

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2341: Uproarious Laughter

Leonel stepped on the chest of a man whose body was only lacking hair in the upper portion of his torso and his face. He looked very much like an ape, and Leonel would have thought that he had run into an ape race of sorts, if not for the fact the entire party seemed to have different bodily oddities, not to mention gave off a foul stench reminiscent of the Oryx.

Some had spotted fur, some had twin tails, some were covered in scales...

They looked like a completely different set of people, but they also seemed to be of one mind.

That was when Leonel understood. These people were likely humans that followed a path of experimenting with their bodies through the use of beast blood and the like. As for how they were already together, it was likely that they had a Seeded Participant as well and started off as one before splitting off into several groups, and Leonel had just so happened to run into one of them.

Having a Seeded Participant was truly a great advantage. It allowed you to start with a huge leg up, and rather than ending up in a battle Royale like Leonel had from the start, you could be among allies and start looking for treasures immediately. This was obviously done on purpose. The Vast Bubble didn't want a bunch of stragglers; they wanted to maximize the chances of those that had been powerful enough to curtail their entire verse.

More likely than not, those that could come together to anoint a Seeded Participant also had the strongest and most unique paths to benefit from. After all, conquering an entire verse was not easy. Leonel speculated, then, that those with Seeded Participants would be the most powerful, while those without would be fighting for scraps.

There would be some exceptions. For example, verses with more than one powerful path that couldn't choose a Seeded Participant because they had too many powerful paths, but that would be rare for obvious reasons. Really, then, Leonel believed that this group he had run into just happened to be among the weaker members of this verse.

How many participants were there? From just a single verse, there should easily be billions. That number wasn't exaggerated at all. He had questioned the little woman about many things, and one of the things he learned was that the only requirement was being under a hundred years of age. Of course, there were some other caveats so that toddlers wouldn't be running around, but that was the main requirement.

There should be a few dozen Incomplete Worlds, each with billions of participants. The number that would be true elites among that number would be minimal.

"Hey."

Leonel pressed his foot down harder before realizing his bodily strength wasn't enough anymore. Instead, his body trembled and his Gravity Domain roared with life. The sudden change in weight was so great that the crackling of ribs echoed moments later.

A roar of pain came from the ape-like young man before they quickly became whimpers. All signs of resistance vanished from him. The people of the Beastman Dimensional Verse respected strength of the body far more, and they had strict hierarchies that were divided into Beta and Alpha. Usually, the ape-like young man would have lowered his head far more quickly, but Leonel had defeated them with speed, finesse, and trickery, that wasn't something he could respect.

But now, there was nothing to

"Good. Now we can talk."

The ape-like young man spit up a mouthful of blood, drowning as the pressure around him lessened.

"You're all in a group, so you should have a Seeded Participant. Lead me to them."

The ape-like young man's eyes opened wide when he heard this. There was a squirming shift of power within him, one that felt almost cancerous in nature.

Leonel frowned. 'Hm?'

Just now, he had felt the ape-like young man's willingness to comply, a benefit of his Dream Force. Although he couldn't sense his King's Might Lineage Factor any longer, his sharpness in reading people had increased thanks to whatever seal had been placed on him being undone.

However, just as quickly as that will had appeared, it was actually suppressed, almost like these beastmen were being forced to comply with certain rules.

'This is a compulsion built on the back of Soul Force? No, it's not Soul Force, it's actually Blood Force, but it seems to have a layer of Soul Force as well. Interesting. A

Blood-Force-Soul-Force fusion. Is this just a Force I've never heard of? Or is it another unique Force like the Chaos Force that little woman mentioned?'

Leonel was interested. Theoretically, as a Life Grade Crafter, he could create ores that had never existed from scratch, and by proxy, that likewise necessitated the creation of new Forces as well.

Who was to say that these various verses didn't have unique Forces he had never come across before?

In this case, there seemed to be an Alpha and Beta system in this world. Those that were forced into submission would always be in submission unless they could become Alphas themselves.

Leonel began to question these Beta Beastmen, and he soon found that his conjectures were correct, but only in part.

There were layers in their Alpha and Beta system, not that he cared much to parse apart the differences. What was important was that they didn't have any ability to directly help him in betraying their Alphas.

In fact, it turned out that the only reason they could answer these questions at all was that they were questions that would help Leonel defeat the Seeded Participant, but not their direct alpha.

If Leonel had intentions of targeting their pack leader, or rather, if they believed that he had the intention of targeting whoever they were, they would be compelled to remain silent.

'I see. So their compulsion's strength is dependent on how close they are to the alpha in question. These few are so low ranked that they're quite a distance from the purview of the true Alpha that leads them all. What a fascinating system... But that's also why I saved this question for last.'

Leonel grinned. If he was correct, if there was anyone who would be born with a Vital Star Force Innate Node, it would be a group with powerful bodies.

It had to be remembered that Leonel's birth of a Scarlet Force Innate Node was seen as absolutely ridiculous because a human birthing an Elemental Innate Node made no sense at all. Humans weren't nearly in tune enough with nature to produce such a powerful Elemental Innate Node.

Clearly, Leonel and Amery were the exceptions to this rule. Now, Leonel had a verse of body experts right before him. If they didn't have what he needed, then who would?

Leonel's grin widened. "Is there anyone among you who has a Vital Star Force Innate Node?"

The eyes of the ape-like young man widened, and soon after, they began to bleed as though he was leaking tears of blood.

Seeing this, Leonel burst into laughter. He had finally found it. He would have his wife by his side soon enough. With a flash, Leonel vanished, but not before he stored the beastmen into his Segmented Cube.

Chapter 2342: Hunting

Leonel flashed forward with great speed. He now had a strong purpose for what he wanted to do and accomplish in this place, but it was still troublesome to figure out how exactly he would do it.

With the binds of Alphas to Betas, he couldn't just have the Betas lead him to their Alpha, or else they would die long before they go there. Just thinking about helping him had caused their eyes to combust with blood, there was only so much that he could do.

Thanks to this, finding them through tracking was impossible, but that didn't make him completely helpless. If he could find another Alpha, maybe their compulsions would be weaker. Or...

'Let me know how it goes, Anastasia. If you can remove the compulsions, that would be great. If you need me to gather some materials to make it possible first, we can do that as well.'

Anastasia's voice echoed in Leonel's ears.

'Removing the Blood Soul Force isn't actually all that difficult. The real problem is that it's tied and intertwined with their very Life Force. You can't extract one without the other. You might even need to use a method as crude as blood transfusion to make it work, but you'd need to replace their blood and their Life Force at the same time -'

'Something I can't even think of doing without a Vital Star Force Innate Node, huh?'

'Exactly.'

Leonel chuckled. What a circular problem he had on his hands. Why couldn't things ever just be simple and straightforward for him?

'Another method would be to just do what they've been doing themselves all this time.'

'You mean find a beast they're compatible with first, then do the blood swap?'

'Yes. It should work as long as you use your Dream Force to contain the proliferation of the Blood Soul Force into the new blood. It would be easy to do if you still have your King's Might Lineage Factor, but since it seems to be dormant, you'll need to create a new Force Art just for this purpose.'

Leonel nodded slowly.

In reality, he was learning a lot from this Beastman Dimensional Verse, not the least of which was the fact that even his King's Might Lineage Factor couldn't have saved these Betas even if it wasn't currently dormant.

Normally, his first instinct would have been to just kill these few beasts, extract their souls, then make them his minions. But according to Anastasia, even his King's Might Lineage Factor couldn't free them.

Instead, they would have been pulled in two different directions, one being a compulsion toward his orders, and the other toward the compulsions of their Alphas.

This was an awakening for Leonel in many ways. It meant that even when his King's Might Lineage Factor returned, something he was sure would happen, it wouldn't likely be an unrestrained cheat like it was in the Dimensional Verse.

If even an Incomplete World had measures against it, the humans that had been responsible for the fall of the Fawkes family most definitely had their own methods against and, they were probably far more robust.

'I'm still far away. At this speed, it'll take me half a day to catch up to this Seeded Participant of the Dimensional Verse.'

Leonel frowned. Too much could happen in half a day, and this round technically had its own time limit as well.

This time limit wasn't based on actual time, but rather the fall of a certain number of participants, that being 90%.

Once 90% had fallen, this round would come to an end and those with the highest kill rates would be ordered in two tiers.

The Seeded Participants would be in the first tier, while the other would be in the second tier. Meaning, even if a Seeded Participant had fewer kills than you, they would always remain ranked ahead of you.

These rankings would, apparently, be quite important for the second round which had rules that had yet to be disseminated.

'No, I can catch up and kill at the same time. If the round ends before I catch up, so be it.'

He doubted the round would end so quickly anyway. The rush of battle royales that started the round would take out a large number of people, but the fact there were Seeded Participants and a large number of allies would be spawned together would mitigate that to a great extent.

Plus, since there were opportunities to be found just laying around, he expected that many would focus on these first before they went on a killing spree.

It would be at least a month before those 90% figures could be reached. Unless...

Leonel looked up into the skies.

Something like the demand of a 90% death rate was truly vile, and he had a feeling that those above would do their best to force things along. They were on a schedule as well and they couldn't waste time even with the time dilation.

In fact, since they had brought everyone together like this, Leonel still didn't quite know if there was a time dilation at all.

Leonel took a breath and he suddenly expanded his Internal Sight outward, far and wide. It crossed over a thousand kilometers in an instant.

He locked onto a particular location and shot forward, his speed becoming faster and faster.

If he had run into a Beta squad of the Beastmen so quickly, then this was definitely the region they had all spawned in, and as such, there should be a large concentration of beastmen in the region.

In that case, he would go hunting.

His aura flourished and rose into the skies as he stopped hiding himself entirely.

His Stars no longer appeared to his back, but his comprehension of the Natural Light Realm was still just the same. So, when he roared, the daylight faded and darkness descended.

For now, he would focus on killing his way through this region until the Alphas were forced to come to him.

Chapter 2343: It Bites

In the depths of a swamp, a meeting was taking place between three individuals. Each one was at least three meters tall, and they all radiated a heart-thrumming aura. It felt like the movement of their bodies alone carried enough strength to make space tremble.

One had a raging golden mane that connected his hair and his facial hair. His canines were sharp, and his shoulders were practically boulders.

The second looked no different from a normal human... if one discounted the fact that she was truly a goddess amongst women. Her hair flowed a gorgeous white, the very same as her hair and the fluffy tail to her back, and most importantly... the same as the pair of angelic wings that graced her slender hips.

The third, however, was one the two seemed to be stepping on eggshells around. He radiated a dark and ominous aura. Sometimes it seemed to crackle like black lightning, at other times it gained a hint of a dark violet that looked like chaos incarnate, and at other times, these energies would become like wisps of black smoke, tendrils of darkness rising out from an eerie abyss.

The man had sharp, yellow slit eyes that shimmered like gems, claw-like hands, and his body was a dense smattering of black scales that only dispersed slightly to allow one a good look at his face... a face that was cold, detached, and carrying a creature of the dark kind of handsomeness that could capture the heart of women.

These three could be considered the strongest of the Beastman Dimensional Verse's younger generation, at least it seemed that way on purpose. Two of them knew quite well that even if that title was extended to the older generation, at least one of them would still be on that list.

"... There will be billions of participants. One of the advantages we should have with a seed is a territorial one. This surrounding region is covered by our people, and anyone not of us can easily be weeded out. Likewise, all the resources can be controlled by us."

The angel-winged woman, known as Alpha Angelica by her people, spoke quickly. However, the response she received was both worth a sigh and expected by her.

"No."

The voice was impossibly deep and made one feel as though their very bones were vibrating.

The one who spoke was none other than the strongest of them, but this scaled young man had a name that one would never expect him to carry...

Alpha Clown.

Neither of the two present knew why he had this name, nor did they dare to ask or even use it. Despite him having introduced himself as Alpha Clown, they simply called him Alpha.

