward her, each one gaining a clone they hadn't had before.

Veiga immediately began to shout out orders, causing a linked shield to form, but with a single blast, Leonel perfectly targeted all of their weaknesses, blasting them to smithereens. And then, he moved.

Golden dust particles danced around Leonel as his arm reached out, a black rod appearing.

The black spear trembled, and a billowing black fog shot out from it. Its blade suddenly spanned dozens of kilometers, all wrapped in a nebula of golden dust. He used so much of the formation's power and so seamlessly at that that the Half Spiritual Overlord felt her eyes bulging out of her sockets.

Leonel was actually controlling each individual strand of golden dust as though it was its own weapon. Just what level of mind did it take to do that?

The devastation was far beyond what the Half Spirituals could have imagined. The ships of Shield Cross Stars, each dwarfing a planet in size, were all suddenly split in two. As though a black hole vanished into a scythe's blade, rotating with golden stars, had suddenly decided to manifest between the tops and bottoms of their warships.

It was a strike as beautiful as it was destructive, and final as it was pure.

It was hard to imagine just how many had died from that strike. Not a single one was an Ancestor, but even so, the blow was unimaginable; it might even be said that the very foundation of Shield Cross Stars had been shaken.

Veiga looked upon this scene with the very same indifference, but her mind was in turmoil.

She had taken him seriously. She had moved with full force. She had even used underhanded tactics against a child.

Just how had this been the end result, exactly?

Chapter 2304: Follow My Words

It was almost laughable. In fact, if she had been in the mood to do so, laughing was pretty much all she could have done. She had bided her time, waiting in the shadows, and only struck when she felt that she had all the information she needed at her fingertips. But not only had she failed the moment she took a step out, she had done so in such a resounding fashion.

She closed her eyes, taking a deep breath.

Of the Cross Elders of Shield Cross Star, over half of them were here. There were only eight remaining at base. If things continued this way, over 20 of their Ancestors would fall here, and their ability to continue to control the situation would crumble. She couldn't allow this to happen, but she also most certainly couldn't allow herself to fall here. Selfish or not, her life was by far the most important.

If there was no one present in the Human Domain that could counter Leonel's access to the Dream Plane, then it would all be-

'Follow my words.'

The voice was light and sweet, and Veiga recognized them immediately. Of the high profile targets, there was Velasco, and then there was this woman. She was a great talent, and if nurtured she could become a supreme asset to their cause. In addition, while she was arrogant, she had never painted outside the lines. She could be controlled and she could be guided. So while Veiga kept one eye on her, she didn't make any moves to deal with her like she did the others.

This woman was, of course, Cynthia Omann, the Scorned Queen Beauty.

But what shocked Veiga was that she hadn't sensed when Cynthia entered the Dream Plane at all. Had she been wrong all along to not pay attention to this girl? No, that wasn't in her personality; she had most definitely done her due diligence, it just hadn't mattered in the slightest.

Velasco had never bothered to hide his presence because of his arrogance, so she had known he was from the very beginning. In fact, she didn't dare to even probe him as Velasco was simply on another level compared to her. Unlike she who could only enter the Dream Plane in an Incomplete World, Velasco was just like a King who could enter the Dream Plane even in a complete one!

Leonel had been easy enough to spot because Maxx had somewhat exposed him, and the actions he took afterward were purposely bold and arrogant.

But this woman...

Veiga's heart trembled. This Incomplete World was always marked as an anomaly. They knew that there was a reason the last remnant of the Fawkes family had chosen this one of the dozens of others. And time and time again, they were proven correct as one monster after another simply appeared.

Should she even listen to this woman? Clearly she was just as dangerous as the family before her, but she was also cautious enough to hide her intentions and bide her time for the perfect opportunity. How could she listen to her.

'What choice do you have?'

Veiga shuddered again. Indeed... what choice did she have?

Her heart trembled and her hands shook. Were these her own thoughts? Or was Cynthia manipulating her? When had she become so uncertain of herself?

As though she couldn't hear these thoughts at all, Cynthia spoke easily and plainly.

'There is no way out of this situation except for sacrifice-'

Was that even true? Veiga felt her head spinning. Did Cynthia have a way to get them out of here unscathed but preferred that her enemies not be too powerful? How could she even trust these words?

'-the formation of the Half Spirituals is powerful, but not to the point of being untameable. The issue is the son of Velasco has already claimed the initiative and taking it back from him is impossible. So, the only remaining choice is for you to flee. But you are trapped and space is locked. Whether its reinforcements, or your own escape, neither will work. Even if you attempt to run out of the encirclement under your own power, the moment you leave the strongest core of your own formation, he will cut you down. He has his eyes on you and in his eyes, it's people like you who are the reason for his father's death, it is impossible that he would ever let you go, even if he has to let everyone else go.'

Veiga fought hard to control her exterior emotions. By now, she was certain that Cynthia was manipulating her. She was a person who had always been in control of her exterior, at the very least. But now her entire mind was focused on it. What else could this be if not Cynthia's efforts?

But it was the best kind of scheme... an open one... one your enemy knew was there, and yet had to fall into anyway... This was the method of the smartest individuals in the universe.

'In that case, if you want to live, you'll have to follow my instructions and sacrifice your people at timely intervals. Do as I say... if you want to live, of course.'

...

Leonel looked off into the distance. He had sensed another mind approaching this region the moment it happened, and though they were subtle, they couldn't hide from him.

This meant one very important thing, though: this person was close.

He knew just how difficult it was to travel across the Dream Plane while your body stayed in place. The further you moved, the further stretched your Dream Force became and it was soon akin to a rubber band on its final legs. If you pushed too far, then not only would the rubber band snap, but even if you pulled back just before it did, it would lose its elasticity.

He knew all of this, he had learned it not just once himself, but seven times over through the memories he had sensed.

So... why couldn't he find where this person was even though his senses were expanded across the solar system with the help of the formation of the Half Spirituals?

Chapter 2305: Overlooked Question

Leonel's gaze became sharp, and he didn't move immediately.

The next sequence of events happened so quickly it felt impossible to stop, but from start to finish, Leonel didn't even move. It was like he was resigned to it already.

He stood and watched as Veiga seemed to manipulate her own hoard of Ancestors, riling them up into a frenzy and leading them into a charge she never had any expectations of finishing off.

He didn't move even when they seemed to show signs of putting his own life in danger, and he only made some faint and subtle actions when he saw that part of her plans seemed to encompass his starships and their Fusion Cores.

In the past, Leonel hadn't been able to figure out how to separate the control Shield Cross Stars had over their Fusion Cores from his control. Due to that, he had been unable to use the starships to attack other Humans and the individuals of Shield Cross Stars, especially. But since then, he had obviously overcome that weakness with his strength in Crafting.

However, there was a weakness that couldn't be stripped from Fusion Cores, and that was their susceptibility to instability. Veiga obviously wanted to use this as a method to carve out a path of escape, and he just made a movement to stop this.

In the end, the real reason Leonel hadn't taken any action showed itself as his people began to act oddly. Some starships turned to face one another, some began to directly battle without a word, and in the far-off distance, Yuri even seemed to be on the verge of directly killing herself.

It was a house of madness.

This shouldn't have been possible. The suggestive effects on a person's psyche should only be possibly by pulling at their already ingrained tendencies. Unless somehow every part of the Morales army wanted to kill one another, it shouldn't be possible even for someone in the Life State to just suddenly turn them all on one another.

At the same time, how could Yuri of all people try to kill herself? Not only was he certain that she had far more to live for than not, even if that was just to confront him about Aina's situation, but she had just broken free of a suggestion earlier. She would be on alert and couldn't possibly fall for another so quickly.

What was most sinister about it all was that whether it was the Morales who had suddenly begun to battle one another, or Yuri who was trying to end her own life but seemed hesitant to do so, each one was targeting an Ethereal Glabella. It was so obvious and clear that Leonel was certain that whoever was doing it was doing it on purpose.

If Leonel himself suffered a destroyed Glabella, there would be nothing but death awaiting him. As for these people, even if he had the Silver Tablet, if their Ethereal Glabellas were destroyed, then their souls would dissipate much faster. If a few hundred died, he might be able to revive them all in time. But if a few thousand died, he knew he wouldn't be able to get to the last of them... so what about a few ten thousand? Hundred thousand? What if half of these tens of millions of warriors died in battle with one another?

This person was not only showing him that they could do such a thing, but they were also telling him in no subtle manner that they also understood the weakness of his seemingly endless ability to revive others.

Leonel continued to look around, a calm expression on his face as Veiga rushed away.

'I see, so that's it.'

In the end, it was the formation.

The Spirituals Religion wasn't exactly one that worshiped the Spirituals. Unlike the other religions that Leonel had come across, there was no deity, and rather nature itself was the deity of the Spirituals.

As a result of this, much of their strength also hinged upon this.

Back in Valiant Heart Mountain, when Leonel met his first apostle of a God, Goddess Evergreen to be specific, the person in question had been able to tap into the power of their God and emit strength beyond themselves.

It seemed that he hadn't understood the formation of the Spirituals as well as he had thought. While he understood the skeleton of the formation, and the many pillars that formed its strength, he had missed the forest for the trees. It was akin to thinking of a baked cake as flour, eggs and sugar, rather than as a cake.

What did the formation itself represent? Where did its strength come from? Yes, it was a natural Force Art that pulled on the power of the world, but what was "natural" about it? Where was the power coming from?

The simple answer was a God. The God of the Spirituals Religion.

If Leonel had followed the God Path, he would have picked it up much earlier, but he didn't follow the God Path, he followed the path that Dimensional Cleanse had laid out for him, or more accurately... that he had laid out for himself.

Due to this, he wasn't familiar enough with the God Path and what its strengths and weaknesses were. Now that he thought about it, he had never really separated what empowered users of the God Path either.

Back in the Void Palace, when he had fought the henchmen of Treanna Virror, the God Path had manifested in tangible runes and physical signs. But he found that as he battled more powerful users of the path, there was no such obvious sign, or rather... he wasn't really looking for it.

This culminated in him overlooking an extremely important question: what exactly was the God Path and what were its strengths? What were its weaknesses?

