

# Dimensional Descent

## Chapter 2641: Point

"Jeez..." Leonel exhaled a breath.

No matter how you looked at it, that thing in the skies really looked like a God. Was all of this necessary? He was just a little human, isn't that what they always said? So why were they going so hard all of a sudden?

Aina was about to spring forward when Leonel tightened his grip on her hand.

She looked back with a questioning gaze, not quite understanding. That sort of enemy was definitely not one that Leonel could fight.

That giant Nomad very clearly had Noah's Ability Index, the ability to not only perfectly control his own size but also his density and weight.

The Morphing Ability Index.

According to Leonel's Life Tablet, it was a Black Grade ability, but as with all things, it was highly dependent on the user. Even a Black Grade Ability Index could be exceptional if it was properly controlled.

Leonel's own Ability Index wasn't very highly ranked either. At the very least, it was firmly beneath Aina's. But how far had he been able to bring it?

For someone with the special quirks of the Nomads, this Ability Index was truly... troublesome.

Aina knew all of this, and she could also feel that this Nomad's strength was exceptional. Leonel simply wasn't able to fight such a person. So she wasn't sure why he would stop her like this. She should be the one to go.

"Hey, hey," Leonel chuckled, "don't you think you've done enough fighting?"

"But-"

Leonel's grin widened and Aina fell into silence.

"Okay. But I want 20 babies now."

Leonel was speechless. What was this woman talking about now?

Soon, he laughed, shooting into the skies on a rising staircase of Emulation Spatial Force.

The Nomad, who was furiously scanning the region, spotted Leonel almost immediately. He had just been about to descend onto the Dream Pavilion, but he didn't expect that Leonel would expose himself even before trying to rush back first.

"What are you so surprised about, old bastard? Did I look like I feared your people when I slaughtered Burul and the rest of them?"

The Nomad's eyes bulged. This, human...

Leonel waved a hand and the cracks across the Human Bubble solidified and healed.

The Nomad's gaze narrowed and his rage suddenly felt as though a bucket of cold water had been poured over it. How had Leonel just done so? That should have been impossible...

"You..."

"Surprised? Want to run, now?"

The Nomad's violent momentum seems to have dimmed considerably.

He had come here alone, not out of choice or arrogance, but because that was the only way. It wasn't so easy to move between worlds, especially across such large distances. He had no choice but to come alone...

But why did it feel like Leonel knew he would come? Why did he look so confident?

"There's no need to look so confused. It's all so obvious that I'm not even sure why you all are trying so hard to hide it.

"Pathetic dregs like you wouldn't even dare to act under normal circumstances. The Gem Dream Pavilion was barely in the top 1000. The Owlans could have entered the top 100 whenever they wanted and the Spirituals were firmly in the top 500. Your Dream Pavilion had no business mixing into the matters of the True Dream World.

"And yet, there you were. Not only were you there, but when you found Deputy Pavilion Head Clarence, you strung him up and tortured him to death as though he was some sort of animal.

"Those kinds of actions don't make any sense whatsoever. I may have personally said some things you found offensive, but going so far is a fool's errand for a world as weak as yours.

"The world may hate the Human Race, but we're still here, and it's certainly not because of a little formation even I was able to shatter with a few tricks. That barrier could at best hold back those weak Demon Races.

"No one dares to touch us because they don't want to offend the Pluto Race or the neutral Faction that backs them. So why is a little middling world like yours so aggressive? Hm?"

The world around the Nomad trembled fiercely, his weight increasing to the point gravity bent and whined, space shrinking, collapsing and distorting around him.

"No answer?" Leonel asked with a smile. "I wonder, how long does it take to rush here from your world? Probably took many months, huh? When did you leave? You can't see the Gathering Stele from the Inbetween Worlds, now can you?"

"ENOUGH!" The Nomad roared. "I am the mighty Kaelan, do you think the likes of the Human Race has the right to speak to me this way?!"

Leonel picked at his ears. "And yet, you still haven't attacked me yet. I'm right here. Do it, big man. Be gentle if you can, I scare easy."

Kaelan's eyes practically bulged out of their sockets. Leonel was barely a hundred meters from him, a nigh insignificant distance. Even if Leonel had been kilometers away, it would have been absolutely meaningless.

He was so infuriated by Leonel's nonchalance he felt like his heart was about to implode. He still didn't understand how Leonel could possibly be so calm.

It was all a bluff, it had to be. But after what happened to the Nomads in the True Dream World... could it still be considered that?

Kaelan then had another thought. None of this made sense. If Leonel was trying to goad him into attacking, why spend all this time talking? So long as Leonel appeared, he

would have attacked. So what was the point of making the trap so obvious that he didn't dare to step into it?

It had to be a bluff, that was the only thing that made any sort of sense.

Plus, the moment the Human Race lost its protection rights, didn't that mean that anyone could attack and kill them? This was the culling! He was justified!

Leonel smiled then suddenly pointed up.

## Chapter 2642: Annoying

Kaelan froze.

1. Aina Morales.

That last name, he didn't recognize it. He could tell with ease that that was the name Leonel was pointing at.

It was impossible for him to not recognize a last name on the rankings, especially not if it was first place. They all should come from the most prominent families below the Demi-God Realms. So how was it that-

He froze. Wasn't this human's name Leonel Morales?

"Surprised? Don't be. I tried to tell you all that my wife is amazing. Not my fault none of you wanted to listen."

"You..."

"Are you going to attack, or not? I'm getting quite bored. You came here all boisterous, beating your chest like an ape. But where's the follow through?"

Kaelan's eyes were completely red.

The boy was confusing him. He suddenly couldn't tell left from right, or right from left anymore. He felt like-

Kaelan froze. He suddenly remembered... Why would this boy be speaking so much? Wasn't it to attack his mind? Wasn't he a Dream Force expert? Could it be that his mind was already being infiltrated? Was everything around him fake?

Kaelan erupted with a roar that shook the world, streams of Earth Force coming out from him in waves.

Leonel coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was sent blasting into the distance. Kaelan's Earth Force was clearly in the Life State, and unlike Leonel, he had access to the full brunt of it as a Ninth Dimensional powerhouse. He was on an entirely different level. Whether it was Leonel or Aina, they stood no chance against this sort of enemy.

Another mouthful of blood came from Leonel. He wiped his lips with a forearm then spit to the side, shaking his head and clicking his tongue. The waters of Existence were truly deep.

Even the experts of such "weak" worlds were so powerful, let alone the true behemoths.

"DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN FOOL ME?!" Kaelan roared, the world shaking beneath his mind. The earth whined and split as mountains collapsed.

His four floating palms were held up into the air and the entire world seemed to elevate. The sea level descended and the cracked and floating rocks rose.

Leonel smiled. Well, wasn't this guy just a big ball of sunshine?