What a joke. Which of them would dare to do so? Anyone who had dared to refer to him as such had died a horrible death. Including those of the older generation.

"This is not a territorial war; this is a fight for survival. The existence of a seed is nothing more than a distraction. To them, the seeds are already among the few that they have chosen. Even if I do nothing, so long as I defend my life, my rewards will be just the same.

"You two have spent so many years toiling in the Beastman Dimensional Verse; can you not see a cage when it's placed right before you?"

Alpha Clown swept a gaze between the two, causing them to shudder.

He was right. The collars had already been placed on their necks, but they were trying to obediently play the game.

Seeded Participants were spawned with billions of protectors, out of the way another of their power level, and given free rein over a "territory" to make do with as they please.

Even if they didn't get kills, they would be ranked at the top, and all they really had to do was protect their own lives, something that would be impossibly easy given how many of their own kind had been placed around them.

But why? If they always planned on opening a backdoor for them, why not just assure them in?

It was a show of power.

Who outside of the Beastmen could understand such a thing better? They didn't have clans; they didn't really have bloodlines; they started as humans and they carved out their own paths for themselves.

No two beastmen looked exactly alike because from the very beginning, they had forged everything with their own two hands.

Any beastman that stood here today had thousands of lives bloodying their palms and an understanding of what it meant to climb out from the very bottom.

One shouldn't mistake the chains that bound Betas as providing security. As much as it was power, it was a reminder that should they fall behind, they would one day be the ones bound in chains instead.

And now, these gods had descended, making them realize that all along, they had been the Betas of a much larger game.

"Then what do you want to do, Alpha?" Alpha Gold spoke for the first time.

Silence fell before a bloody grin spread across Alpha Clown's face. The smile was so wide and jagged that it twisted his handsome face, making him look like much more of a nightmare creature than a man.

"The same thing we've always done. When an animal is cornered, they lash out. When a beast is subdued, chained and controlled, it bides its time, it lowers its head, and then when its enemy is within striking distance..."

"It bites."

...

Leonel stood around a pile of corpses. The deeper he moved into this territory, the more he felt just how truly ferocious these beastmen were.

He didn't think that it was a matter of bloodline, and it obviously wasn't about race either as he was fairly certain that these people were just humans that had experimented on themselves with beast blood.

'This will be... troublesome.'

Leonel looked up from the corpses, a hint of fatigue on his brows.

His eyes landed on an inconspicuous cave, but the symbol of a glaive hovered above it. It seemed that he couldn't enter with the Glaive Domain Ring.

Or could he?

Chapter 2344: Menace

Leonel stood before the cave, looking it up and down. He reached a hand forward, and as expected, he ran into a barrier. However, in doing so, he picked up just the slightest hint of something.

It was a simple detection Force Art. Well, simple to him. It seemed that rather than checking if he had Glaive Force, it instead directly checked his Domain Ring to see if it matched or if he even had a Domain Ring to begin with.

Leonel pulled his hand back and then touched the barrier again. Then he repeated. He must have done this at least a dozen times before he finally came to a stop.

'I got it.'

He closed his eyes for a moment, reaching his hand forward a few moments later; it passed right through as though the barrier wasn't even there.

Leonel smiled.

He didn't believe his Crafting was beyond that of a Complete World; he wasn't so arrogant. However, his level of understanding of Domain Rings was likely far beyond what these people likely assumed, and more importantly than that...

How much effort would they put into hiding their intentions when they thought them all to be country bumpkins?

Leonel strolled into the cave. He thought for a moment and then swapped out the primitive woman's spear for another wooden spear.

This one had a bone for a blade that looked quite roughly shaped. Leonel had never used it before, but it looked close enough to a glaive. It would serve his purposes.

Leonel felt a strong suppression pin him down, but in the end, he smiled. As expected, this suppression was designed to stifle Glaive Force, but Leonel didn't even have Glaive Force to stifle.

The pressure ended up passing right through him, only slowing his steps somewhat as it pressured his body instead.

In truth, the pressure wasn't designed to do this. Unfortunately, he was only in the Fifth Dimension now, so pressure designed for Seventh Dimensional existences just happened to have this passive effect on him. But it wasn't enough to slow him considerably.

He wanted to know, what was at the end?

Leonel made it to the end quite quickly. It turned out that this cave only existed to suppress and refine Glaive Force, likely in an attempt to purify it into True Sovereign Glaive Force.

It was an interesting concept, and Leonel's senses swept about as he took note of the Force Arts that were active in making it happen, but in the end, he felt that it was nothing special.

He felt that if this was a cave for Spear Force, he wouldn't have even a 1% shot at crossing that elusive threshold. You could only do so if you had an inkling of what that kernel of truth might be.

He threw the idea of using this to help Emna out to the back of his mind.

'Oh?'

Leonel stopped. At the end of the path, there was a podium, and upon it, there was a ring. He didn't need to think much to understand what it was; it was a Glaive Domain Ring.

His eyes narrowed. This must be the reward, a chance to absorb this Glaive Domain Ring into your own and multiply its strength.

Leonel had a small bit of familiarity with this process. After he had succeeded in placing first during his tribulation, his Spear Domain Ring gained a whole new section and the number of spears doubled. In addition, beyond the mountain, a place that once was a vast darkness, another graveyard of spears appeared.

This was apparently an opportunity to do the same. But once again, it felt... hollow, like he was missing something.

After some hesitation, he picked up the ring and tossed it into the Segmented Cube.

'How good is your multi-tasking, Anastasia?'

He could practically hear her roll her eyes.

'I'm a World Spirit, my duty is to manage a world. If anything, you're not giving me nearly enough tasks.'

Leonel laughed. 'Your family, I can't just order you around as I please, right?'

'Don't try and sweet talk me, brat. I watched you grow up. I'm not some lady you can just sweep off her feet.'

Leonel laughed harder. 'I feel like there's something odd about these rings; their existence doesn't make sense. What can you tell me about them.'

'Well, if you had asked earlier, I could have told you that the rings are just part of a whole, of which there should be nine total.'

'And what happens when you gather nine?'

'Well, it should be able to create a quasi True Sovereign Aura, one that goes beyond what each individual ring gives. It should also give you a pretty much 50/50 chance of truly becoming a Sovereign as well.'

'But why? The why is lacking...'

Leonel didn't really say this to Anastasia; he was thinking it to himself. Something about this wasn't adding up.

These were not good people. Such an amazing treasure was definitely something they would have kept for themselves if they had the capability.

Leonel stepped out from the cave and found a group of beastmen looking down at the corpses. His eyes narrowed when he spotted one among them, or more accurately, when he spotted the ring on his finger.

Leonel understood. This person should be an Alpha, and these people had found this cave for him. He was a Domain Ring wielder suited for this place.

'An Alpha, huh?'

Leonel looked toward the young man. He had grey, leathery skin with muscles bulging out from every orifice. He was just two meters tall, a bit shorter than even Leonel, but he felt so bulky and large that it hardly mattered.

The most standout feature, though, was the sharp rhino horn that took the place of his nose. When he spotted Leonel, he let out a gruff, low grumble that superheated the air.

A glaive that looked like it was formed of magma and lava rock appeared in his rough hands, swinging down toward Leonel with menace.

Chapter 2345: Serious

Leonel's thoughts wanted him to grab a hold of the magma glaive. He was practically immune to fire and heat, while also incredibly resistant to Earth Force as well. This person would usually be someone that he could perfectly counter without even the slightest hint of unease.

But the moment he thought to do so, his instincts screamed at him to not be stupid an instant later.

Dream Step.

He took a single step back as the glaive swung, barely missing the tip of his nose. The searing heat threatened to burn a layer of his skin off, and the sharpness caught some of his hair, slicing them off and then, as though a will of fire itself continued to burn within them, began to quickly burn them as well.

'What the hell?'

Leonel was speechless.

His hair was truly indestructible. He had tried everything, but outside of the compulsion of his King's Might itself, nothing could cut his hair, let alone singe and burn it.

He didn't even know what to say, but then he understood a bit later... The Metal Synergy aspect of his body had hit absolute rock bottom, while his King's Might Lineage Factor was entirely dormant. The reality was whatever it was that had made his hair special in the past was no longer active.

'Ah, so you're saying I could end up bald? What a travesty!'

Leonel dodged again. Despite his internal jokes, he realized that he had to take this matter more seriously.

There was a certain threshold of enemy he could deal with right now. So long as they were below that threshold, no matter how powerful they were, killing them was as easy as a single stroke of his spear. Despite how ferocious the beastmen had been until now, this was the category the most of them had fallen into.

This was a gap in pure skill. Leonel was no longer that youth fumbling about with a spear, not understanding how to maximize his own strength. He was a true spear master and he put much of the older generation to shame. He could not use any Force at all and still kill Sixth Dimensional existences with ease. With the help of Force and his Ability Index, he could kill even Seventh Dimensional existences.

But there was a limit to this.

Once that threshold was surpassed, even if there was still a large gap in skill, the weight of overwhelming power would be difficult to ignore.

And this Alpha Magma fell into that very category, weighing him down with oppressive might and charging forth.

'No Divine Armor, no King's Might, no Metal Body, no Innate Nodes. Can't use my True Sovereign Spear Force or Body Force, can only gather elements from the surroundings... You really screwed me over big time, old man.'

Before this Alpha had appeared, a part of Leonel had thought that he would still be able to steamroll everyone. But he knew that this Alpha wasn't even the pinnacle of this Beastman Dimensional Verse, and yet his momentum was already so fierce and his power was so oppressive.

Leonel continued to dodge.

His senses swept the surroundings and he realized that the Betas had no intention of interfering. This was interesting because in the past, they had no problem with ganging up on him.

It seemed that when Alphas were involved, the first priority of the Betas was to protect the former's ego.

That was fine by Leonel, though it wouldn't make much of a difference anyway. All of those Betas were below the threshold, so even if they jumped in, they would be a single spear stroke away from falling. If anything, they had saved themselves from death, at least for now.

'Since that's not a problem, I need to focus on how to win this battle. This man's greatest strong suit is his strength if I was still using my Ability Index to put numbers on people's "stats," he would be near the limit of his current Tier. He's fast as well, though not nearly as fast as he is strong, and he can't synergize his agility and strength all that well. But none of this matters because he's so much stronger than me...'

Leonel's head tilted to the side and he dodged out of the way of another strike.

'I've been slacking too much. I need to use Dream Path on myself, I need to understand exactly what steps I need to take to maximize the chance I've received by returning to the Fifth Dimension. Sure, reforming my Metal Body and Crafting my Divine Armors... again, seem like the obvious choice, but none of those things will fundamentally change my foundation. Well, my Metal Body might, but I don't think this is what gramps wanted me to do with this chance. I don't think El'Rion's current strength, even though he's in the Fifth Dimension too, is built off the back of techniques like Metal Body. There's something deeper I have to look for, something that I'm missing.'

Leonel dodged out of the way of yet another strike.

Alpha Magma was starting to become truly infuriated, but rather than making him sloppy, he seemed to become even faster and even stronger.

Leonel's brows shot up and he tapped his foot on the ground several times, flashing in a round arc and stabbing out at Alpha Magma's hip.

Before the strike even landed, he shook his head and explosively retreated, just barely managing to avoid the fate of having his spear, and likely his arm as well, being burnt to ash.

'Force.'

Leonel ultimately decided on this, at least as a sort of pivot point.

What was the largest difference between himself and El'Rion other than their bloodlines? Well, it was obviously their usage of Force. El'Rion wasn't just in the Impetus State, but he had also traveled quite deeply into it.

Could it be that El'Rion and Shan'Rae had wanted to enter the Life State before they entered the Sixth Dimension? Was that their goal?

Leonel's spear tip shook as the surroundings began to tremble.

This really wasn't the time to think about this. It was time he get serious.