And in this context... how did it interact with the Dream Plane?

Leonel had brought his people into a field of battle that he didn't understand and his opponent had taken advantage of the terrain.

After a moment, he snapped his fingers, and the formation was truly destroyed, but not before he shredded Veiga's Ancestors to pieces.

The hold on his people vanished, but Veiga used the opportunity to finally trigger a long-distance teleportation, disappearing from his sight.

Chapter 2306: Smart

Leonel's reaction was far too calm, but the reality was that it was hard to act surprised when you had deduced what would happen the moment it started. Had he wasted time trying to stop Veiga, the Morales would have suffered casualties, and heavy ones at that. At the very least, upwards of a million would have died. For the casualties to go from zero to that point, to this sort of level, he found it unacceptable.

But it was likely that whoever was messing with his plans likely knew this and acted accordingly. Though it was doubtful that they expected Leonel to be so decisive.

Unfortunately, whatever facade of a brash, unruly youth who was too full of himself wouldn't work anymore, but that was the least of his problems.

He cast a glance toward the Half Spirituals.

In order to deal with the immediate problem, he decisively destroyed the formation. This time, it was truly destroyed and there was no coming back from it other than to rebuild it from the ground up. While he could have taken his time to find a less crude situation, the more time he wasted, the more Morales would have died.

His speed of thought was fast, but not fast enough to analyze a Path that he had little to no idea about, and then apply that to a formation that spanned an entire solar system. Even he wasn't that mighty yet.

His most important takeaway from this event, though, was that this person was smart. Almost too smart.

Leonel couldn't remember ever giving this sort of evaluation to anyone. It was a simple one-word description, and it wasn't overly flowery in his presentation, but it held the weight of the word when it was spoken by him.

In order for this person to outplay him like this, they had to not only understand the weakness of his Silver Tablet and his Lineage Factor in combination, but they also had to be able to use an entire Path and a formation they had likely never even seen active in person, to create this whole farce.

But that wasn't the worst of it. That much was still acceptable. The truest problem was that for this plan to have worked, it relied on something else: the weakness of the Morales, their bloodlines, and their origins.

To make a complex matter simple, this individual used the strength of the Spiritual's formation to target the weakness of the Morales, dealing a blow to Shield Cross Stars, the Morales, and leaving Leonel here dealing with quite a few enraged Half Spirituals.

As for how that was done, Leonel still wasn't 100% certain on the details, but he had a general framework.

The Spiritual Religion emphasized oneness with nature. Their formation worked by sensing the life of the universe around them, melding into it, and allowing the power to wash over it. But it was also precisely because of this that it was turned around and used against Leonel.

Oneness with nature could mean multiple things depending on the location, the person, and even the time. With that in mind, it was beginning to become clearer how this person had done this.

There was now a large concentration of Morales in the surroundings. And what exactly was the innate nature of the Morales?

This might be a hard question to answer until one remembered one thing: the curse of the Morales.

As Morales men and women grew older, their Lineage Factors seemed to influence their minds and they became more battle-hungry and less reasonable. This was what had sparked the creation of the current Heir Wars system and the short duration of rulership in the first place.

Using the formation as a foundation, and Leonel's lack of understanding of it, this person had used the Dream Plane to amplify the innate weakness of the Morales, manipulating them into a frenzy.

And, because everyone else was also in its sphere of influence, the very nature of the world around them began to change, and slowly people other than the Morales began to be affected as well.

For Yuri, who was in a state of emotional turmoil, and was both hating herself for what she had done, and hating Leonel for putting her in such a situation, it had manifested in a way that it almost certainly never would have before.

When things were laid out like this, it almost felt that Leonel's analysis of this person wasn't nearly high enough. Orchestrating this matter took no less than a genius who stood above all others.

However, Leonel only felt that it was interesting.

He had read through the entirety of the Void Library, and how could there not be explanations of the God Path within? But they were all vague and abstract, as though even people of the Human Domain didn't understand how it worked.

Now seeing it in action, he felt that the path was more interesting than he had given it credit for, and that was partly why his analysis of this person's strengths was so lukewarm.

This was a strategy they should have saved, because it most definitely wouldn't work again. Of course, only Leonel would think like this.

"So? Are we going to fight?" Leonel asked, looking toward the Half Spiritual Overlord.

The Overlord didn't know what to think. The situation had changed so fast, and she didn't have nearly the understanding Leonel did of what had just happened. One moment Leonel had everything in his grasp, the next his people started fighting one another, and by the time it all ended their ancient formation seemed to have truly been destroyed.

She still hadn't regained her bearings, and yet Leonel was now asking this question. But she was smart enough to understand the implication.

Whoever had outplayed Leonel wanted them to fight.

So should she follow the plans of that person? Or should she fall into Leonel's plans instead?

She suddenly felt indecisive even as her warriors looked raging for battle.

Chapter 2307: Step Back

Leonel met the eyes of the Half Spiritual, his gaze not giving anything away, though he knew the reality of the matter. If they fought a battle like this one, casualties would be inevitable, and not just casualties that he could casually revive either, true, final death casualties. It would take too much time for the war to end, and by that point, damaged Ethereal Glabella or not, the end result would be the finality of death. There wasn't much he could do about this. This was the reality of a war you weren't prepared for, and the striking difference was stark in comparison to the war he was prepared for.

The decision would be in the hands of the Half Spiritual Overlord, but no matter how you looked at it, he didn't receive the kind of benefits he wanted from this battle. If things had gone perfectly, he wouldn't have only dealt a savage blow to the power of Shield Cross Star, crippling their strength by at least half, but he would have also been able to

force the Spirituals Religion into submission. But now, he might be forced to withstand some devastating losses himself.

The Overlord's thoughts were one matter, but the thoughts of her people were another. They all seemed enraged, and it was hard to tell how much control the Overlord had over the situation.

Leonel doubted that the Spirituals Religion had just a single Overlord, much like his Morales family most definitely had more than one as well, that old man couldn't hide such a thing from him. Who knew if the other Overlords would be docile as this one? And even the so-called "docile" Overlord was on the fence when deciding what to do.

'Hm?' Leonel suddenly looked up and shook his head. 'Fine.'

He waved a hand, and a portal manifested. Out from within it, a familiar old man with an annoying, shit-eating grin appeared. He rubbed his beard with a hand and chortled, liking this situation very much.

This old man was none other than Amery's grandfather, Overlord Maxx.

"Ah, Tracilia, how've you been? Has this brat been annoying you?"

Maxx placed a palm on Leonel's head and rubbed just a bit too hard. Leonel tried to move away and even slap it away, but he failed both times, and if he tried a third, it would have been more embarrassing than just letting it be. He found this situation to be unbelievable, and at the same time, he was certain that this old man was doing it on purpose. No matter what, the Morales and Suiard families had been enemies for countless centuries. How could Maxx possibly miss a chance to humiliate their Patriarch a bit, especially since he was here to help out with a sticky situation?

"... Maxx?" Overlord Tracilia spoke a bit hesitantly. Soon, though, she got a bit angry. She might have been slower in thought and duller in intelligence than Leonel or Cynthia, but she wasn't a fool. It was clear that Leonel and Maxx had some sort of mutual understanding, were the Suiards betraying them? Since when had the Morales and Suiards been on the same side? Was there a Suiard army on their way here now? And hadn't they already decided to leave the Morales out of their alliance? That family's problems were too volatile. If the Spirituals Religion had wanted to team up with them, they would have done so already, instead of making such a choice. After all, they had always assumed that choosing one meant forgoing the other, so they had discussed the matter at length, even ultimately choosing to give their best genius' hand over in marriage. Knowing all of this, Tracilia truly did have the right to be more than a little bit enraged, and she almost gave the order to attack right here and now.

"Listen, listen, I didn't want to do this either," Maxx raised up his hands. "But this brat stole my family's World Spirit and kind of forced my hand. I'm not saying to bend over

backward, but you saw it yourself how there are powers at play here we can't deal with alone. It's best we work together."

"How is anyone supposed to trust you?" Tracilia said with a growl.

She simply didn't believe that Leonel could just take Maxx's World Spirit. He must have handed it over. Were those hidden forces of the Morales stronger than they knew? Unfortunately for Leonel, Tracilia didn't seem to be the one of the Spirituals Religion that had their World Spirit, which was one part why he knew there had to be other Overlords, and another part why she didn't believe Maxx's words.

"If you don't believe me, then why don't we go see Poppy?" Maxx said.

Tracilia frowned. Was this a ploy? Maxx chuckled and handed over his spatial ring with a flick of his fingers.

"Just me and the boy, you have nothing to worry about."

Tracilia was stunned. That spatial ring might as well have been Maxx's wedding band, he never took it off, and it definitely held the greatest of his treasures. This either meant that he was going all out for this ploy, or he was really serious. However, she had known Maxx for years, this just didn't seem to be something that he was capable of. Just what should she do?

Tracilia took a deep breath and shook her head.

"No. I won't let you in."

She threw the ring back, and Maxx shook his head.

"Well, you see that? I tried my best. Good luck in this battle," Maxx said with uproarious laughter. Leonel shook his head. He really wanted to see who had planned all of this. He couldn't wait to make them feel the same level of helplessness. He raised his spear, and he suddenly flickered and vanished. Maxx's hand, aimed to knock him out, missed completely.

Maxx was a bit stunned for a moment. He had rubbed Leonel's head so easily earlier, so how had he missed? He shook his head again. This brat was sharp, too sharp even, he would likely cut his own hand trying to wield that blade he was born with.

"You need to learn when to take a step back, Patriarch Morales," Maxx said softly.

Chapter 2308: One Last Chance

Leonel didn't seem surprised by the change. This couldn't be called a betrayal, Maxx hadn't been lying when he said that he had done his best.

If Leonel was escorted to this Overlord Poppy, as Maxx called her, then taking the World Spirit of the Spirituals would be as easy as just thinking it. By then, it would be clear that the Suiard Overlord hadn't betrayed the Spirituals and simply had his hands tied.