Unfortunately... he was also an idiot.

BOOM!

The world that seemed about to collapse was suddenly forcefully stabilized.

High in the skies, higher than even the Nomad, a man appeared... Or rather, a humanoid male...

His skin was a greyish color with echoes of blue. He was tall, standing at over four meters, but at the same time, he was lean and powerful, not to mention muscular to the point of exaggeration. His skin pulsed with striations a human simply couldn't form.

He was bald and his body was covered in ancient tattoos of dark gold that seemed to be a mixture of a careful inking technique and a branding one. That made these ancient tattoos elevated in some portions and subtle in others. It felt like the longer one looked at them, the more lost one would become.

When Kaelan saw the man in the skies, he shook violently, his heart dropping into an abyss.

"P... P... Pluto..."

He took such a blow that his mind went entirely blank and he lost consciousness for a moment before it returned and he lost it again. The man seemed to fade in and out of focus, his mind being ravaged by thoughts of inferiority and fear.

Leonel's lip curled but he didn't really say much of anything.

Why had he spent all that time goading the Nomad?

There was actually no specific reason at all. He just didn't like him. Wasn't that enough?

These people had been annoying him for a long while now, and he was getting very tired of it.

It had only been a short time since he saw El'Rion last, but the brat seemed to have grown substantially already. What was interesting to Leonel was that El'Rion was most definitely still in the Fifth Dimension, and yet he had grown substantially.

El'Rion had said he was a Quasi Sixth Dimensional expert, and that should mean that he was at the absolute limits of what the Fifth Dimension had to offer already... and yet he had still found so much more room for growth.

Leonel found it all fascinating.

'Jackpot,' Leonel suddenly thought. He was eager to see what the Life Tablet would pick up from El'Rion. It could be said he was killing two birds with a single stone.

All in a good day's work.

El'Rion frowned when he saw that Leonel wasn't surprised to see him. It only appeared for a moment, though, before it vanished.

He shook his head. He was used to being silent and stoic, but Leonel seemed to have a way of getting to him.

'He's changed...' El'Rion suddenly thought.

Leonel had, indeed, changed. But somehow, he was just as annoying. It left the Pluto youth without the words to describe him. How'd he manage to change almost everything about himself except this one thing?

He had an urge to tell Leonel to go back to the drawing board.

El'Rion's gaze turned toward the trembling Nomad and he waved a hand.

BANG!

Kaelan's head exploded, waves of blood falling through the skies.

"Satisfied?" El'Rion asked.

"Why are you asking me that question like I ordered you around?" Leonel asked with a smile.

El'Rion wasn't sure how to respond.

"Isn't it obvious you knew this would happen?"

"You're not very good at lying, El'Rion," Leonel said with a chuckle. "You definitely thought I'd be surprised."

El'Rion's nose scrunched up but his demeanor went back to normal.

He stretched out a hand and clawed space, his short, curled nailed ripping into the stream of time and rewinding the events.

He watched the scene in silence and then waved a hand for them to disappear.

"Why did you antagonize him so much?"

"His face annoyed me."

El'Rion, once again, didn't know how to respond.

## **Chapter 2643: A Stage**

El'Rion looked at Leonel deeply and decided to give up. He was never going to win a war of words with this man.

At that moment, Aina appeared by Leonel's side, looking at El'Rion curiously for a moment.

"Is this supposed to be the 'snotty nosed brat'?" Aina asked.

Leonel burst into laughter and El'Rion's expression became sour again. Watching the young boy try to control himself again and again was probably Leonel's most amusing pass-time at this point.

"Alright, we can stop teasing him now. I'm sure you have something important to tell me?" Leonel said.

"... Yes. This is a special circumstance. It's impossible for me to do this-"

Leonel waved a hand and shook his head. "Never expected that."

El'Rion fell into silence again. He really didn't know how to deal with this man. Leonel seemed very eager to let him know that he wasn't relying on him, but if he knew that he was coming, didn't that mean that he already was?

"... Like I was saying, this situation is extraordinarily unique. The Gathering of Kingdoms just ended and your world successfully defended itself. In addition, you've been the constant sufferer of several schemes until now.

"If our Faction did not take action, it would mean allowing the others to trample on our authority, and that could not be allowed."

The meaning was clear. If in the past the Gathering Stele was the representation of the God Beasts of Creation, now it was the representation of the Plutos. Its rules were upheld by them and controlled as such.

At the same time, the Gathering of Kingdoms was a treaty of sorts. It was a balance taken between the neutral faction and the factions who wanted to wipe out all other Races.

Obviously, the latter group wanted to minimize how the resources of Existence were used up by getting rid of countless worlds, believing themselves to be the ones meant to replace the God Beasts of Destruction.

However, the majority neutral factions wanted the status quo to remain. It was trying to mess with the balance in the first place that led to all of this, so trying to actively change things again just felt foolish.

The Gathering of Kingdoms was a compromise.

Years of peace mixed with short spurts of violence. There was a path to survival for many, and it gave life and evolution a chance to occur naturally.

If one tried to ignore this compromise, they would be likewise ignoring the new balance the world had struck.

That couldn't be allowed.

Leonel had heard from his meeting with Shan'Rae that the Pluto Race was losing some of its prestige. If under normal circumstances the Pluto Race might have turned a blind eye to some things, they definitely could not now.

El'Rion was just telling Leonel things he already knew, and it left Leonel feeling a little annoyed, but in the end, he just smiled and shook his head. This was just El'Rion's way of getting a little revenge, so he allowed it.



"... Dealing with these people is fine, but you've antagonized a Demi-God Race, and that's more complicated. The Owlman Race has their own Dharma wielder and that means their actions can't be so easily waved away.

"The good news is that the Owlman Race also has to be wary. They've been very cautious over the years because they've been trying to distance themselves from the Minerva Race. It's unlikely that-

"They will attack," Leonel said.

"What-

"They'll definitely attack. In fact, they're probably on their way by now. If not, they will be soon."

El'Rion frowned. He didn't understand why Leonel was so certain.

The Owlman Race attacking didn't make any sense. Why would they go from so cautious to so high profile?

Leonel shook his head and sighed, his playful demeanor disappearing.

"You're still thinking about things too simple," Leonel said. "Nothing is ever a monolith. It's hard to expect even a single person to act in a predictable fashion. There are so many variables related to personalities and personhood. Let alone an entire power.

"Not everyone in the Owlman Race is as comfortable with the status quo as you believe."

El'Rion was once again confused. How could Leonel understand the inner workings of the Owlman Race better than he did?

Unless... the Challenge Sequence? But Minerva should have a far higher Dream Force than Leonel, how could he possibly grasp her character?

Then, it hit him.