Chapter 2346: Clicked

Alpha Magma could almost feel Leonel's eyes sharpen. It was akin to a blade being pressed into his skin, like a knife being twisted into his heart, like a searing piece of metal being branded onto his flesh.

His senses heightened and his rhino-nose even twitched slightly as he took his first step back.

Leonel's spear was swapped out for a rolling wave of killing intent. It was as though the spear itself had already vanished, and instead he was enveloped by a dense web of them, covering him from all sides.

Alpha Magma suddenly felt enlightened. Was this what it truly meant to have a Domain... to form a Glaive Domain?

The bout of enlightenment was like a fierce wave crashing through his body and the ground beneath his feet suddenly became a wasteland of boiling lava and searing rock. It quickly covered the distance and instantly became the only ground that Leonel could step on for the surrounding several hundred meters.

Several of the Betas were caught up in the domain and found themselves burnt to ash or sinking into a puddle of heated doom.

But Leonel felt like swearing inwardly. Had he just helped this guy to break through?

Then he understood. He was using his Dream Force to pay attention to the Alpha's every movement and read and react to it even before it happened, but it seemed that, at least in a subtle way, observing someone through the Dream Plane was actually a two-way street.

He had accidentally given a bit too much of his insights to this person.

When he had been fighting against the Spirituals Religion, this was an excellent thing as it helped many of the Morales to make sudden breakthroughs.

Against an enemy, though, he had just shot himself in the foot.

The gap between Leonel's skill and that of the Alpha's shrunk a small portion. He was still far more Leonel, but when it was combined with his raw strength and speed, it almost felt like Leonel had crippled himself.

'It can't be Force...'

Leonel shook his head, his thoughts suddenly wandering back to his previous thoughts. His Forces were already so powerful, and yet he couldn't make use of them. If he tried to use his Spear Force the way it was intended, he would end up blasting his own arm to smithereens.

If one wanted to return to the Fifth Dimension just for the sake of comprehending Forces, what good would it do them in the end if they couldn't even use it all in the first place?

Leonel dodged out of the way of another strike, but his spear found a perfect gap.

He had already swapped his spear for a radiant violet one. It was gorgeous and looked as though it had been dotted with amethysts and then carved to be reminiscent of the scales of a dragon.

He had never used this spear before; it just happened to be the first one he locked onto that was both of the Life Grade, and had a Dream Affinity.

Since Dream Force was the only strength of his that remained... he would lean into it.

His aura flourished, the skies turned dark, and Alpha Magma suddenly found himself surrounded from all sides. At least... that was the feeling this Domain gave him.

It had been a long while since Leonel relied on one of the Domains of his spears, but it seemed that he would have to if he wanted to get out of this one.

He spear danced in the wind, the enlightened Alpha Magma feeling as though he was frozen in time before the feeling suddenly vanished entirely.

Leonel landed behind the Alpha, swiping his spear at the ground and causing a slash of blood to sprinkle into the air before it was charred to nothingness by the oppressive heat.

He was only able to hit his cool pose for but a moment before he jumped up, though.

"Ooo, oo, ah..." Leonel grabbed his feet in the air, blowing at them, wanting to shed tears but having none to do so with.

He really needed to get his Metal Body back in shape, but he didn't dare to take even a step forward in his power progression without understanding exactly what to do.

He didn't understand why that old man couldn't just tell him. This was really getting ridiculous. Was this how people felt when he didn't tell them anything?

Leonel looked back at the fallen Alpha and shook his head.

It was a shame. This opponent was about on the level of the average Void Palace genius. No, he was probably a little higher than that; he could definitely become a Domain Ranked disciple.

Even so, this was a person that he would have defeated in two strokes at most, normally. But now, he had to kill him even though he would be more useful alive purely because he wasn't strong enough to capture him.

'Think about [Dimensional Cleanse],' Anastasia suddenly said.

'Hm?'

Leonel blinked for a moment before his eyes suddenly widened in understanding.

Now, when he used his Universal Cycles, his Stars didn't appear. That meant that they had lost access to them, and in a way, [Dimensional Cleanse] had reset.

That wasn't what was important, though. What was important was just how interchangeable the first three layers of [Dimensional Cleanse] had been.

It had to be remembered that the Third Dimension was meant to set a foundation for Force, the Fourth Dimension for the body, and the Fifth Dimension for the mind.

In the Third, you formed the Nodes. In the Fourth, you formed the Nodal Pathways to bring energy to the rest of the body. In the Fifth, you enlightened your mind and broke the mortal chains that bound you, unleashing your truest and fullest potential.

[Dimensional Cleanse] matched that. You were supposed to form Stars for your energy first, then ones for your body, then ones for your might.

But Leonel... he had formed his Dream Force Star first, something that should have waited until the Fifth Dimension, then he formed his Vital Stars for his body, and only then did he form his energy Stars out of Scarlet Star Force and Void Star Force.

He had done everything out of order and it all clicked now.

- Chapter 2347: Bluestar

Chapter 2347: Bluestar

The conclusion was simple. So long as you were within the first of three steps, and you hadn't locked yourself in by entering the Sixth Dimension, everything was still negotiable.

The reason why he could rearrange the steps of Dimensional Cleanse like that without much backlash was precisely because it didn't matter which of the three steps you took first.

If he had wanted, he could have focused on his body in the Third Dimension, his mind in the Fourth, and his energy in the Fifth. Who knew, maybe there were some techniques out there that did just that.

He now also understood why he felt so depleted, why his body was so weak and why his Innate Nodes were dormant.

The real reason was because he wasn't in the Fifth Dimension at all...

He was in the Third!

The reason he felt that he was in the Fifth was because his mind was fully unshackled. It was also why his Dream Force was so absolutely powerful.

His Innate Nodes were dormant because he technically hadn't formed his Nodes, though they were very clearly in his body.

His body was weak because he had yet to form his Nodal Pathways, though technically he already had.

Everything lined up and made much more sense to him.

One might be wondering why it was that Leonel was so excited. After all, just because he understood his situation now with greater accuracy, didn't mean that anything had changed.

He still didn't know how to move forward, and if anything, he had even more questions now than answers.

But Leonel didn't see it that way.

The first thing he had thought when he realized he was in the Fifth Dimension, after he finished cursing, was that it was a shame he hadn't been returned to the Third Dimension instead.

But now he knew the truth and everything had been laid out for him perfectly. How could he not take advantage?

'Why didn't you say something earlier, Anastasia?'

'Blame yourself. You like to get in your own head as though you're the only one with all the answers. You should try and see what your father thinks about this matter as well.'

Leonel's heart skipped a beat, but then he slowly nodded.

He had gotten some closure the last time he talked to his father, or at least his AI father, but that didn't make him use the dictionary more often. If anything, he had begun avoiding it again.

But who knew, maybe his father really would know something about all of this; he seemed to have everything planned out.

That seal that he felt had been undone in his mind was definitely something that his father had placed, so once it was undone, maybe...?

His father hadn't been very helpful to him when his journey began, at least not in terms of the progression of his path. But now that he thought about it, he found it odd.

His father had created such a detailed schematic to help his Crafting progress step by step. Even now, there were still more lessons in there that he could be taking advantage of if he wasn't so stupidly stubborn.

Why would Velasco make a whole training plan for his Crafting, but then leave him to his own devices for everything else?

Unless... he had always planned for this day to come?

Leonel smiled bitterly. Whether it was his grandfather or his father, it seemed they both liked to hold up a mirror to his face and show him how truly annoying he was.

But they were also the only two he didn't seem to really mind being the pawn of.

'Alright, I'll take a look. But first...'

Leonel stretched out a hand and one of the almost feral surviving Betas had their throat sucked into his palm.

There were a few stragglers remaining that hadn't been killed by the Alpha's Domain, and they all wanted to get at him and tear him to pieces, but they also couldn't step onto the magma without combusting and dying. So they had been growling around the outer rim, launching attacks at him.

It was a bit sad, but also another part amusing.

"Hey!"

Leonel roared into the face of the Beta, causing their heart to shake and their growls to subside. It felt like a lion had suddenly shouted at him.

"Good. Was he your direct Alpha?"

The Beta hesitated, but when he realized that the compulsion was gone because his Alpha was dead, he nodded slowly.

'Hm, I can take advantage of this. The other Alphas should still have some compulsions on them, but not enough to stop him from answering some questions now that his own Alpha has died.'

With a flip of his palm, Leonel took out one of the Betas he had stored away from his first encounter, the one he had asked about the Vital Star Innate Node.

"Do you recognize him?" Leonel asked.

The Beta of Alpha Magma shook his head.

"Smell him." Leonel commanded.

The Beta did as he was told.

"Do you now?"

The Beta nodded.

Leonel had picked up some things over the past couple hours. With such a complex, interlocking system of Alphas and Betas, if the Beastman Dimensional Verse wanted to maintain order, there had to be methods of telling each other apart.

Some Betas would be above other Betas because of who they served, there were even Betas more powerful than the Alpha he had just fought. Likewise, there was a hierarchy among Alphas.

It could easily become a mess if you assumed someone's strength just by their prefix.

"Who's his Alpha?"

"Ah... his Alpha is known as Alpha Bluestar..."

"What's his rank among Alphas?"

"... Alpha Bluestar is quite young. It's said that he has a chance to become one of the true elites, but for now he is not. He is still a half-step away, but many believe that with the help of this trial, he will take that step and begin to..."

The Beta suddenly furiously shook his head, not daring to finish.

Alpha Bluestar rivaling Alpha Clown? Even if one thought it, some things could never be said out loud.

Chapter 2348: Together

'Alpha Bluestar, huh?'

"Do you know where this Alpha Bluestar is?"

When Leonel asked this question, the Beta finally began to show some signs of discomfort. It seemed that he finally understood that Leonel wanted to harm Alpha Bluestar, and as such, the compulsion began to kick in.

It was a truly interesting technique. It worked on intention rather than a rough set of rules, and the former was far more difficult to produce than the latter.

Both had their own pitfalls, obviously, as Leonel was still able to get a lot of the information he wanted even with these guard rails. For example, he was able to learn about this Bluestar just by avoiding the topic of the Void Star Innate Node altogether, that way the Beta didn't put two and two together until he had already gathered quite some information.

But he would argue that drawing a hard line at some rules would have even more pitfalls. Anyone who knew a lawyer could attest to the fact that rules would always have loopholes in them, ones that Leonel was sure he could exploit with much greater ease than he was now.

"So that's a yes." Leonel nodded to himself. "And what is he doing now, exactly?"

"He... I... I don't know."

The Beta's lips trembled, and he couldn't quite get his words out, but judging by the shiftiness within them, he definitely knew more than he was letting on.

"Speak."

The Beta almost collapsed, but he seemed to be far more afraid of Leonel right now than he was afraid of a far-off Alpha Bluestar.

"He-he-he's looking for entrances to Battle Ax Domain caves like the one you just entered. He spread out all of his people to look, but he's staying in the same spot. But that spot..."

To Leonel's surprise, when the Beta tried to talk about "that spot," he directly died.

Leonel felt like he understood why. It was clear that that spot was related to more Alphas than the ones he knew. This Beta's Alpha had already died, so for the compulsion to be so strong, there was only one of two explanations he could think of.

First was that a compulsion of multiple Alphas, even if individually weak, was far stronger than that of a single Alpha, even if that Alpha was your direct Alpha.

The second was that this information was related to an Alpha so powerful that their compulsion outweighed all others, so much so that they could have the compulsion of a direct Alpha over everyone.

Regardless of which one was, Leonel believed that he had an understanding of what was going on.

The Beta had said he's staying in the same spot, and that should mean that Bluestar never moved from their spawn point. He's waiting for his Betas to come back to him with information on what he needs.

In all likelihood, there were probably several Alphas in that location doing something similar. Maybe Alpha Magma was among those that had waited, but he was lucky enough to find his cave before anyone else.