But because Tracilia was so cautious, things had turned out this way instead. The best way to solidify this current rocky relationship was to use Leonel as a sacrificial lamb. Of course, this didn't mean that the Suiard Overlord wanted to kill Leonel, he didn't have such intentions. Rather, knocking Leonel out would make corralling the Morales army easier, than the rest could be dealt with in the future.

Unfortunately, Leonel wasn't as naive of the world as he had once been, and he had never been foolish enough to fall for such a bait and switch. He had already deduced that this would be the most likely result if Maxx failed to convince Tracilia and he was prepared for it.

The worst kind of scheme to deal with was one you knew was there, and yet had to fall into anyway. It seemed that the schemes of this hidden expert hadn't concluded just yet.

Maxx knew that all of this was only happening because of the machinations of someone else, and yet he had to act in this way regardless. The Spirituals Religion and the Spirituals had already made their choice years ago, they had already planned to exclude the Morales.

And now, this was just the next logical step.

Looking into Leonel's indifferent eyes toward his change of address from "brat" to "Patriarch," Maxx almost felt like sighing. He felt as though he was looking into his own grandson's eyes. Even when he did the most ridiculous of things, this was precisely how Amery reacted as well.

Overlord Tracilia was confused about the situation once again, she almost made the false assumption that this was all an act. After all, how could the likes of Leonel dodge an Overlord's strike without the support of the formation? But all of those thoughts were thrown to the back of her mind when Maxx took a step forward.

The vast depth of space beneath his feet rippled outward like a pond. The chimes of swords echoed and an overwhelming pressure descended. Following that, there came a piercing sense that almost made Tracilia's heart stop beating entirely.

Killing intent.

"I'm not sure I can deal with all your tricks and schemes if I battle you with the intent to capture you, so I will act to kill. This is the last chance I'm giving you to stand down," Maxx spoke lightly.

Leonel wasn't even looking at him. His gaze went above, and then it moved below. This was the problem with battles in the depth of space. On flat land, the worst you could face was a pincer from four sides, and most often pincers would come in pairs. However, in this vast endlessness, where up and down were just figments of one's imagination and far more cultural than they were tangible, the number of directions you could attack from was infinite.

Above him. Below him. To his back. To his front. Upward and an angle. Downward at an angle.

There were Half Spirituals everywhere. The only saving grace was that their formations were just as much of a jumbled mess as his own had become.

"I'll give you one final chance, too," Leonel replied, still scanning the battlefield. "For every Morales that dies here, I will kill two Suiards. Is that the choice you want to make?"

Leonel finally looked up and met Maxx's gaze.

The Suiard Overlord finally seemed to see it. That endless, unfathomable depth.

The corner of Leonel's eyes and his feet began to smolder. The ripples formed beneath Maxx's feet came to a dead stop over a hundred meters from him, then they began to collapse on their own.

"Attack!" Tracilia suddenly roared.

The reaction was instantaneous. The powder keg of emotions the Half Spirituals had been bottling up exploded forth. Beautiful men and women painted the skies like the descent of angels, a rainbow-like assortment of elemental energies rushing forward without restraint.

The confusion within the Morales was high. The different changes to their mental states, followed by sudden combat in a situation they had just believed to be on top of, was devastating.

However, before the first wave of assaults could land, a calming voice had already entered their minds.

"Stand tall."

It was just two words, and yet their spines shivered and the tips of their blades trembled.

Roars escaped their lips one after another, and their Force echoed across the planes.

"Don't be distracted."

The whisper of a sword blade passed by Leonel's ear. He felt as though he had been cut in two, the sensory perception coming even before the actual blade, like his mind and his body were being attacked at the same time.

He could understand the kind of despair a person would feel facing such an attack. What was the point in dodging if you have already been bisected? But he shattered the mental assault as though it was as fragile as stale bread.

His squadron was too far away from him for him to rely on their strength, but he didn't even bother to call them back. Their task was different. As for his task?

It was to crush every Ancestor that dared to stand before him.

Leonel's aura flared.

"[Arise]."

One after another, the corpses of the Ancestors he had killed in the last several weeks appeared and then began to crumble as though all the strength of their bodies were being devoured into the rise of their souls.

In an instant, Leonel was covered by five Ancestors, each one emitting a sharp light as they raised their bows.

These were none other than the Ancestors of the Constellation Bow Alliance.

Chapter 2309: A Mess

The Ancestors of the Spirituals Religion, all of whom were ready to take action, felt as though their bodies had frozen. A dangerous aura locked onto them and it felt like if they took just a single step in any direction, their heads would be pierced through.

They were all Ancestors, and Leonel was just using puppets. Just how could he have the strength to make them feel threatened to the point that they were immobilized?

What they didn't know is that by having the Ancestors consume their own bodies during the formation of their souls, they were actually at least 50% stronger than they would be otherwise. They were closer now to Overlords than they were to normal Ancestors.

This was a lesser form of [Breathe] that came from the weaker techniques of the Emperor's Might Lineage, known as [Cannibalize]. It could be used on the corpse of a soul alongside [Arise] to make them stronger.

This, though, as an imperfect form of [Breathe], had some drawbacks. Normally, a soul would last 24 hours in Leonel's possession, but a soul that had [Cannibalize] used on it would last no more than an hour.

But this wasn't the only reason why the corpses fell so much more powerful. The real reason for that was because of the improvement to Leonel's Dream Force, namely his connection to the Dream Plane.

Now, he couldn't just perfectly direct his soul constructs, he could infuse his own comprehensions and incorporate his very will into his commands.

One could use the Dream Plane to push people in certain directions, but they would ultimately only act within the bounds of their own personalities. It would take many years of manipulation, and constant attempts to get someone to do something they wouldn't normally do.

However, the will of Leonel's soul constructs was to do whatever he wanted them to do. That meant that his control over their impulses was perfect.

On the surface, this seemed like a minor thing. Couldn't he just control them with his mind normally? What was the use of this seemingly extra, useless step?

But there was an important difference. Not only could Leonel command his souls to act and react faster, he could mold their minds and change their tendencies to exactly what he wanted. When it came to soul constructs like this that already had a foundation that matched his will...

He could give them his skill in the bow.

The five Ancestor's auras roared to life. In that moment, their bows, which had just been surging with a silvery white Bow Force, seemed to shatter, streams of light dispersing and them reforming into a blinding golden streak.

Right then, five Bow Sovereigns were born. And not only that, but they each had the power of an Ancestor backing them.

In a single bound, they went from a half-step to the Overlord ranks, to true Overlords.

Five Overlord Bow Sovereigns.

They had never been this powerful in their lives, but in death... they stepped into a realm of strength and power they could never have imagined.

Maxx's expression became serious. He had only attacked once, and yet the situation had changed so resoundingly. Just how...

"Stop, don't!" Maxx roared as he saw that Tracilia had taken out some sort of orb. If he could have stopped her from even taking it out in the first place, he would have. But that ship had already sailed. "If Poppy comes here, your World Spirit will be taken away in an instant. I wasn't lying."

Tracilia shivered and put the communication device away, but then a cold wind passed by her neck.

She turned back slowly, and what she saw made her heart feel as though it had been hollowed out.

Five bows. Five arrows. Five echoing twangs. Five deaths of her brothers and sisters.

The Ancestors of the Spirituals Religion were still rushing forward, seemingly not even having realized that they died. But the bloody holes in their heads painted a different picture, one of bleak sadness.

Could this have been avoided?

Leonel didn't make a move, standing calmly. But it was like five of him were aiming their bows. Looking forward, neither Maxx or Tracilia could even quite feel their individual auras any longer, it was like they had instead become clones of the young man who stood in their midst.

Maxx realized that he couldn't allow things to stay as they were. He moved like lightning, his very body seeming to carry the aura of the sword.

Two arrows appeared to his left and his right, but his Absolute Sword Domain took shape, shredding them to pieces.

His thumb rubbed along the spatial ring Tracilia had returned to him and a rusted sword appeared in his palm. It looked as though a single swing might cause it to collapse, becoming nothing more than flakes of metal dancing in the wind. And yet, when he made his move, it was like the world had been split in two.

Leonel looked into his eyes.

People, relationships, complex webs of emotion... Nothing was ever simple due to these things. It should have all been easy. He already had Maxx on his side, his army had already surrounded the Half Spirituals, he had already been just a step from victory...

But things had ended up like this because humans were complex creatures that rarely, if ever, acted logically. He was no different, that he knew. As much as he tried to peel himself away from those more human layers of him, he couldn't escape it.

He was realizing every day just how much pressure his future self had placed on him. He even understood that much of his "cold logic" came not from the fact that he was some sort of psychopath, or even from the fact that he preferred logic over all...

It was just a coping mechanism.

Looking at the world like it was an array of numbers, of buttons to push and sliders to adjust, that was much easier than looking at it for what it really was...

An imperfect blob of a mess.

The five archer Overlords around Leonel shifted and seemed to form an odd Force Art with just five nodes between themselves.

'So, is this how it works? I guess so.'

Their auras doubled once again and Maxx's strength was drowned out.

Chapter 2310: Two Way Street

Leonel didn't follow the God Path, but his soul constructs did. It could be said that over 95% of all Ancestors in the Human Domain followed the God Path. There was a reason it was the Path that the Void Palace demanded of their students. It was the path that had allowed most of the elites of the Human Domain to rise up like they had.

The actions of the mysterious person that had placed him into this situation made Leonel realize that there was more to the God Path than what met the eye. But he, obviously, couldn't go back and choose a new path, and even if he could, he wouldn't. His intuition told him that [Dimensional Cleanse] was a far better bet for himself.

But it got him thinking. Had he really reached the potential of his Emperor's Might Lineage Factor just because he had succeeded in comprehending its three strongest techniques?

The answer didn't feel as obvious as it should. The three strongest techniques were meant to build upon one another, slowly building a foundation that could make the next and final steps logical. But Leonel had skipped all of that and went right to the strongest abilities of the Lineage Factor, ignoring much of its subtleties.

In such a situation, how could he know with any certainty that he was pressing his potential forward to the greatest extent?

His connection to the Dream Plane seemed to have only solidified that truth. He felt like he had been a child messing around with a toy, and that toy just so happened to be a loaded gun.