Did Leonel need to? Wasn't the fact Minerva had such a name to begin with paint the picture clearly enough?

How could a race trying their best to separate themselves from their past possibly give birth to a talent of Minerva's level and give her such a name?

Minerva might not be the strongest of the Owlmen, not even close. But in terms of talents, she was top three without the slightest doubt, and her background was exceptional within her Race as well.

"You..."

El'Rion's assessment of Leonel had taken a complete 180 after he returned from a battle with a Shadow Tail. He didn't even know he should explain this matter to anyone, it was far too unbelievable.

He should have known that the way Leonel saw things was far different from the way others did. The plane his mind worked on could already be compared to the best of the Gods.

And it made no sense to him.

"But there's no way they'd attack so soon... The Gathering of Kingdoms-"

"They have a viable reason to attack. I have their Race's 'treasure'. They'll have all the excuses they need."

"Why are you being so casual about this? You do realize that even if it's only Minerva, she is capable of crushing defeating even me as I am now? There is a huge gap between Mortal and Demi-God Races."

"Well then," Leonel smiled. "Shouldn't you do something about that?"

El'Rion was rendered speechless once again. Didn't this man just say he didn't need him?

"I've already said, I can't-"

"Not like that," Leonel said. "I'll crush them on my own. If there's anything you're right about, it is that they'll have to wait a while. I don't fear these people."

"What I need from you is something different."

"I need a stage to be a Wise Star Order without losing my head."

## **Chapter 2644: [Bonus] Plan A**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (1/6)]

El'Rion's brows furrowed, but Leonel looked back at him with quite an unreadable expression. It felt like what he had said was just natural.

By now, many people had already guessed that Leonel was a Wise Star Order. It could be said that the reason the ire of countless Gods hadn't descended on him yet was

because the Life Tablet couldn't grant Lineage Factors. At best, many believed that it had just acknowledged his Wise Star Order status.

Of the Orders, Wise Star Order was the only one not tied to the Northern Star Lineage Factor by necessity. In fact, it could be said that the purpose of the Wise Star Order's existence to begin with was to restrain and maintain.

There was a reason why Leonel could suppress and overpower those with the Northern Star Lineage Factor, an ability he had gained the moment he awoke to his status as a Wise Star Order.

Naturally, for those that didn't want to see the rise of the Northern Star Lineage Factor again, Leonel's existence wasn't entirely a bad thing...

If he could be controlled, that is.

This matter, though, was quickly becoming a web of complexities. Setting aside the existence of Wicked, what it meant, and the members of the Cult that had been left behind, there were too many other things pulling Leonel in all directions. Right now, all he could do was take steps to fix that.

The first step was Aina. Aina's existence was crucial, not just because she had helped them to survive the culling, but because of what she represented.

She was a human, separate from the Northern Star Lineage Factor, who carried a great strength all to herself.

This seemed meaningless. Why would it be important for the humans to come off as strong, aside from surviving, that is?

Ironically, the humans were in a situation similar to the Owlman Race. They were tied to a version of themselves that many were wary of, and many more had a difficult time disassociating from their current selves.

The longer humans spent in this well, the worse their situation would become. But that wasn't all.

If Leonel went to win the Gathering of Kingdoms, maybe he could have done it. Though, it would have been difficult for him to survive the same punishment Aina had at his current level.

But even if being a Wise Star Order didn't mean he had the Northern Star Lineage Factor, it was too close. Anyone could make the argument that it would be safer to get rid of him.

Now, however, there was a positive trend of humans with capabilities that trended away from the Northern Star Lineage Factor.

All this said, there were still several things that didn't add up.

The Fawkes family, for one, was an existence that was likewise separate from the Northern Star Lineage Factor. After the fall of the God Beasts and their Envoys, the Human had managed to bask in some glory of their own as well.

So, what was the point? Wouldn't they be hated one way or another?

But that was exactly the point in Leonel's eyes.

The Fawkes family fell due to a betrayal of their fellow humans. Other Races didn't actively attack them, at least not alone.

This was the status quo that Leonel wanted to return to, a careful balance where the Human Race might be hated, but there was also no one who could easily attack them without reason...

At least not without triggering the skepticism and scrutiny of the majority God faction... that being the neutral faction.

If Leonel wanted to return to that state, he had to thread a very thin line.

For one, he couldn't go around conquering, or else that would also disrupt the balance. If he expected others to leave him be, he couldn't antagonize them.

Second, he needed to show strength. He and Aina were two pillars of their Human Race's strength already, and soon, there would be many more, especially with the new cultivation method that Aina had unearthed.

Third, he needed to separate from the Northern Star Lineage Factor.

This third problem was multi-facets and multi-layered. Although Aina had won the Gathering of Kingdoms, that wasn't nearly enough.

Not only was she just one person, her feats were actually objectively less impressive than Leonel's own, and there was an argument to be made that she was only so powerful because of Leonel in the first place.

After all, it was a Wise Star Order's duty to guide and direct, as well as gathering information. There was a reason the help of the God Beasts hadn't just created the Envoys, but numerous powerful families like the Fawkes and the Constellation families.

This was where things became tricky. Because if Leonel was the one guiding everyone, then it might be impossible to ever completely separate from that level of scrutiny...

Unless he could display his abilities as a Wise Star Order on a much larger scale.

If he leaned into the role of a Wise Star Order, gathering knowledge and passing it on, even helping those of other Races, slowly but surely, the events of the past could be overwritten.

But if Leonel wanted to take even the first step toward that wider plan of his, he needed an anchor. That anchor couldn't come from himself, and it certainly couldn't come from the God Beasts of Creation either.

They needed to come from the most powerful God Race in existence.

The Plutos.

He didn't need them to be looking over his shoulder, nor did he need them to actively protect him either. He just needed a small path he could walk down.

As for the rest of it, he could handle himself.

If El'Rion had no ability to do this, he would have to use his Plan B. But honestly, he didn't really want to do that...

Because if he went down that route, a lot of people would die...

And he would make an enemy out of the whole of Existence.

## **Chapter 2645: [Bonus] Minds**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (2/6)]

Leonel wasn't ready to make an enemy out of so many monsters. Maybe if he was able to return to the Seventh Dimension, he would be willing to take such an outrageous gamble. But at least for now, he wanted to take the smarter approach if he could.

It was all in the hands of the little boy that was just a little bit too big for his age.

When El'Rion looked into Leonel's eyes, he understood much more of what he was seeing now. It felt like Leonel wasn't asking him anything. Instead... he was giving him a choice.

A choice to let Existence stay in peace for a little while longer, or if he would let chaos reign.

It didn't make sense to him again. But it also didn't make sense for Leonel to survive against that Shadow Tail. It also didn't make sense for him to survive in the True Dream World. And it also didn't make sense for him to have planned for his appearance either.