Leonel's eyes narrowed as he bent down and took Alpha Magma's ring. He didn't think that there was anything particularly special about these Domain Rings, especially after Anastasia's explanation, but he still felt like they might be missing something.

None of what he knew now explained why those "Gods" had taken it upon themselves to hand something so good over. It seemed that he would have to find out later.

As much as Leonel wanted to try and use some context clues to find the location of the Alphas, he knew that this would be too foolish of him.

He had struggled so much with just one Alpha; he doubted they would let him stroll into a lair of them, take out one of their best talents, and then raid his corpse on top of that.

There were two choices. The first was to wait until Bluestar left his location and was on his own. The second was to grow strong enough to do something as foolish as attempt a raid.

The problem with the first was that he didn't even know where Bluestar was now, let alone where he'd be in the future. And right now he was just aimlessly walking around, hoping to stumble into something.

The worst part was that even if he was lucky enough to stumble into Bluestar, would he be strong enough to deal with him?

'It seems like getting stronger first is the best way.'

There would be time to deal with Bluestar. For now, he would continue heading in the direction of the Dimensional Verse's Seeded Participant, while he...

Leonel took out a small silver disk, running his finger across it.

'Alright, don't disappoint me old man.'

...

Three looming figures walked out from a dense swamp, and the world seemed to fall into silence along with them.

When these three Alphas appeared, the title that they all shared seemed to become hollow. Maybe if not for the necessity of their current structure in maintaining order, they would have all become Betas by now.

There was only one who looked up from their seated position with calmness in his eyes. He had eyes slitted much like Alpha Clown, but rather than a reptilian, sharp yellow, they were a radiant and almost blinding blue.

The rest of his body, though, didn't have any scales and he almost looked entirely human. The only signs that he wasn't were those cold eyes of his and the subtly sharp claws that graced his fingers.

Who else could this be if not Alpha Bluestar?

"You are all my people," Alpha Clown said in a rumbling voice, "but you all only listen to power, not reason. It's the reason I've been cruel, I've been harsh, I've been murderous. It's all our people know, that struggle. But that struggle will also be the reason we have the best chance to survive.

"From here on out, we travel together. If any of you have any objections, raise them now. I will happily beat them out of you."

Chapter 2349: Perfect Balance

Leonel didn't know that his mission had just gotten that much harder. In fact, he was in a state of quite some tranquility as he moved because his father had indeed left something behind.

"Listen here, oh seed of min-"

"Could you stop with that nickname?"

"Silence, twerp. I'm trying to help you."

"Oh? That's a change."

It took way longer than Leonel cared to admit to get his father's AI to actually start giving him the information it was apparently here to provide. But the moment it did, what he learned quite quickly was that he had too little understanding of what his father had done for him.

For one, Leonel learned that his being born with a Scarlet Star Innate Node and then having it taken away not too long after was actually somewhat of a blessing in disguise.

His father had, indeed, gone to Earth to learn about their forms of medicine in an attempt to regrow the Innate Node and also to stabilize his condition.

After losing his Innate Node, the infant Leonel had been in an extremely precarious state where he could have died any time. The pressure of a higher-level world only made his situation worse, and it was only by returning to a Third Dimensional World could he finally begin to heal.

The question he had never really thought about was why?

The answer seemed obvious. Obviously, it was because he had lost a precious part of himself, but was that truly the case? When he took his Innate Node back from Myghell, the latter had seemed fine afterward.

Of course... Leonel had been a baby while Myghell had been a grown man. There was obviously a clear difference.

But Leonel didn't believe that was enough to explain it.

As a child of Velasco and a wielder of the World Spirit, Leonel's constitution at birth should have been excellent. Even if he lost his Innate Node by rather crude methods, it was so small and insignificant back then that unless those few bastards tried to kill him at the same time, he should have been able to weather the storm at the same time. At the very least, he shouldn't have been on the brink of death.

But what if this was another ploy by the Demoness?

He thought back to Anya and how much of a danger she said he would be. Then he thought of how Wise Star Order had said that his Innate Node would consume him if he didn't master it within a hundred years. And then there was something else that was curious...

His Lineage Factors, from birth, had a heavy leaning toward life. Whether it was the Light Side of the Northern Star Lineage Factor or the portion of the Morales Lineage Factor.

Taking another step back, the Morales Lineage Factor as a whole had a heavy emphasis on life, so much so that he practically exuded vitality, his single breath capable of causing whirlwinds in the sky.

The Metal Synergy Lineage Factor, even though only part of the whole, had a heavy emphasis on creation, mimicking aspects of the Metal Spirit Race and forming many things from nothing.

Its ties with creation couldn't have been stronger.

But then there was his Innate Node. It could be said to be the exact opposite. It was the embodiment of destruction, and he, himself, was a Destruction Sovereign.

The clash between the two should have been enough to tear an infant apart. It reeked of an experiment, reeked with a stench of subterfuge.

Maybe the Demoness' experiments hadn't come to an end after all, and she really wanted to see what would happen when she took two aspects and smashed them together.

What was worse than all of this was something else that he had neglected: his Ability Index.

Dream Force. It was the Impetus of Life itself, and his affinity in it couldn't have been stronger, especially with the bloodline of that Demoness running through his veins.

How would it have clashed with his Innate Node?

It seemed that Leonel's father had seen this as well. As a result, not only was he looking for a way to regrow Leonel's Innate Node, but he also suppressed Leonel's true Dream Force affinity so it wouldn't affect the formation of the Scarlet Star Force Innate Node.

Leonel's body was truly a ticking time bomb with creation pulling in one direction and destruction pulling in the other. He might have even found it to be poetic if it wasn't for the fact his life was on the line because of it.

Ultimately, his creation side had been the far stronger of the two until two things happened.

The first was that he gained a second Scarlet Star Force Innate Node, his enlightened self even having brought it to the same level as his original one after its second awakening.

The second was that he had gained the Dark Northern Star Lineage Factor as well, finally balancing out the light side.

Thanks to this, and his demon bloodline still being suppressed within him, he could finally unleash his mind the way it was meant to be unleashed.

However, that didn't change the fact that he was a ticking time bomb.

For one, having two Innate Nodes with Destruction Character meant that he had to grasp Destruction to an even deeper level if he wanted to keep them in line.

At the same time, as he progressed, his demon bloodline would only grow stronger with time and it would begin to clash with what he had now.

Obviously, as his demon bloodline grew stronger, his Dream Force would grow stronger, and as his Dream Force grew stronger, his creation aspects would likewise gain huge bumps in strength.

This was the balancing act that Leonel had to play now, and it likely also didn't help that Little Tolly was giving off incredibly strong waves of creation as well.

One would think that if one side was far stronger than the other, then it would just suppress it and flourish.

But in the end, creation and destruction couldn't exist without proper balance.

Much like the tale of the God Beasts of Creation had taught him... When you created too much, it would inevitably lead to destruction.

If he wanted to survive, there needed to be a perfect balance.

Chapter 2350: 17%

From the very beginning, Leonel had been forced onto this path and his choice in the matter was quite minimal. Though, he could probably consider himself lucky. Given the track record of the Demoness, the idea of a first experiment subject succeeding was probably next to zero. The fact that he lived and breathed right now was both a miracle, and thanks to a lucky series of events.

It could be said that the healthiness he had displayed soon after his birth was more akin to the last dying sparks of a once vibrant life, almost like the second wind and glow one would radiate just before death.

That left one question, then. Where did that leave him now? Well, according to his father, his method would only work if one day he managed to withstand his seal being undone. That day had come but... the method made Leonel's lip twitch.

He was used to his father's grueling methods. If his Crafting regimen was anything to go by, there would be nothing but pain waiting for him ahead.

He still remembered how his father wanted him to reach a perfect Grade One Designation with his fingers before he even began to Crafting. Even now, he felt that that requirement was absolutely ridiculous. But then again, wasn't the requirement to start this path of progression equally as ridiculous? But he had made it already, right...?

He basically had to progress to the Seventh Dimension before he got all his ducks in a row. Only then could he return to the Third Dimension and have this unlocked to him.

His father couldn't want him to do more than that... Right? Wrong. Looking at the requirements, Leonel saw nothing but a long list of question marks. The only thing on the holographic screen that was available for actual reading were three things.

The first, he was lucky enough to have already done.

[Separate Soul from Body]. This made him feel like he could smile. He finally had a leg up and could grin with some pride. Obviously, the other two would also be things that he had already succeeded in, right?

[Reach Impetus State in all required Forces before forming any Stars].

Leonel was rendered speechless when he saw this. He had already reached the Impetus State for his Dream Force, so that was one requirement ticked off. But assuming that he followed the very same path he had before, that meant that he would need to do the same for his Vital Star Force, his Scarlet Star Force, and his Void Star Force.

This obviously referred to a true Impetus State, not one that he could push his Force to while relying on his Innate Node. That meant that even if he found his Alpha Bluestar, it would be useless in helping him to fix his current lack of comprehension.

But the third requirement made Leonel want to shed tears. It was simply impossible. He could practically hear his father's mad cackle from the afterlife. Wait, he wasn't imagining it, this damn AI was playing a recording of his father's laughter right here and now.

[Reach the Constellation Realm]

Leonel stopped running, looking around to see if he could find the cameras. There had to be a joke hidden around here somewhere. There was no way that this was an actual requirement.

The Four Seasons Realm. The Heavenly Body Realm. The Natural Light Realm. The Cosmos Realm. And only then, there was the Constellation Realm.

The first helped those of the Fourth Heaven to be capable of fighting those in the Fifth. But the last aided those of the Eighth to be capable of fighting those of the Ninth!

Of course, these were the crudest terms, an explanation that Leonel had learned of way back when he was still in the Third Dimension, and one that was likely only the teachings of the Dimensional Verse.

But this didn't change much. [Dimensional Cleanse] alone seemed to be attached to these comprehension states. When he entered the Sixth Dimension, his Heavenly Body Realm and his Stars had basically fused into one, becoming of one mind, while summoning one meant also summoning the other.

That meant that the Natural Light Realm would attach itself to the Seventh Dimension, and so forth until the Ninth and the Constellation Realm.

His father was essentially asking him to comprehend something meant for the Ninth Dimension just to unlock the ability to cultivate his method for the Third Dimension. Leonel didn't even know what to say. It felt like a practical joke. In fact, for all he knew, these were just the first three requirements in order to unlock the right to attempt the next requirement. How long would his father have him stay in the Third Dimension, exactly?

He was speechless.

Leonel shook his head. 'Fine, fine, old man. This better not be one of your practical jokes. I'm toying with my life here.' The screen before him blinked and a detection seemed to sweep over him before the first line was crossed out. Leonel faintly nodded to himself before his lip twitched.

The line that was crossing out the [Separate Soul from Body] requirement stopped halfway as though it was recalculating. Then, a progression bar appeared.

Leonel was stunned. For a moment, he thought it was just a normal bar. But it took him looking for a solid few seconds before he realized that there was a tiny sliver of progression, so tiny that he didn't even notice it at first. He hesitantly reached forward and tapped it.

[Soul Separation]

[Progress - 0.17%]

Leonel's finger froze. Yes, he was definitely being toyed with. Most definitely. He had definitely already separated his soul from his body. How did he know? He had been eaten alive to prove it! He could still remember every single excruciating detail. He felt his bones being chomped into, his flesh being torn off the bone, his heart being squeezed for its pulp as though it was an orange. Why was this thing telling him that he hadn't made any progress at all?!

Chapter 2351: I Understand

Leonel was truly speechless. He had lost count of just how many times his father had pranked him in the past, but this just felt... ridiculous.

"Why the hell is my soul only at 0.17%?!"

Leonel shook the dictionary a bit as though he was grabbing his father's shoulders. Unexpectedly, or maybe expectedly, he received an answer.

"Your soul was mostly sealed in the past, any attempt that you might have made only released it in part, while what remained was still chained within you."

When Leonel heard this, he calmed a bit. But what he heard next made him feel helpless.