That wasn't to say that Leonel was in any danger while using his Lineage Factor, not that he knew of, anyway. It was rather that he still didn't quite understand just how lethal it could be, and he felt that he had just taken a step toward understanding.

Not only could he use the Dream Plane to pass down his own understanding to his soul constructs, but the reverse was possible as well.

Like he had said. He might not follow the God Path, but his soul constructs had when they lived, and if he applied some of the concepts of the Spirituals Religion formation, and also some of the strategy of the mysterious existence that was toying with him from the shadows... then if he sprinkled atop of that some of his own theories on Force Arts, namely ones used in armies...

The five soul constructs resonated with one another and they thrummed with life. The hum of nature echoed and the golden dust particles that were aimlessly floating in the air seemed to come to life once more.

Of course, it was nothing like the truest formation. The use was limited as it didn't have the core of the formation any longer since Leonel had destroyed it. Leonel's understanding of the Spirituals Religion's formation wasn't yet deep enough to simply reconstruct it using his soul constructs, but that was more than enough...

To send these Overlords to their deaths.

Five arrows streaked through the air, and yet it felt like just one. Tracilia's chest was ripped apart and her body was sent flying backward like a broken rag doll. However, she couldn't even land, or even be sent flying into the endless distance, before she was shredded to pieces, even her blood being torn to ash.

The soul constructs pulled their bows back once more and aimed toward Maxx, but Leonel shook his head and sighed as they fired.

The arrows had only just left their bows when the soul constructs shattered to pieces. In the distance, their arrows weakened considerably, but still slammed into Maxx with an undying force.

Maxx's chest caved in and his consciousness shuddered. It took everything he had to remain conscious, but he was still sent flying backward much like Tracilia. He was only lucky that he didn't have to suffer the same fate.

Leonel shook his head. It seemed that using his soul constructs for more than just their base uses limited the time they could last even further. He had already felt that instilling them with his insight into the bow had shrunk the time they had considerably, but it seemed that taking a step beyond that caused the hour he should have had to fall to just a few seconds.

Even so, the outcome was still acceptable. It was unfortunate that he didn't have any more Ancestor souls that were experts in the bow in their lifetimes, but the fact Tracilia was dead and Maxx was on his last legs was a worthy trade regardless.

Leonel looked toward the battle of the Morales and Half Spirituals and shook his head. The casualties were about as devastating as he expected, it was a complete mess. There were no formations, none of the tactics he liked to use. Things might have still been fine had they been organized enough to make proper use of the armors he had given them, but they were too scattered to even do that.

In addition, many of the armors that Leonel had constructed were purely auxiliary in function and only provided help when used in the context of an army. What could forming small scale light illusions, for example, do in a battle like this?

He took a breath, scanning the battlefield so quickly his pupils looked as though they were bouncing around his sockets. On a battlefield this large and expensive, his Internal Sight wasn't enough. At that moment, he wished for the complete Bow Domain Lineage Factor more than he had ever before.

Then, he stretched his Dream Force into the Dream Plane, immediately sending out tens of millions of orders, each one specified and unique for the person in question in an instant.

It was time to turn this battle around before the other Overlords of the Half Spirituals could realize what was wrong.

Even as he did so, his hand reached and grasped out, pulling the spatial device that Tracilia had taken out the communication device from before her soul or Maxx could react.

Chapter 2311: A Best Way

The battlefield became like a Go Board. The swiftness with which the situation changed was shocking, and in as little as a few seconds, the casualties went from about equal on both sides, to slightly lopsided, and then the Morales began to slowly take a firm upper hand.

...

A Morales sharply thrust their spear, but retreated a moment later. He glided backward across the depths of space exactly 112 meters, only to sense a heat behind him as a part of his armor began to resonate.

He didn't need to look behind him to know that someone with a matching set to his armor had appeared. They both acted at once, causing their Force to roll and their armor to link.

They both threw out another spear, the flickering light of illusion painting the skies. Their enemies couldn't dodge at all. How could they when they didn't know which spear was real?

...

In another section of the battle, a single Morales found herself surrounded by three Half Spirituals. Beaten and broken, there was no chance for her to escape. Her Absolute Spear Domain roared with what felt like the last of her Force, causing the enemies to take a step back, but it was only a brief reprieve as they rushed forward.

Suddenly, there was a subconscious suggestion in her mind and she twisted her body. However, the light of hope came to an end as soon as it came. Her body was pierced by swords and a glaive from three sides. The pain shot through her like a torrent and she could feel her life slipping away.

But that darkness of death didn't come like she expected. She had thought that she was dead for sure, but only now realized that the blades had missed her vital organs. No, more accurately, what was vital, what wasn't, the line between life and death, that was decided by her, wasn't it?

The Spear Domain Lineage Factor... No, the Morales Lineage Factor... what did it mean for the Absolute Spear Domain, a pure offensive ability, to fuse with their Metal Bodies and their Divine Armors?

She felt that she had a vague idea.

She released her spear, causing it to vanish. She grabbed onto the two sword blades, pulling down and snapping them before throwing both broken blades into the brows of their owners.

At the same time, her spear suddenly appeared behind the head of the glaive wielder, shredding them to pieces.

...

Two Morales brothers, sharing the same branch bloodline, pressing their backs to one another. They trusted each other with their lives, just like they always had. They would make it out of here just like they had every time before.

One of them gritted his teeth with determination, blood trickling down his chin until his heart suddenly felt hollow.

The solid back pressed against his suddenly went limp. He could feel the life of his brother draining as a sharp blade pierced an inch into his back. He didn't need to look to see what had happened, someone had just driven a blade through his brother's heart so far that it had almost run through him as well.

The Morales looked down and watched as a familiar spear drifted down beneath his feet. Once again, he didn't need to look to see what had happened. His brother had thrown his spear away, grabbing onto the sword with both hands so that it wouldn't drive through him as well.

A suggestion pressed onto his mind as he roared in fury, his Absolute Spear Domain raging like a torrent.

The energies of the world were suddenly being swallowed with a vicious momentum.

The Metal Body of the Morales could assimilate metals and earth. This was the foundation for many of their strongest techniques... Metal Body... Divine Armor... countless others...

This ability, though, was built off the back of an insatiable greed to devour, a greed that reminded this Morales brother a lot of the Metal Spirit.

He really wanted to be one. He really wanted to swallow everything in his path, to rampage with fury fueling his mind.

His Absolute Spear Domain rushed outward, swallowing all the Force in the surroundings, assimilating them, and then using that strength to shred everything in his path apart.

They would pay for the death of his brother.

...

Leonel breathed heavily sweat drenching his brows.

In the past, he had created a technique to help his brothers improve and keep up with his steps. He called it Dream Path.

Unfortunately, this ability was one of the few that he had created with the help of his Ability Index that didn't work out well. As a result, he had only used it once on his brothers, but ended up abandoning it.

But after awakening in the Dream Plane, he had come to understand some things. He still couldn't just draw out a path for a person, and he had overestimated himself far too much when he thought that he had the ability to. Instead, he could sense the small kernels of inspiration they had brewing in their subconscious and push them forward.

There were millions of Morales, each with their own ideas, each with their own thoughts on how to progress, but many of them found themselves tied down. Either they hadn't reached the perfect circumstances for enlightenment, or they were so tied down by tradition and hierarchy that they didn't dare to strike out on their own path.

However, seeing through their thoughts, Leonel realized that maybe there was no right way or even a best way to use a Lineage Factor. There was a huge array of application methods, and each one had its own viability. This was only more so for a recently mutated Lineage Factor like their own.

So he gave them the nudge that he deserved.

The battlefield became a mixture of continuous breakthroughs and squadrons that quickly became teams, and teams that quickly became battalions and battalions that quickly became armies.

Just when the tide was firmly on the side of the Morales, the Overlords of the Spirituals Religion finally realized that something was wrong.

Chapter 2312: Over

Leonel sent a glance toward the planets below, his breathing labored. Not far from him, Maxx and Tracilia were still trying to gather themselves.

Tracilia wasn't a threat. As a Half Spiritual, after losing her body, while she could survive, she was far weaker. He could probably defeat her on his own even without relying on a formation or his soul constructs.

Maxx was in a state of great weakness right now. He was nigh incapacitated and only barely managed to hold onto his consciousness. He wasn't a threat, at least not on his own. He could still launch an attack if it came to, but Leonel still held back from trying to deal him a final blow. This old man was definitely not simple. Even if you pressed a normal animal into a corner, they could lash out, let alone an ancient beast.

Leonel took a breath, trying to catch his breath, but he realized that he was practically hyperventilating. He was breathing so heavily based on a reflex, not because he needed to. That much was proved by the fact his breath was actually so controlled rather than causing waves of hurricane force winds like it usually did.

The fatigue was soul deep, it was a depletion of his Dream Force and a fatigue of his mind, something he hadn't experienced in a long time. It was nothing like a bodily fatigue might be, no amount of breathing hard would help him.

With a thought, his three Dream Stars took shape and began to rotate with a fierce momentum.

Leonel suddenly gasped and it felt as though he finally caught his breath. His gaze sharpened as he felt the difference and his plan changed.

He had forgotten. The manifestation of his Stars wasn't just a method to accumulate Dream Force quickly, nor was it just a representation of his Universal Cycles. It was the manifestation of his path, the path of Dimensional Cleanse.

In an instant, he found that he could travel much further in the Dream Plane, and every action he took stripped away a lesser amount of his Dream Force.

He sent out more commands, and suggestions that were more precise. The efficiency of his control over the Morales army skyrocketed even as the Overlord of the Spirituals, the woman he assumed to be Poppy, rushed out from her hiding spot.

He sent out a final wave of orders as he snapped his attention toward the coming ballista.

Poppy was another beautiful older woman, but she had a fiery temper that rivaled that of a bubbling volcano. Her hair was a shortcut blaze of red, her eyes just as piercing red. Leonel would have thought her to be a Brazinger if he didn't know better.

At the moment, ten shadows appeared by Leonel's side.

"Is it done?" Leonel asked.

Joel tossed an orb at Leonel.

Leonel nodded, but the confusion on the faces of Maxx and Tracilia practically formed tangible phantoms. That orb... it was definitely the communication device that Leonel had just taken from Tracilia, but these ten hadn't been by Leonel's side from the beginning that meant...