Nothing this man did seemed to make any sense whatsoever.

"What do you expect from me?"

Leonel shrugged. "That would be up to you."

El'Rion's gaze narrowed.

"... Following the Gathering of Kingdoms, an exchange of martial arts, there is the Gathering of Minds. This is a historical event and one that hasn't been held since the collapse of the Minerva Race as there hasn't been anyone else worthy of it..."

Leonel's eyes sharpened. He understood what El'Rion meant immediately.

The Gathering of Kingdoms had been commandeered as a "culling" event. Its original purpose had long since been lost, so the Gathering of Minds that usually followed after it was likewise forgotten and ignored.

After the fall of the God Beasts of Creation, the command of the Gathering of Minds had been taken over by the Minerva Race. This continued for many Generations until they, too, fell...

There were many rumours about the reason for the Minerva Race's downfall, and Leonel felt that Anastasia might very well know more about it than she let on. But what was most important here was the Gathering of Minds itself.

"... It has been a very long time since a new Creation Grade Crafter was born, and the sudden activation of the Gathering Stele to gift your wife with an opportunity is also a decent chance as well... If you would like, I can use some of my authority to trigger the start of this event for you. However, I'm not sure if it will end the way you want it to."

El'Rion didn't want to underestimate Leonel anymore, as he felt that he had done enough of that and had suffered enough mental anguish as a direct result.

However, it was impossible for someone as weak as Leonel to thrive in such an event, especially since unlike the Gathering of Kingdoms where only Mortal Races participated, the Gathering of Minds had a different precedent.

It had to be understood that the only reason the Gathering of Kingdoms only allowed Mortal Races to participate now was as a front for the culling. However, in the past, all Races of all kinds participated. Including the Gods.

If he started up the Gathering of Minds again at Leonel's request, he wouldn't have the same excuse to stop higher level existences from participating. At best, he could limit it to the younger generation.

Leonel's lip curled. "Didn't you say that no new Creation Grade Crafters have been born in a long while?"

"I did..." El'Rion replied slowly.

"Then what's the problem?"

El'Rion shook his head and Aina, who had been mostly silent all this while, couldn't help but giggle. Leonel was usually confident enough about most things, especially battle. But when it came to Crafting, his arrogance was on another level.

He had never tried to compete with anyone in Crafting, at least not normally or in any sort of formal setting before. However, his actions told Aina all she needed to know.

Right now, her husband had access to a mountain of wealth. He could have used any number of resources to trade for an outfit for her. But instead of trading for a treasure that might very well have been made at the hands of a Demi-God, Leonel preferred to Craft her military uniform himself.

This was Leonel's subtlest form of arrogance, and yet when one thought about it... it was also the one that shone the fiercest.

"..."

El'Rion's lips parted, but his words stopped again. This man was really too much.

"Also, since you're kind enough to do such a thing, I have a different suggestion.

"You can start the Gathering of Minds, request for the Owlman Race to be the host. Separate it into two portions, one that is a healthy exchange of thoughts and ideas, the second of which is a challenge section where one can challenge another when two treasures of equal value are put on the line.

"Is that alright?"

El'Rion took a breath. Leonel explained it simply, but his thoughts were layered in complexity.

For one, requesting the Owlans to host basically cut off the idea of any God participating. What God would join an event hosted by a mere Demi-God? And El'Rion nor Leonel would have to ban them in so many words.

Second, the Owlans hosting would make the Pluto Race's neutrality shine through.

What happened here today couldn't be hidden. People would soon find out that El'Rion had taken action for the Human Race.

However, if soon afterward, he announced the Gathering of Minds hosted by the Owlans Race that clearly had a grudge with Leonel, it would be the perfect balancing act.

Third, the challenge section would make the Owlans all too eager. Wasn't this their chance to make Leonel put Anastasia on the line so that they could finally get the treasure of the Minerva Race back?

Fourth, the healthy exchange that would start the Gathering of Minds would be akin to a soothing massage after the death and destruction of the Gathering of Kingdoms.

## **Chapter 2646: [Bonus] Alike**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (3/6)]

El'Rion felt that he had been bamboozled again. Leonel told him to do whatever he pleased, and then happened to have the perfect plan for the exact option he did?

He almost thought that Leonel was using Dream Force to control him, but how could such a thing work against a Pluto? He could be an infant and Dream Force would still be useless against him.

Even so, he couldn't help but feel that Leonel had managed to surprise him again.

This plan not only covered for Leonel's future, but it also covered El'Rion's own ass.

The Pluto Race had been taking a lot of heat recently. First it was the fact they were declining in general. Though they were still by far the best of the best, their enemies were like sharks in blood-infested waters.

Then there was the help they had given the Fawkes. Not the fact they had helped out Humans to begin with, but instead the fact they had done so with the help of so many Incomplete Worlds. That was unacceptable to many God Races.



If El'Rion was too willful, he could end up putting even more pressure on his family. That was precisely why he had immediately told Leonel that he couldn't just do this all the time.

But it seemed that Leonel had already considered this more than he had.

"Alright," El'Rion nodded. "We'll do as you say. In that case, farewell."

"Whoa, whoa," Leonel called out. "You don't want to stay for dinner or something?"

El'Rion's steps paused, not quite understanding the invitation until he translated it to himself and tried to find the right words for it.

However, in his language, the best he could do was the word "gift", and the idea of anyone gifting him anything struck a chord with his Pluto Pride. It felt like Leonel was looking down on him.

But he could also tell from Leonel's tone that that wasn't what he meant.

"You should really taste my wife's cooking. I bet you the whole of Existence doesn't have a better chef."

Aina smiled, seemingly not minding the fact Leonel was offering her services.

"Um... alright..." El'Rion finally said slowly.

Leonel grinned and the trio vanished into the Segmented Cube.

...

"Holy hell, you're huge!" Raj looked up at El'Rion, craning his neck. "Where've you been hiding this guy, cap?"

"He has not been hiding me," El'Rion replied in polite correction.

Raj and Milan looked toward one another and burst out into a fit of laughter.

"Arnold!"

"Allan!"

Raj and Milan spoke out at the same time.

"We found you a new friend!"

Leonel stood in the kitchen with Aina, laughing.

"What, you're not unhappy you're missing out anymore?" Aina asked.

"No, ma'am!" Leonel stood at attention. "Direct me as you please, General!"

Aina's laughter echoed in a radiant bell-like tone.

"Good, then start prepping. Since you got me into this, you're slaving too."

Leonel was aghast. This woman had just spent months on end fighting against a horde of literally trillions of enemies. She had the stamina of a million chefs. She certainly didn't need his help nor support.

But it seemed that he wasn't escaping today.

After he tuned out the laughter from outside the kitchen, he grinned again.