"In addition, there are layers to the soul. These layers can be looked at much like Force Manipulation. There are multiple Dimensions, and the soul is layered throughout each one. The stronger your soul is, the more Dimensions it is layered throughout.

"If you want to fully separate your soul from your body after birth, you have to first reach the Impetus State in Dream Force-Life State if you find yourself outside of an Incomplete World-and only then can you fully sense all the layers of your soul.

"Then, you can begin the process of true separation."

The reason why Leonel felt helpless after he heard this was because he was in the Impetus State now, but he was already on his way out of their Incomplete World. This place should still be in an Incomplete World, so he should be fine for now. But all of this essentially meant that he had to find a method to separate his soul from his body fully before all of this came to an end.

Judging by the situation of the humans, even in Complete Worlds, it was obvious that they didn't have such a method, so he couldn't expect to just stumble onto such a thing while roaming this world.

That meant that he would have to find this method on his own. Or would he?

Even if the true progression path his father had laid out couldn't be started until he checked off all of these boxes, that didn't mean that Velasco hadn't laid out a detailed plan for these individual tasks.

So, Leonel chose to ask, and luckily, his father didn't leave him hanging. And better than that, the fake digital voice that he was using in the past seemed to have been left there, so it really felt like his dad was speaking right to him.

"Meditate within the Dream Plane. The more you understand yourself, the easier it will be."

The words were vague and cryptic, but this told Leonel that there must be some sort of bar of comprehension that he had to clear.

After some hesitation, he chose to find an abandoned region before he used his Earth Force to bury himself deep underground. Only then did he enter the Segmented Cube.

He sat in the midst of a forest and entered a deep state of meditation. In a flash, he had appeared in the Dream Plane once again.

'Layers... sense of self...?'

Leonel thought deeply about what this would mean, but almost instantly, he understood the first. There was a vague line connecting his true self and the self that entered the Dream Plane. The Dream Plane was the Second Dimension itself, but his body...

When he focused on that vague line, he found that his body was being stretched across several planes of existence, pulled in countless directions. There was his body which was in the Third, his mind which was in the Fifth, his Forces which were in the Seventh.

This all confused Leonel, though. He had begun to stray away from the concepts of "Dimensions" a bit. Once he had accepted the Vast Bubble as a Complete World, he felt that their magic system was more "correct".

The Vast Bubble didn't use Dimensions, they used Stars as a gauge instead.

But what was odd about this was that Force Manipulation used Dimensions, and his father was obviously also using Dimensions. So who was...

It clicked.

'Those sons of bitches...!' Leonel shook his head.

This was obviously another ploy by those Four Great Families to keep people in the dark. The less they understood about Dimensions and their weighted importance, the less likely they would be to grasp certain things.

Soon, these youths here would probably be like him, thinking the so-called "Gods" were obviously correct, and abandon their already adequate comprehension of progression and how progress should be made.

The Dimensions were important. Extremely so. And they actually seemed to be loosely based on Earth's physical sciences as well.

The idea of Dimensional Folds, of one step above being infinitely more powerful than the last...

Then it clicked for Leonel once again.

'To understand myself... should mean to comprehend just how much my soul is doing for me. It's being stretched in so many directions, supporting my existence in the Third Dimension, and even up to my Forces in the Seventh.

'It's so flexible. It's the very foundation of my life and it does so with ease, but that doesn't mean that it's working optimally either.'

Leonel meditated in silence, trying to understand what that might mean. His thoughts drifted and he thought of the first seven individuals that he had killed when he entered here, how their thoughts were so different from one another, and how they all knew and understood that absorbing the souls of others was bad not just morally, but for their own progression path as well.

And then he thought about how his soul seemed to be anchored to this place. It couldn't move across large distances from his location because...

'Because my body is an anchor holding it down...'

To separate the soul from the body. Didn't it mean to give the soul absolute freedom?

But he felt like he was missing something. It shouldn't just be absolute freedom, or else wouldn't he be essentially killing himself? If the connection to this soul and body was fully severed, his body would atrophy and die.

'I understand...'

Leonel's progression bar suddenly trembled, and from 0.17%, it began to skyrocket upward in 10% increments.

Chapter 2352: Lost

Leonel could feel his soul almost compressing. If before it was like an accordion stretched thin and playing a note that was as shrill as it was high pitched, now it was an extended, rhythmic hum.

It was almost like a piano with the pedals pushed down, each note resonating longer and layering atop the next note that was played. The notes played first began to slowly decompress and fade, while the latter ones thrummed with a vibrant boom.

These images that coated his mind were more figments of his thought, almost like artistic conceptions that were leading his action. And yet, it was exactly this artistic conception that held so much strength and power. Just how much had he learned about the art of thought. His grandfather's methods built atop of this, starting from the power of the word, progressing to the power of a verse, to the power of a painting and a resonate note.

These were all artistic conceptions and even until now, they were a core part of why his Spear Force was so powerful.

But why was it that such a thing could impact his Spear Force? Leonel had deduced this matter long ago. Weapon Forces were far more malleable than other Forces. A Force like Scarlet Star Force had its own personality, its own will, its own life, so to speak. However, what differentiated Weapon Forces from other Forces was that while they had their own character, they could be molded.

Leonel had come to understand that the impetus for the creation of Weapon Forces had to rely on the same impetus that created life itself. Weapons wouldn't exist without the will of humans. It took unique intelligence to create weapons. However, this intelligence didn't just manifest weapons out of nowhere. It relied on the laws that the world had already created. The two worked hand in hand.

On one hand, there were the humans who created weapons for the sake of hunting, of protecting themselves. And on the other hand, there were the laws of the universe. How could a weapon work without the concepts of sharpness? The concepts of momentum? The concepts of swiftness and flexibility?

A sword could only be sharp because the universal laws dictated that a blade, when refined enough, would find it much easier to cut through things. This was a crude explanation, and yet it was a true one.

Leonel found himself understanding the connection between the two all the more... the connection between the life that was humans and the life that was Forces... the line that separated what was the soul, what was the very core of a being's, well... being, and what was simply a law of the world, one that would exist even without the input of life.

When he understood this, Leonel felt his body tremble at the same instant his soul reached 100% separation. His Spear Force and his Bow Force had both entered the Impetus State. Not only had they entered the Impetus State, but they had entered the Middle Impetus State, a step beyond even that of his Dream Force.

However, this didn't last for long as his Dream Force took one step, and then another. His Dream Force entered the Higher Impetus State, a step beyond that of his Weapon Forces, and just a step below the very peak of the Impetus State... just two half steps from the Life State.

Leonel felt as though his body was floating on a cloud. He felt both disconnected from it, and somehow more connected to it than he ever had before. He realized that the true core of his life wasn't his body at all. Rather, his body was just a conduit of nature and its laws. His body was a vessel through which his soul could impose its will onto the world, but it was not his soul, and it was not the root of his life.

At that moment, Leonel felt that his soul could travel endlessly through the Dream Plane. Of course, if the Life Force of his body ran out as he did so, his body would "die" and he would have to reconstruct a new one. But ultimately, the bounds that had been placed on him were no longer present.

What Leonel didn't know quite yet was that there were even some Life State Dream Force users that could not accomplish this. Reaching the Life State didn't mean that you could separate your soul from your body perfectly. And those that relied on treasures to do the same thing would not have this privilege either unless they came to understand the truth.

It could be said that Leonel had opened up a clear path for himself toward the Life State. All he needed was time and accumulation. But what he was more interested in wasn't the state of his soul, he already knew he had succeeded. Rather, he was far more interested in his Weapon Forces.

His Spear Force and Bow Force had taken such an enormous leap forward, but he had a feeling that it was a bit... hollow. The comprehension that Leonel had just come to could be applied to any and all Weapon Forces. Technically, if he used Glaive Force right now, it would be at the Middle Impetus State as well.

'This is... a bit of a problem.'

Without even circulating his Spear Force and Bow Force, for fear of what it might do to his body, Leonel knew that he had lost his True Sovereignty. If he used either right now, or used his Mage Core to gather it from the surroundings, it would no longer have its golden hue. Instead, it would be the normal white-silvery color.

Leonel hadn't known that this was even possible. He assumed that it would be permanent. Even so, Leonel wasn't worried. If he wanted to regain his True Sovereignty, he just had to bring his precise comprehension of the Spear and Bow, to the same level as his holistic level of Weapon Forces in general.

He grinned. That was far easier than what he had just done.

Chapter 2353: Thank You

Leonel stood up. He didn't begin to meditate on the spear and bow now because he knew that it was useless. Even if he regained his True Sovereignty, so what? His use of his Weapon Forces would be limited until he returned to his original strength.

This wasn't exactly true. Leonel had a feeling that the training plan his father had in store for him would allow him to use his Weapon Forces long before he returned to the Seventh Dimension. Or else, what would be the point? However, it wasn't worth the time expenditure currently.

Although what he had just done was much harder, he had also had a sudden moment of enlightenment that brought together all of his comprehensions from across several years of thought. He didn't have such momentum for the spear and bow themselves. If

he wanted to meditate on it, it would probably take him at least a few weeks. If he battled, however, it would likely only take him a few days. Unless...

'Unless I use the Spear Domain ring...'

Leonel looked down at the ring, but he was already moving. There was a chance that if he continuously tried to gain the acknowledgment of the spears in the ring, he could cut down a few days' work to just a few hours. But once again, he felt that it wasn't worth the time.

When he gathered his Weapon Forces with his Mage Core, the effects weren't as strong. Though, he now understood why. The source of Weapon Forces came from one part humans and another part the world. If he solely gathered up Weapon Forces from the world, then he was cutting off half of its strength.

'That's interesting,' Leonel thought as he continued to move toward the Dimensional Verse's Seeded Participant. 'What if I used myself and the Mage Core at the same time, and then used my Spear Dance on top of that. Would I be able to gain a spear strike that was close to the Life State as a result?'

Leonel's thoughts swirled with ideas, but he soon tossed them to the back of his mind. It didn't matter how many ideas he came up with if in the end, he couldn't use them. His first priority was to strengthen himself. That meant that his focus should be knocking down the other two items on his father's list. This meant that he had to bring all of his Forces to the Impetus State, and then find a way to enter the Constellation Realm without leaving the Third Dimension.

'Easy peasy.'

Leonel chuckled to himself. What were his Forces? He had Vital Star Force, Scarlet Star Force, Void Star Void, and Emulation Spatial Force; these were the few Forces he had left that hadn't reached the Impetus State. But did his father really mean all of them?

That was when Leonel realized he didn't need to just stumble around blindly anymore. He could just ask.

"... All Forces core to your path."

'My path?' Leonel mumbled. "How do I decide that?"

"Don't be an idiot."

Leonel was rendered speechless again. He had forgotten that this was an AI of his father, of course, it'd have a few answers like this one. So, he decided to be more specific.

"Right now, my core Forces are... Should I keep them as is?"

"Why do you have Void Star Force?"

"To balance out my Scarlet Star Force."

"And why do you need to balance it out?"

"Because..."

Leonel's voice trailed off. Back when he had made the decision to strengthen his Void Star Force, it was because he wanted the mirror of his Scarlet Star Force. This would not only help him keep it in check, but it would also provide him a different perspective in comprehending his Scarlet Star Force.

But now that he knew the balance to his Scarlet Star Force Innate Nodes was this apparent creation path that he was on, was it still necessary? If anything, the Void Star Force might mess with the balance instead.

"That's a shame, having ten Stars was kind of cool..."

"I don't need you to have ten Stars. In the end, your Stars will form a Force Art. This Force Art will become the only Natural Force Art you will ever need, and it will use your Constellation as its foundation. One Star, ten Star, nine Stars, a million Stars, it doesn't matter."

Leonel blinked. "I..."