Maxx's gaze turned solemn.

That meant that Leonel had sent them on a mission before even getting his hands on the communication device, before he had even seen Tracilia take it out.

The realization hit Tracilia at the same time and her heart trembled. Her gaze turned to her fellow brothers and sisters in the distance. Every moment, another one of them fell, and they weren't lucky enough to maintain their souls like she had. The Morales directly targeted their weaknesses. Somehow, many of them had gained the ability to kill them with a single strike.

"Easy enough," Joel said. "With the orb, the location was as easy as breathing to find."

Leonel had sent the ten on a simple mission. Their goal was to find the entrance of the Spirituals Religion Holy Land.

Any communication device required a receiver, and any such receiver would give off fluctuations. If the communication device was modified under a Crafter as skilled as Leonel, the receiver would become no different from a beacon.

Of course, Leonel didn't need to send them for just this. If it was just this, he could have found the location from right here.

There were two things he needed.

The first was to lure Overlord Poppy here. What better way than to send enemies to her resting place?

The second was to find the core of the formation that Leonel had been forced to destroy. As he had predicted, the moment Poppy was alerted, she noticed the problem going on outside and had no choice but to rush here. While she did that, these ten had brought the shattered core she had been forced to leave behind here.

As expected, Raj tossed something at Leonel soon afterward. It was just a ring, but within, there was a shattered core the size of a planet's core.

Leonel shook his head. Luckily, he had sent Anastasia with them, or else putting such a thing into a spatial treasure would have been impossible.

And even further than that, it was lucky that he had chosen the method of shattering the formation core that he had.

Leonel hadn't just indiscriminately shattered the formation. Instead, he had treated it like a puzzle, following along the fissure lines and only breaking them along those weak points.

Due to this, it was not only far easier to rip apart. But, due to his Crafting skill reaching the molecular level...

It was also far easier to put back together.

BOOM!

The entire battlefield froze. Every warrior, including Poppy, Maxx and Tracilia felt like their bodies had been marred in cobwebs of time and space.

Before, the core of the formation had been light years away and Leonel could only use an endless chain of commands to control it from an obscene distance. The design of the formation made this possible as it was designed to be used across the entire solar system, but that didn't mean that it didn't have its weaknesses.

Now, however, the core of the formation was right here.

This battle was over.

Chapter 2313: Kill

Everything came to a stop. There was no moving forward, no retreating, and everything danced in the palm of Leonel's hand.

After a moment, Leonel exhaled a breath and shook his head. He looked out into the battlefield once more and his gaze flickered with rage. The casualties were atrocious, almost 10% of the Morales army was either dead beyond his means to revive, or heavily injured. There was another 10% on top of that that were dead and he might have a chance to revive if he was quick enough.

20% of an army of this caliber and size was a devastating blow, especially when the total had been at 0% for the past several days. These were the most elite of the Morales Seventh Dimensional experts. The only ones missing among them were the Nova Heirs, at Leonel's request. Every loss of one was not only one less that they'd have, but it would also be a great detriment to the future potential of the Morales in the short term.

It was simply infuriating, infuriating that something like this could happen when it could have all been avoided. Maxx wasn't supposed to be his enemy, but he had made such an idiotic choice in the end.

When he spoke of killing two Suiards for every Morales that fell, he hadn't been lying, but it also wasn't just an act of rage that he wanted to mete out. The history between any two forces had to be taken into account whenever they were moving forward in any sort of conflict or cooperation.

Real Morales had died due to Maxx. Their parents would grieve, their wives and husbands would carry that pit in their hearts for a lifetime, their spouses, their children, their friends, each one would be impacted in their own way.

How could they just forget everything and move forward in cooperation with the Suiards? The original cooperation that Leonel had wanted now was dead. He had tried, he had made concessions, he had even laid down his own fury toward these families and their inaction as his father fell on his spear. And yet this was how they repaid him.

The smoldering lines of black began to appear around Leonel again, but just as quickly as they had, he snuffed them out, his gaze returning to a cold depth of indifference.

His actions might have seemed crude, he might have even been seen to have pushed the Suiards and the Spirituals Religion to this point, but he knew what his intentions were better than anyone else.

He had left Maxx alone after taking the World Spirit. He had proved himself by entering the Impetus State with his Dream Force and countering Veiga. He had had no intentions of slaughtering the Half Spirituals when he came here and the entire brunt of the attention he had given had been focused on killing the Ancestors of Shield Cross Stars.

He had been bold, a bit crude, and a bit strong-handed, but these had all been necessary actions. If he came, hat in hand, trying to form alliance bonds with these two powers, what would the result have been?

In the best case, he would have been laughed out of the room. In the worst case, they might attack to kill him due to his role in linking the Morales and Earth, the soon-to-be only two Eighth Dimensional worlds of the Human Domain.

He had chosen to forgive, to forget... not only their actions in not aiding his father, but also in their intent to pressure the Morales just to keep their families safe. Did the Spirituals Religion not send a representative that day? Did the Suiard family not place a pawn in the Void Palace and use it as a proxy to pressure his Morales family?

He had been too kind.

BANG!

Maxx was forced to his knees under a resounding pressure. There was no land to stand on, and yet the space beneath his kneecaps cracked and shattered, forming a pseudo-land just for him. The golden dust particles around him swam and then formed powerful chains, piercing through his shoulders, his chest and then, finally his knees. Then, they bound around his body tightly.

Soon, the same actions were repeated for Tracilia, and the Poppy in the distance. Despite the latter being the only one of them that wasn't injured at all, under the weight of the formation... it was all worthless.

Leonel raised a hand and a strong pull came from Poppy's very soul. Her eyes widened as the World Spirit was torn out and brought to Leonel's palm. With a squeeze, it was shattered and the Half Spirituals, all at once, felt a sense of laws that trembled their hearts and caused their eyes to water. Compared to humans, the Spirituals were far more sensitive to this sort of matter. Their World Spirit subconsciously felt no different from family to them.

After he was finished, Leonel began to use the formation to speed up the process. He didn't have to gather Force the normal way since the formation could accumulate so much of it. Thanks to this, the Force he needed to revive the members of the Morales were readily available.

Luckily, he managed to revive almost the entire 10%, only missing out on a few, a result that was much better than he expected. There was nothing he could do about the ones that were gone before he got his hands on the formation, but this would have to do for now.

Leonel looked toward the army. His expression was the mask of coldness and he could see every Morales looking at him with the same steely intent.

He knew that this was exactly what the person lingering in the shadows wanted. There was no better scheme than one your enemy knew was there, and yet had to fall into anyway.

Right now, though, it didn't matter. For the sake of the future, this was the best step to take... The only step.

"Kill."

The roar of the Morales shook the solar system.

Chapter 2314: Satisfied?

The fallout of the battle rocked the Human Domain. The slaughter of both the Spirituals Religion and the Suiards was akin to watching the fall of titans from their mountain. These two powers had always been seen to be on par with the Morales, and yet the Morales alone, after taking out twelve constellation families just weeks ago, followed through with a campaign that brought these two to their knees... And it was all led by Leonel Morales.

It felt like a curtain of silence had fallen over the Human Domain. It was inescapable. Many felt that such infighting, when they had only just survived the invasion of several Domains just months earlier, was inadvisable. If there was a scale of public perception, it had easily begun to swing from fear of the Morales, to a lambasting for their actions.

How could the public know of the intricate details of the events that had occurred? And even if they had an actual chance at knowing, would that mysterious figure, hidden in the background, and spurring on those very same flames of hatred, let it go so easily?

This was exactly what they wanted. To paint the Morales as savages, as demons that didn't understand the true weight of the situation, and there was no better mascot for their displaced fury than Velasco and his son after him.

Rumors of Velasco toying with the taboo and thus bringing down the rage of the Gods spread like wildfire. Watching as his son now led armies to take down families that had lived for countless generations only seemed to bolster these thoughts further. How could a child like Leonel possibly bring down these families if there wasn't something nefarious at play? Many even began to believe that if they really allowed the Morales to take control of the Human Domain, and thus left Leonel to be their de facto leader, rather than the Gods coming down to smite Velasco on his own, it might even be the whole Domain that was wiped from existence.

The moment this sort of paranoia grew legs, it soon grew wings and soared through the skies. It passed through countless ears and affected countless hearts, and it only grew worse as the details of the past events began to be spread in earnest.

First came news of just how thorough the destruction of the Spirituals Religion was.

The Spirituals Religion had quite a positive public perception in the eyes of many. They never led crusades like the other religions, and humans always had a sort of innate awe of the Spirituals. In addition, such a group of beautiful men and women, how could they possibly be hated? If it wasn't for the fact they only accepted Half Spirituals into their ranks, the largest religion in the Human Domain might actually be them.

And yet, Leonel had not only plundered their ancient formation, but he had razed their lands to the ground. The territory of the Spirituals Religion was just a single solar system unlike the Suiards that controlled many Sectors filled with many more galaxies, and so every act was akin to the impetus of a genocide.

Being so small, the Spirituals Religion simply had no large group of weaklings that the large families and organizations did. As such, Leonel had gone to each and every one of their planets, waging a bloody, one-sided war until he forced them all to their knees. And it was precisely this picture that the Human Domain received...

But this was nothing compared to what happened to the Suiards.

The Half Spirituals only suffered a loss of life. The Suiards, however, suffered a loss of dignity, of pride, even the willingness to raise their heads high had been crushed no different from when Leonel had kicked down their doors of their Sword Faction.

Maxx was chained to the front of Leonel's starship. Every battle, he was forced to watch as his Suiard family was crushed and split to pieces. The fervor of the Morales, as though unleashing a wave of countless years of animosity and hatred, spilled over like a tsunami.

The Holy Land of the Suiards were razed to the ground and their spirits were crushed.

Amery, their greatest hope, faced off against Leonel in battle once again. Legends of their battles had spread like wildfire, and many believed that another legend would be painted on this day so long as Leonel didn't use his King's Might Lineage Factor, and yet the result...

Leonel crushed Amery. There was no suspense. He didn't even bring out his spear, it simply wasn't necessary.