"Today, I'll show you how a Crafter does things. You Force Cooks are all so rigid and unimaginative. Have you ever seen a man chop a hundred onions at once?"

"Oh?" Aina called out with a smile.

"Indeed," Leonel opened a palm and Tolliver formed a gorgeous array of flickering liquid silver before forming into several tiny lives. "Watch and learn, wife."

A flurry of slices echoed through the kitchen. Vegetables flew about, and neither Force Herbs nor powerful beast meat could escape his clutches. He even ground fresh spikes and dispersed the air of tear-inducing vapors all at once.

He was simply a machine.

Aina clapped to the side, feeding her man's ego.

The atmosphere could only be described as happy and harmonious.

...

In an unknown location, voices echoed, their intentions laced with schemes and multi-layered hidden meanings.

"It's coming, like you said. This will be a perfect opportunity to take advantage of."

"But can you guarantee my safety?"

"Did I not already promise you all the riches in the world? What can the measly Human Race do for you? Are you not aware that the most powerful Humans in Existence have

never stepped foot into the Human Bubbles? They are all born and raised in other worlds.

"Do you want to be the big fish in a small pond? Or swim in the vast ocean? In fact, in this case, you wouldn't even be a big fish, you would always be under his thumb. I don't think you understand what it means to be a Wise Star Order."

"I came to you, not the other way around. You don't need to remind me of the benefits, I've long since become aware. I just want to make sure that you will keep up your end of the deal."

"Can I hide from your abilities?" The voice chuckled. "Just the fact you could contact me in the first place has astonished me. You'll do well here."

"There are many things in this world that I do not understand," the other voice replied plainly.

Another chuckle came. "Continue to be humble, it will bring you far. I'll trust you to do as you've said, and you can trust me. It isn't like you'll be in danger."

"Maybe..."

The voices fell into silence, and it seemed at some unknown time, they had disconnected from one another. Just like that, silent and without fanfare.

The second voice sat in silence, shadows moving over their figure as they sat in an unknown location. In their hands, a familiar Black Tablet was rolled back and forth, their fingers gliding over the etchings as though fascinated by the fact such an unimaginative item could hold such power.

"You and I are a lot alike," they said with a silent chuckle.

## **Chapter 2647: [Bonus] Wildfire**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (4/6)]

Leonel entered the Dream Pavilion with his mind ironically in the clouds. He paused, remembering something, then chose to do a check. He wanted to understand why Cindra was so powerful. Soon, he figured it out.

He should have realized it earlier. But this was the first time he was actually meeting such a person in the flesh so it hadn't really sunk in.

Of course, Cindra was a Snow Star Order. Well, that was Leonel's guess, but he was fairly certain that he was actually correct because nothing else made sense.

But this wasn't the only interesting thing he had learned.

Snow Star Order. Stone Star Order. Starry Star Order. Twinkling Star Order. And Golden Star Order.

The names of these Orders were fairly self-explanatory. These were people who had a natural advantage in the control of Lineage Factors related to the Snowy Star Owl, White Stone Elephant, Starry Tailed Fox, Twinkling Light Bear, and the Golden Tiger.

The only reason the Luxnix family only knew of the Snow Star Order was, obviously, because they had only ever unlocked the Snowy Star Owl Lineage Factor. Even if they had had one of the other Orders, they wouldn't have even been aware.

There was also the fact Wise Star Order had manipulated the history of the Luxnix as well. And now that that man had disappeared, Leonel had no way of telling what parts of it were real and what parts were fake.

What he did know, though, was that Orders of this kind were very special.

In Leonel's worldview, the Snowy Star Owl was just a Sixth Dimensional Lineage Factor. However, in the visions, the Snowy Star Owl was a creature that could cross a universe with a single flap of its wings.

The disparity between the actual creature and the Lineage Factor it represented was a vast chasm.

To the God Beasts, the lesser Lineage Factors were entirely worthless. It was only those humans that could eventually reach the end and form the Infinity Beast or Void Beast Lineage Factors that could really be considered to be the true powerhouses of their movement... With one exception.

The Orders.

The Orders were able to unearth potential from the lesser Lineage Factors that most humans could not.

And it seemed now that Cindra was likely to be one of them.

'Hm... What to do...'

The matter with Cindra was even more complicated now. Unlike him, Cindra would be immediately recognizable. She didn't have a Lineage Factor that was mutated like his own.

Right now, if she appeared before a knowledgeable God, she would definitely be exposed immediately.

Leonel had already explained these things to Cindra, and for now, he could only hide her away. So, unfortunately, it seemed that he had actually lost a great asset instead of gained one.

Unless he was strong enough to snub his nose at the Gods, it was impossible for him to bring her out and lean on her... at best he could have her join the Dream Pavilion and she would be an extra buffer to his ratios. But he couldn't use her in any other ways...

'It's possible that I can find a way to hide it like I did. But she's not like me. She doesn't have other talents and such to rely on. If she sacrifices her Lineage Factor to boost her body alone, much of her strength would plummet.'

As Leonel thought, he continued to walk, strolling as though to free his mind of his worries.

His mind drifted to the Gathering of Minds and a smile crept up onto his face. He truly had never done an exchange with other Crafters. Come to think of it, the only person he had somewhat done so with was Anya, but that ended quite quickly, and she had always been far beneath him in skill. That "exchange" was mostly just him proving himself in every fashion.

However, he had some worries about it too.

The first was Tolliver. He still didn't quite understand what changes the little Metal Spirit had undergone, but they certainly weren't normal by any stretch of the imagination. He felt that he would have to try and find a way to hide Tolliver's specialness.

The second was, obviously, Anastasia. He didn't like the idea of using her like some sort of bartering chip, but he also knew that he had no other choice... Not only was this important for baiting and dealing with the Minerva Race, and at least making sure that they wouldn't come and attack him before he was ready, but also...

How else could he possibly get his hands on a Demi-God World Spirit if not by doing this?

Demi-Gods were well beyond him, let alone their World Spirits. If he didn't get one like this, would he be stuck in the Fourth Dimension for the rest of his life?

Either that, or he would have to raise one of the Human Bubbles up to that standard, but that was a whole headache in and of itself.

This was the only choice he had left to complete his father's mad science experiment.

Leonel sighed. He slid his hands into his pockets and stared into the beautiful skies.

He smiled.

He was beginning to see this cruel world in a different sort of light. It was no different from another 9-5 job to him. If he was on Earth and still in the Third Dimension, it wasn't like his life would be all sunshine and rainbows either. He'd be dealing with problems that would feel probably just as existential as all of this did.

As he stood there, news of the Gathering of Minds began to spread like wildfire.

All across Existence, the best Crafters of the younger generation seemed to have had a fire lit under their bellies.