He was about to finish his words when his gaze sharpened. He slipped his father's silver disk back into the Segmented Cube and he dodged to the side. An arrow hit the ground with such force that it cratered it. Even after doing this, it still didn't seem satisfied, splintering the ground that remained as its feathered earned whipped back and forth with enough force to cause hurricane force winds.

'... Maybe I should have strengthened my Bow Force back to True Sovereign Force after all, what an annoyance.'

Leonel's gaze sharpened as he saw the perpetrator in the distance. They were some sort of demon-monkey hybrid. His arms, and most of his body, really, was covered in a red, almost rusted fur. It was just that practically the only thing Leonel could see were his arms because they were so long.

If this demon monkey wanted, he could drag his knuckles across the ground as he walked. Upon closer inspection, Leonel actually noticed that this demon monkey, or one of the beast men, he presumed, actually had three jointed arms instead of just two.

Leonel looked at the demon monkey Alpha as though he was a raining idiot. You had those sorts of genetics, but instead of wielding a spear, or a pair of sabers, or... literally anything but a goddamn bow, you chose this path?

When Leonel chose his weapons, he did so out of necessity, and then soon afterward he did it because his Lineage Factor matched it. It was practicality that came first for him. But this fool...

Alpha Demon Monkey could almost feel the palpable disdain coming from Leonel, and it confused him. He had just been surprised that Leonel actually survived his strike, all for this to happen.

"Oh!" Leonel suddenly lit up. "You have a Bow Domain Ring, thank you very much!"

Alpha Demon Monkey didn't know what to say... Why was this human thanking him?

But Leonel had already moved.

Chapter 2354: Ability Index

Leonel's speed didn't feel fast, especially not in the eyes of the Alpha Demon Monkey. And yet, for some reason, the latter felt his senses blur for a moment, and by then, Leonel was already right before him.

'Interesting, that doesn't work too bad, but it's not as effective as my Ability Index. Also takes up a lot more of my Dream Force, not that that matters all too much...'

Leonel punched out, trying to test something.

The Demon Monkey Alpha was completely on the back foot. He was confused. How had his advantage disappeared so quickly?

He was an archer, so obviously the distance benefited him. He had been at least a kilometre away from Leonel, so how come all of that had already vanished?

He raised his bow to block Leonel's strike, but Leonel's fist seemed to vanish and he found a strong strike landing on his chest.

Or was it a strong strike?

Alpha Demon Monkey took a single step back, his heart skipping a beat as he felt death loom over him, but that feeling vanished as quickly as it appeared, being replaced by a dull ache instead of the heart-rending pain that he had been expecting.

'So weak?'

What Alpha Demon Monkey didn't know was that Leonel was surprised as well, not by the weakness in his strike, but rather the exact opposite.

He hadn't used any Force just now and only relied on his Third-Dimensional body. Of course, he had also used his Dream Force to pull at the demon monkey's mind and confuse the location of his fist, but other than that, it was just pure strength.

'My body is stronger? Why?'

In the Third Dimension, he shouldn't be able to make a Seventh-Dimensional being feel anything with just his body alone. It should have felt like a fly was landing on his chest, but the demon monkey actually took a step back.

'Interesting...'

Leonel didn't believe that this was being of his Force comprehension, obviously, because he hadn't used his Force to bolster his strength just now. The only explanation was that this was a result of his soul being fully separated from his body.

With his soul being separated, it wasn't just his soul that was freed, but his soul as well.

Together, the body and soul formed a sort of mutually suppressive relationship with one another. Only when they were pulled apart could they display their truest strength.

Most importantly, with his soul fully separated from his body, Leonel's talent could finally flourish to its greatest extent.

In the next coming days to months, his body's strength would increase by leaps and bounds. He was looking forward to seeing just how much stronger he could become in body alone.

Leonel's gaze flashed and his combat style shifted. Universal Force descended and melded with his body, the skies turning various shades of light and dark.

"Natural Light Realm? But you're-"

BANG!

The next fist that landed carried with it the weight of a mountain. The demon monkey tried and failed to block once again, finding himself surrounded by countless afterimages of Leonel.

Thousands of fists rained down, but only one in a batch of hundreds was real. The Alpha found himself being kneaded like meat, but his life ultimately wasn't in danger.

Even so, the danger to his life was one matter, but the humiliation was a completely different one. He felt a rage bubbling up deep within him and he roared into the skies.

Leonel lightly tapped the ground with the tip of his foot, appearing outside the range of the roaring Force in an instant. He didn't fear it, but he was rather reassessing some things.

Using his Dream Force like this had great results. It took more Dream Force, but his reserves were so large that he hardly felt the dent. Access to the Dream Plane made several of his previously created Ability Index techniques far stronger as well, not to mention shed the previous weakness of his Dream Force being unable to project to his body, at least somewhat.

Using the Dream Plane as an extension of his soul, he could basically stretch his Dream World within the Second Dimension. As a result, he didn't need to rely on the Starry Tailed Fox's Domains any longer.

However, he wasn't sure if this was the path for him.

Toying with the mind was something that he could do, but it wasn't ultimately a path that had a great deal of potential for him. If he had an illusion-type Dream Force Ability Index, then it would be worthwhile investing some time into this path, but right now, it wasn't as viable.

Due to his father's training regimen, and especially the time he had spent separating his soul, Leonel began to think more about not just how to get stronger, but what the best paths were for him as well.

His mind couldn't help but drift back toward King Alexandre and his Ability Index. He could still absorb it any time he wanted, but...

Leonel took out the silver disk again. "Old man, what do you think about absorbing another Ability Index?"

Alpha Demon Monkey nocked an arrow, pulling back with all his strength. Seeing this, Leonel nodded. At the very least, the demon monkey hadn't given up all of his advantages.

Taking advantage of his long arms and extra joints, his bow was much larger for his body than it should have been, allowing him to pull far more power out of the bow.

"If you believe that your Ability Index is so close to this King Alexandre's, a mirror image, even, then why waste your time taking strength from others when you can forge it on your own?"

"If you have a chance to do something on your own, never rely on someone else."

"An Ability Index is more flexible than you're giving it credit for. Once you understand what an Ability Index is, where it gets its strength from, and how much you should or shouldn't rely on it, everything will become clear."

Chapter 2355: Off Switch

SHUUUUU!

The arrow shot through the air with blazing speed. The separation between Leonel and the demon monkey wasn't even a hundred meters. With their strength, even shooting arrows from tens of kilometers away could be considered to be close, let alone just a few dozen meters.

The danger Leonel was in was quite high. Even a few seconds would be too long of a counter for the time it would take the arrow to pierce his head.

Even so, Leonel seemed to be in a bit of a daze.

"... never rely on someone else for something you can do yourself..."

That was indeed his father's philosophy, even to the very end. He followed it until his dying breath, relying on nothing other than his spear.

Leonel was different from his father. He wasn't a lone wolf, and he didn't want to be one. He wanted to move forward with his brothers, with his friends, with his future wife.

That all-consuming loneliness wasn't something he wanted to experience again.

Leonel shook his head. 'That guy isn't me.'

Even so, Leonel felt that his father's words were correct. He was often careless with his path. No, he had been careless with his path until now.

That feeling of loneliness wasn't all that had consumed him; there was also that arrogance, that unwarranted, unearned, undeserved arrogance that had been a mainstay for him for so long.

Because of that, he took his steps casually, he didn't plan very much into the future, and he had made several mistakes until now, mistakes he could only say that he was lucky to receive an opportunity to correct.

Recklessly absorbing the Ability Index of someone else just because he felt that he had deduced that it was the perfect mirror image of his own was something that the Leonel of the past would have definitely done.

He would take his father's advice and apply it where it was needed, and where it wasn't needed... he would follow his own path and rely on his own thoughts just like his father had told him to.

Leonel smiled.

It was a sight that looked absolutely ridiculous, especially when there was an arrow just about to pierce right through his head. If it landed, it wouldn't just be his body that was destroyed, his Ethereal Glabella would go along with it and he would truly die.

However, his lips only slightly parted.

"Disperse."

The arrow trembled in the air and suddenly lost all of its strength and momentum. It wobbled and then fell out of the skies.

A wave of fatigue hit Leonel, but his eyes were glowing with a fierce light.

Everything seemed to line up perfectly. He even felt that he understood why it was True Sovereigns were able to become immune to all Weapon Forces of like kind.

"That Ability Index-!" Alpha Demon Monkey practically screeched.

Leonel moved again, his movements even faster than last time. Even so, the demon monkey felt that he was far easier to read and react to, but halfway there...

Leonel pulled out a wooden spear.

"You...!"

The demon monkey's eyes opened wide in shock. Leonel was very clearly a fist expert, how had he just?

He froze. The spear strike was simply too exquisite, he almost wanted to present his neck to it.

What was he thinking about just now?! Where...

His thoughts ceased. It was like the candlelight of his life was cut off, crushed instantly and so quickly that he never had a chance to realize what was happening.

Leonel flexed his wrist, the tip of his spear vibrating wildly as he pointed it to the ground.

That spear strike felt good. Very good.

It seemed that even though he had lost his True Sovereignty, the effect of having a weapon in the Impetus State was clear for all to see.

But that obviously wasn't all. It was as though he could impose his very will on the world now.

He didn't need to think that there would be such a large change immediately.

He couldn't grant titles like Alexandre had, at least not yet, but his will was far more tangible than it had been before.

And if he did take that step and speak a word... The world itself seemed to be forced to listen.

Leonel reached out a hand, and the Bow Domain Ring flew to him. He rolled it through his fingers as though it was a coin, his designation shining through as it moved so quickly that the ring blurred and then disappeared entirely.

Leonel stood in thought for a long while.

He had been focused on the Weapon Force aspect of the Domain Rings, but there was something that he had neglected: the Lineage Factors.

Why was he so excited to get his hands on the Bow Domain Ring? It obviously wasn't for the Bows; he had one in his possession that was already of the Life Grade, and his Morales Lineage Factor also now allowed him to create his own as well.

What he really wanted to do was complete the Lineage Factor and allow his eyes to become a great supplementary strength.

But his father's words echoed in his ears again.

Don't rely on others for something you could do yourself.

This alone made him hesitate, but then he thought of that little pink-eyed woman's words. She had said that the eyes provided by the Bow Domain Lineage Factor were just inferior products.

Of course, she had spoken partially out of anger, but Leonel could sense the truth in her words. She had exaggerated, but she hadn't been untruthful.

Then he thought about his own strength, how the demoness could seemingly turn off his strength as she pleased and seal him away with a thought.

He didn't know if this was just because she was obscenely powerful, or...

There was an off switch built into his very DNA.

Leonel's fingers suddenly stopped, the ring spinning on the tip of his thumb before he flicked it upward.

It never got the chance to fall down as it vanished into the Segmented Cube.

"You've all been there for a while now, is it necessary to continue to do so even now? Why don't we get acquainted?"

Chapter 2356: Clown

In the far-off distance, there was quite a large group of people. Even with his partial Bow Domain Lineage Factor, Leonel could see them quite clearly.

They had clearly used the demon monkey as a scout, which made sense considering the benefits of being both an archer and one of sharp sight. However, Leonel was wondering why these people hadn't done anything while their companion died.

'It seems that the relationship between the Alphas isn't as close-knit as that between the Alphas and their Betas. It's also possible that it's just a cultural thing, and they don't want to interfere in one-on-one battles. It's also possible they didn't respect this Alpha; a sneak attack like the one he tried to use against me isn't very much like the rest of the Alphas I've fought.'

Leonel casually tried to deduce some things. He felt that it was important to understand the enemies he was facing, mostly because their current behavior was... peculiar.

They had actually gathered up like this, each one of them with extraordinary power.

His eyes scanned them one by one, observing Alpha Clown for a very long while before he finally focused on Alpha Bluestar. This was definitely the person he was looking for, he was sure of it.

But the words of his father echoed in his mind again and he hesitated.

After a short while, he came to a decision.