It wasn't until now many remembered... the last so-called legendary battle between these two had taken place when one was in the Sixth Dimension and the other was in the Seventh.

They were never on the same level to begin with.

One after another, the Ancestors of the Suiards were bound and captured, chained up and thrown into the dungeons of the Morales. It could be said that for the first time since the founding of the Suiard family...

Their capital lands were vacant and empty. Leonel might as well have burned the crops and salted the earth.

"For every Morales that dies, I will kill two Suiards." He had said those words, and he meant those words.

Locke, the envoy of the Suiards, truly had to watch as his home was burned to the ground.

Leonel speculated that it was never Maxx that told him to speak those words. It might have been another Ancestor of the Suiards, or... it might very well have been that mysterious figure that had been goading him into a trap from the very beginning.

But none of it mattered.

...

"Are you satisfied?"

The voice was gruffer than before, but that made sense, considering Maxx's state.

Leonel glanced over but didn't care enough to say something. If Maxx wanted to avoid this, he should have never acted against him.

"Your grandfather would have never done this." Max continued, much of his hair covering his eyes.

Leonel didn't care to respond directly to that either.

"Rest up," Leonel said indifferently. "From now on, the Suiards will be the vanguard of the Morales."

A Force Art, complex enough to split one's mind if it was gazed at too closely, whirled in his palm.

- Chapter 2315: Cruelty

Chapter 2315: Cruelty

Maxx looked toward Leonel's back, his words escaping him. He should have known, someone like Leonel wouldn't be so easily swayed by moral arguments. Even the most caring of people would have their bottom line, let alone Leonel.

What Maxx could have never guessed was that there truly was a point in Leonel's life where the pull of his morality ruled him. Over the years, those thoughts had been overruled, taken over by a man who killed without hesitation and shed blood without blinking an eye.

It was difficult to tell for an outsider whether this was the fading of a youthful vigor and naiveté, or if it was something else, something deeper.

Leonel, as oblivious as he seemed about his own emotions sometimes, was very much aware of everything happening within him. Even if he missed something, with his memory, he could go back in time, so to speak, watching the changes that took place step by step and understanding what had brought him to this place.

Maxx would never know the answer because Leonel would never tell him. The old Overlord had his own reasons for doing things, and so did Leonel.

Seeing that Leonel was about to walk away, unmoved, Maxx shook his head.

The Morales family was simply not to be trusted. These weren't words he thought of due to Leonel, though at this point, even he couldn't deny the animosity that was building up in his chest. Rather, it was pointed toward the hidden undercurrents within that family.

If Ishmael was still alive, things wouldn't have gotten to this point, and maybe he would have been marrying his son to an Heiress of the Morales instead. But such things couldn't be deliberated over now, especially when things had already reached this point.

Leonel had won. For now. And it seemed that his Suiard family would be forced to be hitched to this wagon. Whether they sunk or swam would be all reliant on the shoulders of this cold and detached young man.

...

Leonel stuck to his word, he would turn the Suiard family into the vanguard of the Morales. He knew what kind of words were spreading about him and the Morales now, and since these were the thoughts that everyone in the Human Domain would have about him, he would simply lean into it.

He knew how these kinds of storms worked. No one would believe that he suddenly became benevolent and started to treat the families he had conquered well. Even if he did, whoever was in the shadows could spin it any number of ways.

For example, what if that person planted the seed that those captured by Leonel would be turned into his loyal soul puppets? And that the only reason he seemed to be treating them all well was because he had already captured their souls just like he had shown many times before.

The abilities of the Fawkes were powerful, but Leonel had no doubt that it had created quite a number of enemies for them over the years. A family that could one day in the past do a favor to the Race like the Pluto, and yet end up regulated to just one descendant locked away in an Incomplete World, most definitely couldn't have fallen so far without many powerful individuals wanting it to be the case.

And right now, Leonel was watching that play out in real time. He made a mental note to himself that he would likely have to be far more cautious with how he displayed his King's Might Lineage Factor once he left this Incomplete World. But for now, there was no use in fretting about it.

It was too late to win the war of public perception, and his actions in releasing the young heirs of the weaker Seventh Dimensional and Sixth Dimensional families was wasted, but that was fine. One of the markers of a great general and strategist wasn't just how good their initial plots were, but also how they adapted to changes in the field.

So, he wouldn't try to win it at all.

Yes, the Morales family were a family of Demons. What were they going to do about it?

Leonel got to work not long later. His plan was simple. Right now, what remained in his way was the remainder of Shield Cross Stars, the Omann family, the Void Palace and the Godlen family.

Shield Cross Stars was mostly crippled, as was the Void Palace. His greatest worry was that the most powerful of Shield Cross Stars, aside from Veiga, hadn't made their moves yet. These were existences like Cross Elder Avan and Overlord Sith.

He had been avoiding the Omann family until now because he knew they would be the most difficult to deal with. They were the only family capable of mitigating the advantage of Leonel's linked armies because they had wealth and Crafting skills comparable to the Morales.

Of course, Leonel didn't believe that there was anyone who could match up to him in this regard, but he was just one person. The Spirituals Formation had already threatened him a great deal, who knew what the Omann had prepared? Especially since the tier 2 starship design that he had improved came from them in the first place.

The Void Palace was most crippled too, but there were still hidden cards of the Cult that had yet to make their presences known. Leonel hadn't forgotten about the large center of Variant Invalids that they should have, nor the large number of Savants that the Void Palace should have accumulated as well.

As for the Godlen family, they were a complete wildcard. He knew nothing about them, and the souls of the Pyius Ancestors had been completely in the dark.

This time, though... Leonel wouldn't be attacking. The time for pushing and launching assaults had ended. He had antagonized the Human Domain enough, and his next series of plans would only antagonize them more. The next phase of this war would be played on his turf.

All were welcome. He would be happy to send them to the grave.

...

One by one Leonel began to brand the experts of the Suiard and Half Spirituals that remained, turning them into the loyal warriors. As he did so, the final straw that would break the camel's back descended.

A group of demons, wearing Morales armors and wielding Morales spears appeared in the depths of the Void Palace. There were just 100 of them, but each one radiated a towering aura. As for when they worked together, even the sturdy lands of the Void Palace crumbled and shattered.

One by one, they killed every elite of the Void Palace. Nominal Disciples, Quadrant Disciple, Galaxy Disciples, Sector Disciples, Domain Disciples, it didn't matter. Rivers of blood ran and each of their corpses was desecrated. Each had a hole in their forehead the size of an Ethereal Glabella.

The demons didn't even try to hide their movements as they returned, paving a streak of crimson across the cosmos as they made their way back to Morales land. Then, without a word, they disappeared. All that remained of the once mighty Void Palace were the corpses of the most promising youths of the most powerful families of the Human Domain. The powder keg exploded.

Chapter 2316: Names

'Hm? No losses?'

Leonel looked toward the small troop of a hundred demons, somewhat surprised. He had sent this troop into the Void Palace without his support with only a single goal: kill. Of course, there were some other caveats about time constraints, efficiency, and the like, but he had ultimately left it up to them to decide the details.

The troop was the first batch of his experiments with the golden scaled koi fish and the tentacle womb. It was years in the making, but it was finally bearing fruit. It was just that he had been waiting to use it at an optimal time.

This time, he decided to use them to provoke the Human Domain. What could be a better tactic to provoke the ire of these powers than to kill their children and their future? He could imagine just how enraged they were now, and whatever plans they had been making would most definitely move forward.

But standing here, right here and now, he was shocked.

According to the report these demons had brought back, they hadn't just managed to kill a small number, they killed all of them. Not only did they kill all of them, but they didn't lose a single member of their original 100.

This troop, his first troop, was built based on the cobra demon that had eaten Leonel alive. They all had beautiful, sapphire scales and their necks and heads were covered in the natural hood of a cobra.

Each one stood at over two meters tall and they radiated a dense cold. Their armors matched this cold, fusing them and amplifying them. Leonel had added some of his comprehension of Void Star Force, but honestly it was limited and not his best work as he had created these armors even before his breakthrough in Crafting.

His thought process was that even if this cobra demon troop was caught and dissected, they wouldn't look any different from normal demons, and on the other hand, his enemies wouldn't have any idea what his current Crafting skill was at.

But the end result was beyond his expectations and his provocation had worked almost too well. Looking at the storage device filled with Ethereal Glabellas, he didn't even quite know what to say.

He had personally created, from one cell to a complete living being, an army stronger than the greatest elites of the Human Domain?

He shook his head and sighed. From the moment he learned of the abilities of the Silver Tablet, he had felt that life was far too worthless, and here he was confirming those ideas once more. It was hard to accept for someone like him whose journey of morality and its push and pulls had once given him the conviction to save all beings.

It was funny, in a morbid sort of way.

Back then, he thought that all lives were equal because they were each immeasurable.

Now he thought the same... but only because all lives seemed to be equally worthless.

It was a foundational difference that led to the same conclusion. But what made it worse was the legend of the Northern Star.

Life could be created so casually, it even felt that the life and death of those born in these Incomplete Worlds was no different from a breeze riding the rays of the sun, fleeting and without substance.

And yet the end of the world was looming on the horizon and no one seemed capable of stopping it.

These things... how could both be true, why were they both true, what kind of sick joke built the fabric of reality as it was?

Leonel looked toward the demons, his gaze a bit blank. Right now, he was striving to bring his future wife back to life, striving to see his father stand broad and tall once again, but if he really succeeded in either, just what worth did they ever even have?

It was a thought he had been running from and it was like he was being forced to confront it, ironically due to creations of his own.

What was more important to him? That lives were worth something more substantial than an outpouring of resources? Or that he could always bring those he loved most back to life?

If he could bring those he wanted back with a thought, if he truly ever reached a level of power that allowed him to be infallible to such an extent, would acting on his power diminish the worth of the lives he had wanted to save so much?

He didn't know the answer. It was another question, one maybe even more profound and complicated than the one that had guided his journey until this point, and it came with a depth of suffocation and helplessness that was even heavier than the first.

Leonel gazed toward the demons again. They stood tall, none of them knowing what thoughts were running through the mind of their creator.