However, it wasn't just them, but the Force Pill Crafters as well. Who said that the Gathering of Minds was just about Crafting?

A different sort of fervor rushed through the Bubbles of Existence.

## **Chapter 2648: [Bonus] Order Standards**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (5/6)]

Leonel chuckled to himself. Unfortunately, Aina's Force Pill Crafting methods relied on her Blood Sovereignty to Force Pill Craft.

'Well, knowing her, she could probably take another first place after creating an entirely different method. But I can't let them covet my wife too much, she's all mine.'

Leonel ducked instinctually, only recovering when he realized there wasn't a frying pan coming for his head.

He cleared his throat, clamped his hand behind his back, and continued his stroll.

...

Owlan Race.

Minerva sat in silence, reading over the mandate again and again.

Of course, this matter had been accepted by the Owlan Race on behalf of her. It was almost an amusing joke. Almost.

Elrik had been here not too long ago telling her that her only place was in bed with a big belly. And now, the entire Race was expecting her to lead the charge for their glory.

What a bunch of sick bastards.

As the Pavilion Head, she was nowhere near the strongest Owlman, but she was certainly the best Crafter.

That wasn't just because of her Dream Force, but it was also because she was among the very few who embraced her Minerva Race roots. She had been basking in this profession for all her life.

Of course, she was far above the cut-off age for this event. It would have to be her juniors that participated. However... this was all too useful to her.

The Pluto Race had decided to hold the Gathering of Minds for the first time in such a long time, and it was the Owlmen who were chosen to host it?

Just how much leverage did this give her? What would all those bastards who kept saying they should distance themselves from the Minerva Race say now?

The strongest of the Gods had given them the right to take up the mantle of the Minerva Race. Didn't this prove that all their cowardice was worth next to nothing?

"Call Celestia," Minerva suddenly commanded.

As she waited, Minerva's thoughts were churning. Although all of this felt great, she felt that she was suddenly dancing to another's tune and it was a slightly uncomfortable feeling.

But she shrugged it off.

On the one hand, if this was the tune of the Plutos, at least for now, it was impossible to resist.

On the other, if she was just overthinking it, what was the point of wasting her time?

Soon, a beautiful young woman walked in with her wings tucked and her demeanor respectful to the point it seemed she mind bowed down and kowtow if Minerva gave the slightest inkling that that was what she wanted.

"How is your Crafting these days?" Minerva asked.

"Master, I've been doing okay."

"Your temperament is still the same. I've said to be more confident, so be more confident. I do not take dregs as disciples. You are the only disciple of I, Minerva, so carry yourself like it!"

Minerva spoke in a low shout, but she didn't seem to be truly angry.

"Yes, master!" Celestia said through gritted teeth. "I have reached a Sixth Order standard."

"Is that so... not bad. I will guide you personally to reach the Seventh in the coming months. Come."

Celestia's eyes lit up with excitement as she hurriedly followed after.

...

The Order Standards were a measurement of Crafting skill created by the Minerva Race. The particular standards that Minerva herself was referring to were the Demi-God versions.

There were simply too many variables to a Crafter's prowess. There was their Spirit, their Dream or Soul Force strength, and then there was their actual ingenuity and skill.

Depending on these matters, it could vary widely.

The reason why the Black to Life system Leonel was used to didn't work was because what could be considered Black or Bronze and above varied widely in a given world. There were some worlds where a Black Grade treasure could shatter a Life Grade one with ease.

Leonel had experienced the fluidity of these rankings personally after his Life Grade breakthrough. Back then, he had gained the ability to Craft "Black Grade" items that were really of the Life Grade.

These problems were things that everyone across Existence faced, so the Order Standards were introduced.

An Order Standard was the average of one's skill in multiple categories.

The first was Control. This referred to how well you could communicate with your Spirit and how well it responded to your commands. This also baked in skills like Finger Designations and dexterity.

The second was Knowledge. The sheer amount of information a Crafter had to take in was excessive, and how much of it one grasped would inevitably decide how effectively you could Craft in the first place.



The third was stamina and Dream Force. Even if you had all the Control and Knowledge in the world, if your Dream Force or Soul Force was too weak, and you lacked stamina in using them, you would never be able to finish a Craft.

At lower levels, you could just set aside a Craft and return to it later, but when the Life Grade was concerned, everything had to be done in one go, or how else would you guarantee the creation of a new "life"?

The fourth and final category was Ingenuity and Adaptability. It was a fluid category that was more difficult to measure than most, and yet it was maybe the most important of them.

A First Order Standard actually meant more than it seemed. A person who had reached this standard was considered a true Crafter in the eyes of even the Demi-Gods and they had quite some value.

A Fourth Order Standard was highly sought after, an individual capable of making forging treasures that could even harm Ninth Dimensional experts who had one Force in the Lower Life State.

At the Seventh Order... one could make treasures that even the Gods wouldn't snub their noses at.

The average for geniuses of the younger generation, even accounting for the Demi-God Race, was Third Order. And yet...

Celestia was at the Sixth.

## **Chapter 2649: [Bonus] Part Two**

[Thanks to Ian <3 (6/6)]

"HAHA! My stage has come!"

A boisterous laughter that should probably come from a War Lord instead of a Crafter echoed.

A young man wearing beast skins kicked a door open with a foot and brought half the house down as a result.

"Talon! You son of a bitch! Didn't I tell you-"

The laughter drowned out the rest of the spiel. Talon couldn't be bothered to listen, his laughter causing what remained of the home to shake on its foundations as though it might collapse at any moment.

Talon was huge. He stood at over two meters tall, had boulders for shoulders and a round belly that seemed made of iron. Despite his round belly, when he breathed, one could see the visible striations of his abs.

His entire body was coated in crimson runes that took the shape of tiger stripes, and every time he roared with laughter, they would greedily suck up the Force in the surroundings.

This young man was a member of the Barbarian Race. They were a Race of beings who couldn't form their own Nodes or Nodal Pathways. In fact, they didn't have an Ethereal Glabella either, and some speculated that they didn't even have souls in the natural sense.

It was hard to guarantee such things because the Barbarian Race wasn't one to experiment. They didn't care about the details. All they knew was that the more they ate and fought, the stronger they got.

And that was indeed how it worked.

The Barbarian Race might not have any Nodes, but that was because all the Force they absorbed went directly into their flesh and blood.

The purest of the Barbarian Race were essentially walking wrecking balls.

If Leonel had been here, he would have been endlessly fascinated by this race... because in effect, they seemed to be large Neutral Force Crystals. If they tweaked their ratios properly...

Wouldn't they be immune to any and all Forces?

And this was precisely why they were a Race of Demi-Gods. Only existences of such strength were worth such a title. And this was also why the largest concentration of Destruction Sovereigns were found in this very Race.