'If I cannot break into the Impetus State with my Vital Star Force before this farce ends, I will take it regardless of the consequences. The longer I leave Aina in that state, the more variables there will be.'

Leonel relaxed when he came to this decision, as though a guillotine that had been hanging over his head vanished.

Then there was a flash of black.

Leonel practically had to look straight up. Alpha Clown stood at a height that was easily two of him. He moved so quickly that distance felt like nothing more than a joke to him.

He stood no more than a single meter from Leonel, looking down at him. His yellow, reptilian eyes seemed to be trying to see something. But what he wanted to see clearly didn't come.

"You can understand our language."

The words were deep and rumbling, and they also didn't seem like a question at all. Instead, it was a statement. Leonel could tell that this person wasn't very used to asking questions at all.

"That's not what you want to ask me," Leonel smiled. "First you want to know why I haven't retreated yet. Second, you want to know why I'm so powerful despite being in the Fifth Dimension."

The reptilian slits in Alpha Clown's eyes sharpened.

Indeed, he already knew how Leonel could. He had seen powerful Dream Force users before; he had instead wanted to probe Leonel, to get a baseline for who he was, and he had an answer already.

Arrogant.

And more than that, correct.

"People like you, who like to toy with the minds of others, often die horrible deaths," Alpha Clown said slowly.

"Blaming someone else for your inadequacy? It doesn't seem like something an Alpha like yourself should do, no?"

A bloody grin spread across Alpha Clown's face. It was feeling with an eerie and almost crippling darkness, one that could freeze enemies as though a cold spell had been cast.

"You are not a Seed Participant. There are people in your world stronger than you?"

"I doubt it." Leonel said after a moment.

"You don't seem sure."

"Well, I can't be too arrogant, now can I? People don't usually like people like that."

"I believe that ship has sailed long ago."

Leonel chuckled. "You have a pretty scary face, but your sense of humor isn't bad."

"I try to tell people that all the time, but they never believe me."

"And why's that?"

"I'm not sure. I even put it in my name."

Leonel's smile brightened. "What? Do you call yourself Alpha Clown or something?"

The atmosphere seemed to freeze. The Alphas in the distance all felt their hearts constrict as a fist that could end worlds descended.

Leonel took one step to the side, and yet he still felt his knees nearly collapse.

A raging wind blew by his ear, shredded his skin apart. It would have taken his entire head with it, just from the wind pressure alone, had it not been for the fact his Universal Force was still circulating.

Even so, it looked as though half of his face had suddenly erupted in a wave of blood. He lost so many layers of skin that it almost exposed his bone.

Leonel shook his head and chuckled.

"I take it back," Leonel said with a bloody smile, "A clown shouldn't have such a bad sense of humor."

Alpha Clown slowly pulled his fist back. That sick and twisted smile was still there.

"Interesting. There are only two people I know in the Seventh Dimension that can survive a fist of mine. Well, you can't survive it, but you can at least dodge it.

"I'll give you a chance. Become my Beta and teach me how you are so powerful despite being so inferior in Dimension, and I will allow you to live."

Leonel's grin widened. Looking up at Alpha Clown, from the distance, it didn't feel as though he was half the former's height either.

"Didn't I tell you before? No one likes arrogant people."

"Arrogance implies inadequacy. The word you're looking for is confidence."

"You're not keeping up; I also already said something about that. Didn't you hear me?"

Leonel's smile suddenly faded, and the air shifted.

"Blaming someone else for your inadequacy isn't very Alpha-like.

"Kneel."

Alpha Clown's smile froze.

"This Ability Index-"

BANG!

Alpha Clown's entire expression seemed to be cast into a moment in time as one of his knees came crashing into the ground.

It was as though the world commanded him to do so, and he... couldn't fight back against it.

Leonel's spear rested on Alpha Clown's neck, looking straight into his eyes. He seemed to want to ingrain his image into Alpha Clown's psyche.

Then, he suddenly vanished.

Chapter 2357: Cripple

Leonel landed heavily a long distance away. Of course, this wasn't because he had been kicked or punched, but rather because he had escaped with his Emulation Spatial Innate Node. The "Leonel" that had been holding his spear to Alpha Clown's neck was nothing more than one of his clones.

As for himself, the moment he said "kneel", he had already escaped. This time, though, he used his will to form an impression on space and combine it with his Ability Index, allowing him to jump a much, much, much further distance in one go than he would otherwise be able to.

After hacking up several mouthfuls of blood, Leonel chuckled to himself before slumping against some rock. He had let his ego get the best of him. Truthfully, he should have just escaped directly, but he didn't like letting that clown go unscathed, so he had forced him to kneel.

Well, that had cost him practically all of his Dream Force, and as a result, he hadn't been able to jump as far through space as he had hoped. If he didn't get a move on, they'd probably find him within a few minutes. If they had any Spatial Force experts, it would be even faster than that.

That Alpha Clown was annoying, but he was powerful. In fact, Leonel felt that even if his grandfather hadn't sent him back to the Third Dimension, he would still be weaker than Alpha Clown. Of course, he was Tier 1 of the Seventh Dimension back then, while Alpha Clown was well into Tier 9 and seemed to be suppressing himself from entering the Eighth Dimension, but it was the truth nonetheless. The gap was huge.

In the Dimensional Verse, just stepping into the Seventh Dimension had made Leonel invincible among Seventh Dimensional humans, at the very least. But clearly, this wasn't the case here, and it most definitely wasn't the case since he was stuck at the Third Dimension for now.

'If it was the me of back then, I would have probably meandered around until I had a breakthrough of some sort and then I would have defeated him before going on my merry way.' Leonel smiled as he pushed himself up. His body was in a bad, but not terrible state. The greatest wound was to his face, so nothing major. He'd just have an ugly mug for a bit.

The greatest problem was his Dream Force. He only realized now just how valuable his Stars were. Recovering his Dream Force felt that it was moving at a snail's pace.

Leonel began to run, using the energy of his Emulation Spatial Innate Node directly to cover more distance. He didn't even want to waste the Dream Force it would take to use his Mage Core, so he had to do what he had to do.

"Just my luck..." Leonel mumbled. His Dream Force might be drained, but everything was relatively. He might just have a single percent remaining, and yet he was still capable of using his Internal Sight to a distance of several hundred kilometers even if he could no longer tap into the Dream Plane.

All this time, Leonel had been making his way toward the Dimensional Verse's Seeded genius, and that would, obviously, be leading him out of the Beastman Dimensional Verse's territory.

Well, after his huge teleportation, he had made it to the borders of this "territory" and into the borders of another, and these people seemed to have exceptionally sharp minds because they had already long since spotted him.

For the millionth time, he blamed his grandfather for not letting him prepare for this before pulling out his bow.

...

The Nomad Race.

They looked no different from humans aside from the fact their Ethereal Glabellas stuck out from their foreheads. Oh, and there was of course the fact that they had six pairs of hands, two of which floated without wrists or arms, as well.

In a lot of ways, though, they were simply better at being humans than humans were. They had larger Ethereal Glabellas, more hands, and most importantly, they were better at being jacks of all trades than any other race in existence.

It could be said that the greatest weakness of the Human Domain of Leonel's Dimensional Verse was that no one followed just a single path, as such their energies were diverted across numerous disciplines and they couldn't align their potential as one.

The greatest strength of the Nomad Race, however, was exactly this weakness of the humans. They were exceptional in body and hand to hand combat, like the Rapax. They had great nimbleness and mobility, much like the Dwarven Race. They had excellent attunement with the elements, much like the Spirituals.

This was why they were called the Nomads. The paths they could journey were many, and the ones that they could travel to the end of were numerous. As a result of this, the Nomad Race was quite well known for their insatiable desire for knowledge, knowledge they wanted to assimilate into their own understanding to grow their strength.

So when the Nomad Dimensional Verse, a Verse that had swallowed up all other Races but the Nomads themselves, laid eyes on a Fifth Dimensional expert strong enough to dodge even their strikes...

Their eyes lit up as though it was Christmas Day.

Leonel was bombarded from all sides, hounded, and treated like some run-away science experiment. There were weak Nomads, as there were strong ones, but the main issue was that the baseline of the Nomads was much higher than that of humans.

As such, while the Betas had been easy kills for Leonel, he had yet to come across a Nomad that was anywhere near as easy. Leonel was able to kill many of them from a far off distance, but the Nomad Race was intelligent and not nearly as feral as the Beastmen. When they saw their comrades die, their first thought wasn't to charge forward blindly.

Instead, they took a step back and reassessed, preparing to launch an assault that would cripple Leonel.

Chapter 2358: Damn

Leonel huffed in deep breaths. The good news? Because he was in the middle of his shitstorm, the Beastmen shouldn't feel that they have an easy time either, if they pursued him so far, that is. Of course, Leonel didn't have any fantasies about the matter. Someone like Alpha Clown, when he was interested in something, would pursue it to the very ends. This was what it meant to grow strong.

Even so, Leonel shook his head. This was truly ridiculous. If it wasn't for the fact most of his Lineage Factors were greatly weakened or even outright sealed in many cases, he would have long since used [Instant Recovery]. He thought about bringing out his demons to fight for him, but he had sensed great resistance when he tried to do that, and he had a feeling that if he pushed through, he would end up causing some undue attention to himself that would make the rest of this place a hassle to deal with.

'Hm?'

"Yip! Yip!"

A swirl of black appeared before Leonel, causing his eyes to open wide. Little Blackstar? Why was this little guy so... He didn't know exactly what it was, but the cluster of Little Blackstar's fur felt less... lustrous. Not in a sickly or faded sort of way, but rather in a deep abyssal black and swallowing all light sort of way. The last time he checked, Little Blackstar wasn't in anywhere near this condition. It had only been half a day, no? And even if he accounted for the time he had spent in this trial world, it had been less than two. Basically, he had only just convinced Little Blackstar to focus on the Shadow Tail just yesterday.

"How'd you become like this in a day, little guy?"

Little Blackstar's head tilted in confusion.

"A day? It's been over a year," Anastasia's voice echoed.

"What?!"

Leonel hurriedly checked his body as though to check if he had any wires coming out of him. If he had been out for a year, then those Nomads would have definitely dissected him thoroughly.

"Oh, you don't know." Anastasia seemed to have a tinge of amusement in her voice. "After your grandpa tapped your forehead, you were out cold. He took you out of the Incomplete World entirely and into an odd space. Only half a day passed to you, but in the Incomplete World, over a year passed. Whatever he did, it left me and Little Blackstar behind."

Suddenly, so many things seemed to make sense. It was no wonder he had ended up being transported without everyone else, was he even considered a participant of the

Dimensional Verse? That was a good thing, though, no? It made it harder for those that wanted to track him.

But..

"Aina?!"

Leonel's heart was beating out his chest. If Blackstar experienced over a year, so had Aina.

"I wouldn't worry about her if I were you, she's doing fine."

"Fine? What do you mean? Did something happen?"

"Yes, her self-healing has already kicked in, from what I can tell. It's a bit blurry to see through the Golden Tablet and I don't want to push through in case it affects her, but her soul has already reformed. I wouldn't be surprised if she woke up soon."

"Uh..."

Leonel didn't know what to say. Wasn't he supposed to gain an Impetus State Vital Star Force understanding first? But then he remembered. It wasn't his future self that told him that, his future self hadn't explained anything. It was El'Rion that had told him that. Back then, he used his Half-Step Impetus State Vital Star Force to help bring what remained of Aina's together. He hadn't thought that Aina would be able to do the rest on her own. Leonel practically grinned ear to ear.

"Damned Pluto brat, pretending to be all knowing when- Hey!" Leonel suddenly turned his attention to Anastasia. "Was it impossible for you to explain these things before?!"

"You never asked."

"You didn't think that it would be important for me to know?!"

"You're always in your own head. You should try thinking aloud, then I'll know what you need," Anastasia harrumphed.

"Unbelievable," Leonel said speechlessly.

RUMBLE.

"Shit."