Their intelligence was no less than that of the demon that Leonel had fought back then, the strength no less as well. In fact, they were stronger, having been constructed to the level of the Seventh Dimension rather than the Sixth.

What made the reality all the heavier was the fact that this demon wasn't even from an Incomplete World.

"What are your names?" Leonel suddenly asked.

SKKKKRRREEEEEEEE!

The roars of the hundred threatened to shatter Leonel's eardrums, and Leonel actually began to laugh.

He didn't understand their language, but he no longer needed to. With the Dream Plane, he could sense the intentions of their words directly.

Their names? They didn't care about them. They had never had one. They only wanted to fight, to bleed for strength, to crush the bones of their enemies beneath their feet. All of the more complicated things, even if it was just a name, they didn't care to have one.

It was a simple and beautiful existence, and one that he unexpectedly envied.

Chapter 2317: A Good Look

To not care, to be carefree. He wanted it, but his mind wouldn't seem to allow him that sort of peace. It was all too easy for many to focus on the next step forward, to chase that next goal, to aspire toward something larger than themselves, but they rarely thought about what it meant to sit at that height.

If you really did have the power to wave a hand and make everything you want come true, to force it into being, would it all even be worth it?

'What a uselessly human thought,' Leonel thought, still laughing to himself.

He was laughing because he could already see himself taking it for granted, as though he would definitely reach that height, as though he would be proposed with this question one, inevitable day... and when that time came, what choice would he make?

The question was too complicated, too marred by his own biases, and maybe if not for the level of thought he had achieved, he might not have even considered the question in the first place.

'I really hate you demons,' Leonel thought to himself, shaking his head.

Demons had almost killed him more times than he cared to admit. A demon had eaten him alive. Demons were infiltrating his Morales family. A Demon was supposedly his grandmother, toying with his life since even before the day he was born.

If this was a novel, he'd feel that the author was far too on the nose with his motifs and literary themes. What a condescending wackjob.

His life truly looked as though it was the greatest joke. How many existential crises was he going to have?

Well, this didn't really feel like an existential crisis. He felt calm as he faced these questions, and it wasn't because he knew the answer, or because he felt that the answer wasn't as important, but he was already certain of what he would do.

He didn't know whether they would be worth the same, but he knew that he couldn't allow his life to go by without trying to see his father again, he couldn't allow that silly girl who never listened to him to go to the grave without seeing those that had harmed her mother to be buried first.

Even if he found out that their worth really had plummeted just by virtue of his actions... he was too selfish to not try anyway.

And for the first time, just thinking these thoughts, Leonel felt that he had finally understood something about himself, his true self.

For as long as he could remember, he hated to lose, so much so that even if it required crossing the benefits of his own brothers, he would rather win anyway. James had first had experience with this matter.

That day during the championship game, he had known there was something wrong with James. James himself had tried to bring it up earlier in the day, and Leonel had had plenty of opportunity to ask about it.

He just chose not to. He chose not to because he didn't want to face the decision of what to do himself. He didn't want to be split between his own desires and helping out someone he cared for.

So he had avoided James. He hadn't allowed James to tell him about his plight. Even up until this day, he still didn't know exactly what sort of issues James had faced that day.

And why was it? Was it because he hated to lose that much?

No, it was deeper than that.

He was selfish. He wanted it all. He wanted his brother by his side, and he wanted victory. He was insatiable and there probably wasn't anyone who could turn him from his own goals.

How foolish was it to ask the woman out over 500 times? Even if you felt that she might be interested in you, wouldn't it be obvious after the first handful of times that she had worries and troubles that went beyond her liking of you?

He had ignored that. His charisma had made those around him ignore just how ridiculous what he was doing was too, they had even begun to cheer him on, looking forward to the day that he would finally receive his answer. He had manipulated them for his own goals much like he manipulated everyone else to suit himself.

He hadn't cared about what troubles or worries that Aina had had, because all that mattered to him was her saying yes. He didn't care about what might have caused her to be hesitant. All he wanted was that answer.

It was something that was constant. It was maybe his one constant.

He left his brothers behind on Earth, brothers that he had known since he was a toddler, all to chase a woman who hadn't even given him an affirmative yes yet. Their lives were on their line, and they had actually died. But he didn't care.

Aina told him many times that she wanted him to take better care of his life, that she had already lost too much in her life and she didn't want to lose more, that the lives of everyone he was trying to save weren't worth as much to her as his own. But he hadn't cared, even up until the point she had chosen to leave him.

It didn't matter to him, he was on his own crusade, he had a savior complex back then and he didn't even know how much of that was genuine emotion versus a childish hatred of the fact that he had, well... lost.

Thinking about it could make someone quite sick to their stomach.

Did he really make the decision to unify the Dimensional Verse because he wanted to save people? Or was it because his failure in the Valiant Heart Zone stirred his selfish desire to win?

How much had it really mattered to him if he was willing to sacrifice the lives of those thousands of warriors that had called him brother, just to revive the brothers that were only dead because he had abandoned them too?

Leonel looked down at his hands. They radiated the familiar bronze color of the Morales family, but in his eyes right now, they just looked beaten and bloody.

He had finally gotten a good glimpse of himself, free from the restraints of an almighty future self, and his conclusion was quite something.

He had never been as good a person as he thought himself to be.

Chapter 2318: Worth

Leonel wasn't too shaken by the conclusion. He felt that everyone was selfish in one way or another, the problem was that he was selfish, and he also had the ability to enact his selfishness without the burden of judgment. If you could always manipulate everyone into doing what you wanted them to do, what worry did you have to have about backlash?

This, though, was still a bit of an excuse, and he knew it. This was his reality, and he had to decide whether he wanted to change or not.

But it wasn't that simple... because there was a very strong pull leading him in a certain direction. He still had a strong conviction to save his father and Aina, and he simply didn't see that changing.

Leonel clenched his fist and suddenly vanished.

...

Leonel stood high in the skies a long while later, staring down at a devastated scenery. This place was familiar to him, and it could be considered his true first stint into the wider Dimensional Verse...

It was Valiant Heart Mountain, the place linked to maybe the most growth he had experienced in his life. It was a place he owed quite a bit, but just like everything else, he had left it quite selfishly. He had taken everything he wanted from it, and then he had directly abandoned it.

Bits and pieces of it were now part of his people, those like Rayon and his wife. Emna was also a remnant from this part of his life... But the mountain was no longer anything. The people that had once called this place home, the elders that had given their entire lives to protecting it and helping it to grow, the excited youths who put their lives on the line just for a chance to enter...

It was all reduced to dust now, crushed until nothing remained.

Leonel descended and landed on the ground, standing along what remained of the wide road that led to Valiant Heart Mountain. In this place, two mighty pillars had once stood... it was they that pressured the disciples on their ascent up the mountain, and it was also they that also opened the Valiant Heart Zone.

Leonel closed his eyes, breathing in the air.

The planet was weak, so weak that if he took a breath that was too deep, the trees that had managed to survive the catastrophe of this world would be ripped out and tossed into the air.

He remembered the first time he had come to this world. He couldn't even make a dent in the ground with his spear, let rip a tree out from it. And yet, it all felt so feeble.

The faces of many crossed his senses.

Rollan.

It had been a long time since he had thought of that name. He was the best friend of The General, the character he had become in the Zone for those two years... or was it a character?

Rollan had truly become his best friend. He was different from James. He wasn't a playboy, he had a loving wife, Elise. He was less braggadocious and boisterous, but he was earnest and he had a kind pair of eyes that could melt the soul.

His wife was a perfect match for him. She was weak and didn't have any talent for improvement herself, but Rollan cherished her like a man should his wife, and she had begun to bear his child. When the Zone closed, she had yet to give birth, but Leonel knew how hard Rollan had fought just to give her and their child a chance to look into the skies with a smile on their face.

Goggles.

That pragmatic youth who refused to put his life on the line for anything. And why would he? With his Ability Index, he never had to. But he had chosen to fight for Leonel, to ignore his usual baser instincts and fight for something larger than himself.

Gertrude.

That fiery, red-headed young woman. She had once been a noble woman, but she abandoned her status because she felt that the actions of King Alexandre the Apex were vile and disgusting. She had a temper that could rival a dragon's, but a heart of gold.

He knew quite well that she was in love with him, but he had ignored her feelings. Even though he and Aina had already been on a rocky road back then, she was still the only woman for him. But she didn't deserve what happened to her...

None of them did.

He squeezed his eyes shut tighter, but the single tear came anyway.

He exhaled a breath.

"I'm sorry."

It was a hollow voice in a silent world. There was no one here to hear it. The ones that deserved to hear it were long gone because it was an apology that was long overdue.

RUMBLE. Leonel's eyes sharpened as they snapped open. It was a risk to come here, he knew that. War would break out soon of the Morales world, and yet he was here reminiscing. However, when he saw what was before him, his pupils constricted.

A portal, a familiar one. It was the Valiant Heart Zone. He could feel it in every sense of the word.

He hesitated, but he eventually stepped in.

It was all the same. Two years wasn't even necessary. A few hours wasn't even necessary. Even a few minutes felt excessive.

He crushed the Zone that had once taken his years to complete in not even a fraction of the time.

But he felt every second as though it was years.

What was the tradeoff? He was so powerful now that he couldn't build those relationships again, he didn't get to bask in Rollan's kindness, in Elise's sweetness, in Goggles' sense of humor...

And why would he? He was far above them, he was an existence beyond even their understanding. The tyrant King that they had feared for so long could only be strung up like a chicken in Leonel's palm.

And then, he stood before the Silver Tablet once again, entering its world and looking at the endless spirits who this time, instead of seeming illusory because of their deaths, look as real as could be. He had enough Force within his own body right now to revive them all if he wanted, he wouldn't even need external treasures.

But that question came back to nag him.

If you stood at the top of the world, with the strength to make anything you wanted to happen come into existence... If you acted on that strength, would its worth still be the same?

Leonel grabbed the Silver Tablet and poured his Force into it. His body acted without his mind's consent, disregarding the question entirely. All he wanted was this pit in his chest to disappear.