And yet, it was this young man who was excited by the Gathering of Minds.

"I'm going to be the best Crafter in the world!"

"Shut up! You're a Barbarian, dammit!"

"A Barbarian Crafter!"

A flying pot came out from somewhere within the broken house, but it disintegrated the moment it touched the young man's skin.

"HAHAHAHAHAHA!"

\*\*

"I have to go."

"Aerin, this is too dangerous. Our Dwarven Race has had a Dream Pavilion to protect us all this while and we barely managed to survive the culling without it. We can't draw more attention to ourselves."

A young Sparrow of the Dwarven Race stood with his jaw clenched and his expression determined. Despite his small size, he was proportionately lean and powerful.

This was the young prince of the Trapping Earth Bubble, Aerin Solevin.

"Father, this is our only path forward. We survived this culling, but will we survive the next? Our Crafting skill is our best asset, and it's currently what's protecting our lands from the invaders trying to escape their own culling. If we do not improve between now and then, how will we survive?"

"We need more knowledge, more experience. We've been stuck in this Bubble for too long, trying to make progress alone because we are too weak to try and rely on anyone or anything else..."

"I do not believe that you or that Ancestors are wrong in making this choice. We are, indeed, weak. However, now that we have a chance, a small light of hope to change that, we can't give it up willingly."

"I must go."

Aerin's father fell into silence. He knew that his son was right but... the discrimination the Dwarven Race faced was too great. His son might not make it back for a reason that might be as ridiculous as looking at someone the wrong way. If such a thing happened, he wouldn't even be able to forgive himself.

"Don't worry, father. If I die, just know that I tried my best. I think that will just have to be good enough for us."

"This sort of ignoble existence isn't right for anyone to suffer through... I will fight for something better for me, for all of us."

\*\*

Orion sat in silence. The humiliation of his battle with Aina played in his head again for maybe the fourth time that day already. It had already been a while since that battle, but he thought of that woman every day.

He could tell if it was out of fear or some sick, twisted love fantasy that would never come to fruition.

When he heard about the Gathering of Minds, he didn't even react much, and that was despite the fact he was a rare genius capable of placing well in both events. He didn't even have the heart to go.

He sat in silence for a long while until he suddenly remembered something.

That Leonel Morales... wasn't he a Dream Force user...? Was he a Crafter too, then?

There wasn't a one-to-one relation between the two, but there was a good chance.

Maybe... if he beat that man he could...

'What am I thinking... the Owlman Race is hosting and he offended them thoroughly. What are the odds he'll show up even if he is one? What a waste of my thoughts...'

He reclined in a hammock, ready to continue his lazy streak when he heard footsteps.

Orion cursed. These old bastards were definitely going to make him participate. Where was the justice?

\*\*

Leonel lay in silence, a naked Aina in his arms as he looked through a glass roof toward the starry skies.

In these few days, he hadn't made any progress on the Self Path, but that was mostly because he didn't even try to. He would never allow those people to see his father's core inheritance.

Instead, he had focused most of his intention on fun, a small bit of his mind on the matters of Complexity and Simplicity.

It seemed it would be time to cut loose again soon.

Part one of Plan A had worked out.

It was time for part two.

## Chapter 2650: Goadng Trouble

"You're going to wear that?" Aina asked, blinking.

"No way. You give a woman a ring and she's suddenly treating you like your mother," Leonel mumbled.

"What was that?"

"What was what?" Leonel smiled innocently.

Aina rolled her eyes. She didn't really care very much about what Leonel wore. She, herself, wasn't really fond of dressing up either. But she could see that this man was goading trouble.

This was an event that a lot of people were taking seriously and he was trying to go in sweatpants. Where was the propriety?

"You're just trying to poke and prod people into finding trouble with you."

"Guilty," Leonel grinned.

Aina smiled and chose to drop the matter. She was just trying to see something, and judging by Leonel's response, she understood his intentions.

Was it about trying to goad people into targeting him? Maybe a little bit, but that wasn't the whole of it.

Leonel understood how to read people and social situations very well. He knew when he had to dress well and well he didn't. He wasn't clueless. The fact he had chosen to do this meant that there was a reason for it.

In that case, his intentions were quite clear.

Leonel wanted to appear as the representative of the Human Race... but only in spirit.

He appeared at the Heir Wars like an Emperor with his Empress by his side, but he didn't want to give off the impression of a mature man with a good head on his shoulders right now. He wanted to embrace the arrogant young master role to its fullest degree.

If he appeared to be too good of a leader, too understanding of the overall situation, and too prepared to take on the world, it would bring him more trouble than not.

The role he wanted to play was that of an extremely intelligence and talented young genius who had yet to understand just how large the world around him was and how deep the waters of danger plunged.

For that role, sweatpants was the absolute best.

"So I'm guessing you're also quite firm in not wanting me to participate in the Force Pill Crafter stream?"

"Of course. You just need to stand around and look pretty, let your husband handle everything."

Aina laughed. "You're getting bolder with your words."

"Is it working?"

"Maybe," Aina's golden eyes twinkled.

"In that case, I have to be fashionably late anyway."

Leonel grinned and scooped Aina back into their room despite the fact they had only just taken a step out. Aina's squeals were soon muffled by his lips.

The Owlman Bubble.

Unlike many other Races, the Owlman Race was singular in its territory. There were many speculations as to why, but the main reason widely accepted by most was that the Owlman Race was simply too low-key.

There was a reason they were also called the Sage Race. They hadn't warred or participated in any battles for many generations, and they had long since become a Race of gentle beautiful women and handsome men in the eyes of the public.

In line with this, their world was also gorgeous beyond measure.

Their cities floated in the skies and their clouds were floating mists of a pink that was gentle on the eyes. Their moons were visible even in the day, three of them shimmering a gorgeous sky blue color that fused with the skies and yet had their own distinct presences as well.

Their sun was a pale violet color that looked identical to Leonel's own hair.

Their rivers sparkled like small gems of flowing diamonds and their Force Herbs and greenery looked as though they had been carved of emeralds.

It was a world without poverty and hardship, an unmatched paradise.

These were the feelings of all those that stepped into this heavenly place. The Owlman Race didn't usually allow outsiders into their home. There was a 99.99% population of Sages in the Owlman Bubble and it could be said that other than the Sages themselves, no one else had seen this world in its full glory.

Experiencing it for the first time, the youths who touched down felt absolutely shaken. Even given the long line and wait they had to experience in order to enter the hosting city didn't seem to be much of a bother anymore. All they wanted to do was slowly take in the world around them just a little bit more. Only that way would they feel satisfied.

The Gathering of Minds worked differently from the Gathering of Kingdoms. There wasn't the Gathering Stele to facilitate things, so instead, in the last month or so the Pluto Race and Owlman Race had collaborated to create a network of teleportation hubs. Or, more accurately, they commandeered a network that already existed for the sake of the event, covering the outrageous fees and providing maintenance to areas that needed it.