Leonel tapped into his Emulation Spatial Force, but Little Blackstar was faster. The both of them were surrounded in a swirl of black that appeared outside the cave he was hiding out in.

Standing atop the rock face of the cave, Leonel saw that there were at least a hundred Nomads below, separated into several squadrons in a perfect formation. However, Leonel was completely focused on the cute little mink in his arms.

"Well damn, little guy. You sure have gotten stronger."

"Yip! Yip!" Little Blackstar nodded, his cute little reflective black eyes, seemingly the only part of him that reflected any light at all, blinked like two large black marbles.

"Good. Well, it's your duty as my master to protect me, no. These guys are annoying."

Little Blackstar's expression became surprisingly serious as he reached out a paw and tapped Leonel's forehead twice. At first, Leonel thought that the little guy was trying to do something magical, but he only realized after a split second that this was Little Blackstar's way of patting his head.

Leonel burst into a fit of laughter as Little Blackstar vanished in a swirl of black. Carnage was unleashed. Weapons passed through Little Blackstar's body as though he was nothing more than a ghost. Tendrils of darkness erupted across the battlefield, spearing through the chests of two or three Nomads at a time. Every time Little Blackstar flickered and vanished, a swipe of his claws would cause another head to fly into the skies.

It was a one-sided slaughter, but Little Blackstar seemed to have learned well from Leonel because he wasn't finished showing off yet.

With a roar that sounded like a mighty primordial beast, completely unlike the little one's usual cute "yippling" sounds, Little Blackstar appeared high in the skies, raising a cute little paw.

Very soon, though, there was almost nothing "cute" about this paw at all.

A rush of heartrending shadows billowed forth as the paw was suddenly shrouded by a claw so large it seemed to blot out the skies. It descended, splitting wind and shattering space as it crushed the Nomads that remained into meat paste even before it landed.

Even so, Little Blackstar was committed to his bit as he pressed the claw the rest of the way down, destroying the land for the surrounding kilometer.

Leonel's eyes opened wide as he blinked a few times.

"Well, damn."

Chapter 2359: Wicked

Leonel was taken aback by Little Blackstar's strength. The little guy was still in the Seventh Dimension, and hadn't even moved up in Tiers. Though Leonel had known that the Shadow Tail would have a huge positive impact on Little Blackstar, he didn't expect it to be this much.

The truly shocking thing wasn't really the power Blackstar showed. This was still relatively close to his previous strength. What truly impressed Leonel was two things. First the sheer ease, and second the method of Force control.

Blackstar had output a level of strength that was comparable to the Blackstar that Leonel remembered, but the difference was that there was no effort to it. It was the equivalent of a stroll in the park. If Leonel had to make a guess about the level of effort, it probably wouldn't have been more than 10%.

As for his Force control, it was less about Force Manipulation, and far more about technique, Style and effectiveness. Though Leonel was sure that Little Blackstar's Force Manipulation had undergone a change, it wasn't what stood out to him the most.

The way he manipulated his Dark Force to ebb and flow like fog when he needed to, only to instantly snap it into a physical form no less sharp than a blade. Or how he seemed to so easily phase in and out of the Shadow World, moving freely and ignoring even the Force infused attacks of his enemies. Or how his sudden Force output and explosive instantaneous strength was enough to go from no movement, to the enormous crater that was below them now...

Each one was the mark of a true expert, but Little Blackstar-mostly due to Leonel-hadn't truly fought that many battles, if he was honest.

"Yip! Yip!"

Little Blackstar blinked into existence above Leonel's shoulder and patted his head for extra good measure, as though to make sure that Leonel knew that he was there.

Leonel chuckled and reached up to scratch the little guy's head. Well, this made things a lot easier on him. He could let Blackstar protect him for now while he got his body in order again.

The duo continued to travel forward and Leonel really felt reassured to leave things to the little guy.

In the past, it had taken a great deal of effort for Little Blackstar to take Leonel into his incorporeal state along with him, but now, although it wasn't necessarily easy, it wasn't nearly as strenuous.

Of course, the only reason Leonel knew this was because the little guy loved to be playful. They hadn't encountered a situation where this was a necessary maneuver, but Little Blackstar had only done it to show off.

It gave Leonel quite a scare when he thought the little guy had messed up, and Blackstar seemed to have his own little hoot about that.

What was interesting, though, was that after making that attempt, Leonel noticed the Tolliver, who was still a sleeve of silver and gold on his left arm, hadn't been phased in with him.

There were two explanations for this. Either Little Blackstar could, or the little one was still enjoying his rivalry with the little Metal Spirit and purposely didn't bring it along for the joy ride.

Leonel chuckled and felt that it didn't matter much. Honestly, he didn't know what it would even take to harm Tolliver at this point. It wasn't that the Metal Spirit was immune to everything, but rather that its Life Force was unending and undying even if it was blasted to pieces, it wouldn't make a lick of difference.

The Nomad Dimensional Verse found themselves being slaughtered, but Leonel still found it curious. Were they simply this weak? Or was there something else going on?

...

Alpha Clown stood across from an existence barely a quarter of his height. He was used to being the largest in a comparison of two, but even so, a person that was only a single meter tall was truly an anomaly, especially when this person was of the Nomad Race and not the Dwarven Race.

"No need to look so shocked," the Nomad youth chuckled. "My family's Lineage Factor is quite unique, albeit quite annoying to use. My Nomad Race has a fondness for following many paths, and my family's Nomadic Rebirth Lineage Factor allows us to reset our life when we've found an interesting path that we want to fuse into our own understanding. The more rebirths we undergo, usually, the stronger we are. Though, the requirements for paths interesting enough to make us suffer through such a thing only get greater with every attempt."

The Nomad youth chuckled once again. "This is why I look like an eight year old youth, don't mind it, don't mind it."

"You're quite forthcoming with your secrets," Alpha Clown said with a sneer.

"And why not? Will it make a difference to me whether you know of this Lineage Factor or not?"

"Maybe," Alpha Clown grinned. "After all, in my Beastman Dimensional Verse, we all share just a single Lineage Factor, the Beastman Lineage Factor. It allows us to consume blood and incorporate it into our path. Usually, we only do so with beasts, but..."

Alpha Clown took a step forward, his aura bearing down.

"Oh my," The Nomad youth chuckled, not seemingly the least bit intimidated, "that is an interesting Lineage Factor indeed. I wonder what sort of synergistic effects it would have for my own? It might even be worth becoming a toddler again."

Alpha Clown's sneer deepened. "It's too bad you won't have such a chance."

"Is that so? I'm not sure I agree. After all, there are so many of you, I just might succeed. My first rebirth was when I was 23 years old. My second came when I turned 47. My third when I was 63. I didn't think I would need another as the older we get, the more grueling the process. The record for success in my Rhismet Family is just 82 years old and I'm already 93, I didn't think that I would risk it.

"But you know, as the saying goes..."

The atmosphere darkened.

"... There's no rest for the Wicked."

[Author's Note: capitalized because his name is actually Wicked Rhismet. I know, I've been killing it with these names, praise me.]

The both of them vanished and the first clash was so terrible that both armies were sent flying back, unable to maintain their footing.

Chapter 2360: Peddled

Leonel looked off into the distance, turning back toward the direction he had just come from. No, it should be just a bit off from that, but it was close. Just a slight deviation, but it was enough.

That clash just now was felt even by him. He recognized one half of it, but the other half was entirely foreign.

He expected those as strong as Alpha Clown to be rare, and he still felt they should be. Who would have known that his luck would be so bad that he would run into two of their territories back to back.

In the end, Leonel turned back toward the direction he was headed in and continued to rush forward, chuckling to himself.

'Seems like he's pretty mad about that kneeling incident. Worth it.'

He was just buttering himself up. With that Alpha Clown's temper, he wanted to be the only one on the mountain top, he wouldn't share his position with anyone else.

Whether Leonel had pissed him off or not, that battle would have been inevitable.

The real question was whether Alpha Clown and the others as powerful as him could adapt to the situation. Those that still insisted on having the mountain top all to themselves would likely soon find themselves being thrown off.

Leonel had a feeling, though, that Alpha Clown was of the smarter variety. Someone like him should also travel alone, so why did he have so many Alphas around him when Leonel met him?

Compromise.

Alpha Clown had likely felt that there was something wrong about the situation they were all in currently. He might not know as much as Leonel did, but he definitely felt the moving tides around him. As expected of a beast in human form.

Anyone as powerful as them would be bound to have quite a level of intelligence, and if you paired that with the instincts of a beast, the feeling of the world crashing down around you would be almost palpable.

People who called themselves Gods suddenly descended and "asked" you if you wanted to participate in a battle Royale that would kill over 90% of billions of participants?

What was the catch?

That was a question that they'd all be asking, and it was an amusing one at that. Wasn't the catch the fact that 90% of you would die?

The smart ones would know that there was another layer hidden within.

What Leonel didn't know was that it wasn't just personal deductions that would spread this issue, but his own actions as well.

He hadn't really thought much about the little test he had given the little pink-eyed woman. But it would have reverberating consequences that he hadn't cared to consider.

...

Amethyst was leaving a trail of corpses in her wake. She moved with quite a bit of stealth and she was both smart and sharp. It wasn't a surprise that she had managed to survive until this point.

Suddenly, she frowned, coming to a stop. Her breath became slow until it stopped completely and she almost melded into the ground.

Although she hadn't disguised herself in any way, to the Internal Sight of any passerby, she would have looked like another piece of nature. A rock by the roadway, a short tree, maybe even a fissure in the ground depending on what the target's mind chose to fill in the gap with.

However, her worst fear seemed to be realized.

A sweet, angelic voice drifted into her ears.

"Little cutie, you can't hide from me with just that."

A bell-like laughter resonated, and Amethyst realized that she had been discovered. Without hesitation, she turned and sprinted off in the opposite direction, but she had only taken two steps when she came to a hard stop.

Before her was the most beautiful woman she had ever laid eyes on. At first, the only thing she could feel was softness and the huge mound of deep caramel before her. However, when she took a hurried step backward, she found that what was before her was the very chest she had just run into.

A beauty with skin the color of milk chocolate and amber eyes that looked like the final dying embers of a once radiant flame stood before her. She was an entire head and a half taller than Amethyst, and a white gown seemed to have a mind of its own, flowing through the air like the fins of a koi fish.

"You... I..."

Amethyst lamented her own bad luck. First Leonel, now this woman. Why did she keep running into absolute monsters? She hadn't seen when this woman moved behind her at all.

"Don't be scared, cutie, Mama Bear won't hurt you," that beautiful laughter echoed again, like caramel drizzling across a brownie, it was so rich and satisfying.

"I just have a question to ask. You killed so many of my people, but why is it that you haven't absorbed any of the energy they left behind?"

Amethyst froze.

...

'Finally,' Leonel thought to himself.

He could sense the Seeded Participant was just a few hundred kilometers away. It should have been a half day journey, but it became a nearly three day affair as he crossed these territories. After the Nomad Dimensional Verse, there was another territory, this one even more wild than the last.

This territory had no organization because Leonel assumed there was no Seeded Participant. Due to that, it was just a free-for-all and everyone was much more aggressive.

Thanks to this, though, Leonel got a much greater understanding of Little Blackstar and had time to fully heal. Not only did he fully heal, but he could feel more of the changes that his separated soul was causing to his body now, and they were truly astonishing.

Thinking back to his enlightened self, and how he was usually covered in scales, Leonel wondered just how much of that strength was coming from the demon side of his bloodline.

A few hundred kilometers was nothing to Leonel, it was a matter of a few minutes at worst. But as he moved to close in that distance, his thoughts grew eerily silent and his expression seemed to have lost all of its playfulness.

His body might be hundreds of kilometers away, but this was a distance his Internal Sight could easily cover now, and what he saw left him completely enraged.

Every human within range of his senses wore a neck collar of iron as though being peddled as slaves.