Somewhere a long distance away, a sigh that Leonel couldn't hear echoed.

Chapter 2319: Never Existed

Leonel looked at the various souls floating around him and felt a hint of excitement that was doused quickly. How could he remain excited? While it was true a burden that had been weighing him down for so long was finally off of his shoulders, there was another matter that was harder to accept...

After a bit of hesitation, he reached forward toward Rollan's soul.

Rollan was someone that Leonel had met long after his falling out with James. After what happened between him and his longtime best friend, Leonel truly didn't think that he would ever connect with a person on that level again. He and James might have been complete polar opposites, but they worked in a way that Leonel simply couldn't describe.

That wasn't to say that Leonel thought more of James than his other brothers, that wasn't the case at all. Some parents might lie when they said they loved all of their children equally, but Leonel wasn't lying at all when he said that he loved all his brothers the same.

What differentiated his best friend from his buddies wasn't how much he liked James, but rather how well they clicked, how well they played off of one another, how well James seemed to compliment him.

Now that he understood a bit more about himself, Leonel knew exactly why this was too. Would it even be him if it wasn't for a selfish motive?

James was a simple minded brute and he was all too willing to deal with Leonel's manipulation. But at the same time, he was sharp and intuitive in a way he himself probably didn't understand. He could pick out Leonel's flaws in a way that others simply couldn't.

In a lot of ways, James was like Leonel's litmus test. If he could pull one over on James, then his actions would go unnoticed.

In truth, Leonel knew he had probably tipped the scales a bit too far out of his favor. Yet, he was a selfish person, but he didn't believe that he had crossed the line to evil, villain, mastermind just yet, treating James like some sort of science experiment.

Even so, he knew that there was some truth to this for certain, because although Rollan was also a polar opposite of James, he reflected those very same core traits.

He could see through Leonel's nonsense, he could cut right to the core of whatever was ailing them, and if anything, he was a bit sharper than James was, at least when it came to actually articulating his thoughts.

He actually reminded Leonel a lot of Joel, their personalities were nearly identical. And it was amusing because if Leonel had to choose which friend he was the second closest to outside of James, it would be Joel. Their drunk escapades and night of cuddling painted that picture quite well.

The difference was just one thing: Joel didn't tolerate Leonel's nonsense at all, once again proven by that drunken night.

It was Joel that had brought the liquor that day, and it was Joel who forced Leonel to see that he was less okay than he tried to pretend to be.

Leonel didn't want that kind of best friend. Joel wouldn't just call him out like Rollan, or tolerate him like James, he would try to force Leonel to change, and it made sense. Joel was a captain in his own right.

While on the football field Leonel had been the captain of the offense, it could be said that when the defense was on the field, the leader wasn't Leonel at all. After all, he was on the sidelines. It was Joel who took control of their defense... he was the quarterback of the defense.

When he put it that way, it was almost sad. Maybe if Joel had been his best friend instead, or rather if he had allowed that to happen, he could have saved himself a lot of pain.

But why would he? Why would he allow someone to change him? Did a person as selfish as himself even have that sort of capacity?

Leonel grasped Rollan's soul and it shuddered. He undid the restrictions and allowed Rollan to break the final barrier to life.

Rollan practically popped into existence, looking around in confusion for a moment. When he noticed Leonel, he immediately bowed deeply, and it was precisely this that made Leonel sigh.

How could this Rollan be the same as the other? Of course, no matter how quickly he had completed the Zone, he and Rollan were still slated to be best friends. After all, it had to be remembered that it was Rollan that had given Leonel the first clues on what his role in that Zone world would be.

But that was "The General" and Leonel was Leonel. Rollan hadn't had any time to acclimate to them being the same person, and the Leonel that had entered was so far and beyond the best friend he had known that they easily became two separate existences in his mind.

To Rollan, his best friend had long since died and the Leonel before him was a completely different person, a person that had crushed King Alexandre, the tyrant that had ruled them all for so long with absolute ease. If for no other reason than to ensure his wife remained safe, he couldn't afford to neglect showing proper due respect.

Any camaraderie the two had had seemed to have gone up in a puff of smoke. Leonel knew that even if he explained things clearly, it wouldn't change a single thing. The Rollan of now and the Rollan that he fondly remembered would never be the same person.

Leonel stoically resurrected them all one by one, the familiar burden that he thought he had left far beyond weighing him down once more.

Goggles' previous gusto was nowhere to be seen as he looked around shifty-eyed. Gertrude didn't have that familiar infatuation in her eyes when she looked at him. And Elise... her stomach was decidedly and glaringly flat. Their baby was dead. Or rather...

It had never existed in the first place.

Chapter 2320: Fuse or Shatter

It took a few hours, but Leonel got to everyone. In truth, this chance had dealt with a problem he had been avoiding all this time: the Oryx.

The Oryx Empire had yet to learn that Leonel sacrificed the rest of their people as Leonel had never told them. Elthor would have been an especially important warrior to lose out on as his potential had yet to be fully unearthed.

Originally, he thought about what it would mean to have this chance. Would there be two Elthors? Two Oryx Kings? But he had overthought it. There was nothing of the sort.

This realization, though, made Leonel certain that someone had a hand in this.

Thinking back, how did he even earn the right to enter the true Valiant Heart Zone? He had found a ring on the body of a dead person whose name he wouldn't even remember if not for his infallible memory. That person was as close to a nobody as you could get, and the fact the ring landed in Leonel's hands was still something that felt... odd to him.

But Leonel could only really deal with one problem at a time. There were too many forces in the dark that wanted to bring him down, and there were very few like this one that actually seemed to... help him. He didn't have any more attention to split on this.

Leonel shook his head. Even this matter took far too much effort on his part.

Years ago, the lives of these people would have been a great benefit to him, but whether it was the humans or the Oryx, they were both far too weak. In fact, that probably wasn't even harsh enough.

Back then, King Alexandre had killed Leonel just because he had stepped into the Fifth Dimension. Leonel had been completely helpless against him, and these people were even more.

He had almost forgotten. These people weren't in the Fifth Dimension at all; they were all in the Fourth. They were so far from being useful in this conflict that it was laughable. And yet, Leonel still took his time to revive each and every one, giving them a small token of his own personal assurance.

All of these people were already familiar with him, not in the intimate sense of the first time he had taken the Zone trial, but rather in that they had all seen him defeat the King as he had made certain that they would.

The person this seemed to impact the most was Normand the Speedster, or as he had been known in the Zone... Normand the Cuckold. And it was precisely because of that name that Normand looked toward Leonel with more passion than just about anyone else. It was thanks to Leonel that the love of his life had finally been released from her shackles.

Even during the first trial, Leonel had never been close to this person. In fact, they had ended up fighting in the end, and Leonel almost died at his hands. But it was also because of this that Leonel knew how much potential Normand had.

The Pure Speedster Ability Index was incredibly rare and extraordinarily powerful when brought to its limits. And at the same time, his former fiancée, though I guess current fiancée now, was yet another monster.

Normand's fiancée had had her blood drained by King Alexandre for the sake of harnessing her power of life. She had a Life Force Innate Node, and just by virtue of that, her lifespan was nigh unlimited.

If her blood also carried such power, Leonel also had an inkling that she might also be a Blood Sovereign, though it was possible that this was just a byproduct of her Life Force Innate Node.

And then there was King Alexandre himself. He was one of the few that Leonel hadn't resurrected, but after he had finished going through everyone, he stared at this looming silhouette for a long time.

There was a good reason for that: King Alexandre's Ability Index.

The King called himself The Apex. He was able to grant others titles that could strengthen them, and he could also strengthen himself by giving himself such a title. In truth, even when Leonel thought back, he was a shocking talent.

Part of Leonel wanted to resurrect him and rein him under his control. But to do that, he would have to first find a resource worthy of resurrecting such a talent.

Leonel shook his head. Just how could so many astounding talents be squeezed into this inconsequential Zone? It was like, once again, he was being pointed in this direction.

He had thought that when he returned, even if he gained such a chance, these people would just become another burden he had to take care of. But the more he thought about it, even when he reframed the things that happened back then with his current understanding of the world...

It was hard to accept just how far ahead these people were.

Whether it was Elthor, Normand, his fiancée, Alexandre, and maybe the most shocking talent of them all, Goggles, they were each more ridiculous than the last.

But Leonel's hesitation about Alexandre went beyond just the mystery of why so many talents would be here, so even whether he should revive such a vile man, it was instead something completely separate.

Should he do it... Should he finally absorb a talent that wasn't his own?

Leonel hesitated.

In the past, he hadn't noticed. His scope was too limited and his comprehension of Dream Force wasn't nearly as deep, but now he saw it as bright as day.

King Alexandre's Ability Index was a pure Dream Force ability, maybe the strongest Dream Force Ability Index he had ever seen, stronger than even Lionel's despite him not being a Savant.

The people of the Zone had called it "Royal Force," and it had completely thrown him off. But ever since he had come out of the Zone, he had never heard another word about this so-called Royal Force, nor did the Void Library have any information about it.

Then he thought about his King's Might Lineage Factor. If there was any ability that would make use of Royal Force, wouldn't it be it? And yet... it was a Lineage Factor built completely from Dream Force.

And then, the straw that broke the camel's back, was his new comprehension of the Second Dimension and his new access to the Dream Plane.

Breathing Life into a Word, that was how Alexandre's was described by the people of the Zone.

But the way Leonel saw Dream Force now, wasn't it the same?

Dream Force was said to be the impetus of life, but it was no more than the capacity of thought. That alone gave birth to life; it was the core of what created.

If one took it a step further than that, Force Arts were a method of tapping into this sort of language, pulling on the laws of the world with words as well... it was just that they were words the common person couldn't understand.

A step further than even that, and his own Ability Index was just a translation of his own "words" into an internal change. His Ability Index highest level was known as Control, a perfect internal control that allowed him to in turn exert pressure on the outside world.

Alexandre's, though, was the exact opposite. It was an exertion of Control on the outside.

Leonel believed that he had found the other side of his Ability Index's coin.

The question was, if he absorbed this Ability Index...

Would they fuse and provide a multiplicative effect?

Or would they cancel one another out and shatter both?