Thanks to this, everyone was given three months to make their way over before the festivities could begin, and yet the line was already so large the moment the teleportation channels had opened. It was clear that this event would be much larger than anyone could have anticipated... and that was because the prizes were simply too enticing.

The Owlman Race had put up several blueprints as prizes, blueprints of Life Grade treasures personally created by their ancestors.

These were the greatest enticements to Crafters and it lit a fire under the participants...

But that was only the very beginning.

If one made it into the top 1000, they would receive a Mind Splitting Rune, one capable of doubling the capacity of one's speed of thought.

If one reached the top 100, they would receive Spirit Elevating Force Herb, one capable of doubling the potential of one's Spirit Companion.

If one made it into the top 10, they would not only receive a Creation Grade Ore, but also one Eighth Order Standard Blueprint.

If one made it into the top 3, they would receive one Ninth Order Standard Blueprint and a Ninth Order Workbench personally forged by Minerva herself.

However, it was the top 1 prize that truly shook the soul.

## - Chapter 2651: Top One

The top 1 prize of the event was truly heart stirring.

There were many Spirits in the world. Fire Spirits, Wind Spirits, Metal Spirits... each one had their own unique path of Crafting, but there was no doubt that in order to be a Crafter, one had to have one of these Companions by their sides.

There were some Crafters who had more than one, some who combined multiple paths or chose to have more than one of the same kind. But this was still the inevitable truth of them all.

Morphing and forging Ores without the help of Spirits was possible, but without being in the Creation State, it was hard to give your creations any sort of life without them.

Of the normal Spirits, there was no doubt that the Metal Spirit was probably the most highly sought after, and also the most dangerous to work with. However...

There were Spirits above this level.

The Minerva Race was known for a great number of feats during their existence, but it could be said that of their best, one would be remiss if not to mention the Minerva Spirit.

The Minerva Spirit was the only humanoid Spirit in existence. It looked like a small doll, always sitting beautifully on the shoulder of its master... But within that small body, there were a myriad of changes and it housed the mysteries of the universe.

The Minerva Spirit, being a humanoid Spirit, was a blank slate. It was capable of practicing and growing affinities for Forces much like other Races could, and as such, it was considered to be the absolute pinnacle of Spirithood.

Having a Minerva Spirit was akin to having a growth-type Spirit capable of becoming any one of the others. If you wanted to behave like a Metal Spirit, it would. If you wanted it to become a Fire Spirit, it could. If you wanted to fuse the paths down a unique and personal adventure of yours... it could do that as well.

The Minerva Spirit, even in comparison to the Spirits used by various God Races, was known as the best of them all...

Of course, that was a matter of potential and not actuality. The Minerva Race of the past was capable of raising Minerva Spirits, but the current Owlman Race wasn't the same as the Minerva Race of the past. As such, though these Spirits had the greatest potential, in practice, they were weaker than those God Spirits.



In addition to this, who couldn't tell that the Owlans only dared to do this because they were certain that one of their own would win?

Minerva Spirits were so rare these days that there were less than a few dozen in the Owlman Race that had one. Of course, part of that was also because they were making a real attempt to distance themselves from the Minerva Race as well. But now that they had the support of the Plutos...

What need was there to do that any longer?

And now, such a Spirit was the prize for the first ranked. How could the hearts of the youths not be stirred up?

...

Everywhere Leonel and Aina walked, there was a large berth given to them. The city of the Gathering of Kingdoms wasn't part of the projected images to the wider population, but the battles themselves certainly were. There was no shortage of individuals who picked out Aina immediately.

Compared to the Human Bubbles who were just worried about living it up for the last moments of their lives, or surviving the carnage forced upon them by others, these worlds were different. They were strong enough to not worry about the culling, so they had all watched the Gathering of Kingdoms for the sake of their own entertainment.

And due to that, the image of Aina was practically burned into their retinas.

They might not have seen what happened in the city, but the world wasn't filled with fools. When Aina kept entering the arena more and more injured than the last time, despite having secured easy victories earlier, they could put two and two together.

In the eyes of these people, Aina was an absolute legend.

Of course, this Bubble World wasn't the Owlman Bubble. There was quite some distance Leonel and Aina had to go before they could reach such a place. And, it was a bit inconvenient for them to do so in a straightforward way as well.

If Leonel just started hopping from teleportation pad to teleportation pad like everyone else, the result could be imagined. The Minerva Race would easily be able to trace it back to his exact location.

So, Leonel had taken a different approach.

There were really two ways to approach this. The first was going out of his way to travel through the Inbetween Worlds for as long as possible, distancing himself as best as possible.

The trouble was that he wouldn't get very far.

Anastasia's speed was based on the Force in the surroundings and Anarchic Force wasn't something she could absorb. So unless Leonel had great treasures to feed her, it was a pipe dream to do so.

Even if he mined the Force Crystals in the bubble worlds, their quality was so inferior that they would at best give him the speed of a Human Ninth Dimensional expert, and what good would that do him?

If he moved at that speed, he wouldn't get very far even if he used all three months. It would still be a small enough search radius for Minerva to pin him down.

Luckily, there was a second approach.

Leonel smiled when he laid eyes on the teleportation pad for the first time.

Just like he expected, it was well within his wheelhouse.

This world was a Cloud Race World nearby the Human Bubbles. It was known as the Fleeting Bubble. And the reason Leonel was smiling right now was because the Crafting skill of this world was very clearly inferior to his.

It seemed that he could really have some fun.

## **- Chapter 2652: Here**

### **Chapter 2652: Here**

Leonel pulled Aina's hand and the two stepped into the teleportation circle.

"Uh, I would suggest the rest of you wait three days before using this thing again. Just to be... safe."

Leonel grinned and the Cloud Race elder running the teleportation pad trembled. Even if Leonel was just joking, he took it very seriously. In fact, he planned to close the whole thing down for the next week at the very least.

WHOOSH!

In that moment, Leonel's mind trembled and his gaze sharpened. The teleportation pad lit up, but across several Bubble Worlds, this happened as well. In fact, people who had just been about to step into their own rushed away, fear coloring their expressions as they weren't certain of what was happening.

BOOM!

The teleportation pad seemed to implode after Leonel and Aina vanished, a rush of light piercing into the skies.

The Cloud Race elder put a hand to his chest, wondering why his heart was betraying his thoughts and trying to rush out of his throat.

...

Leonel and Aina repeated this exact same action three more times until they found themselves in a world with pink clouds.

SHIIING!

To the side, several winged Knights brandished spears, pointing them toward Leonel and Aina. They hadn't personally activated the teleportation platform, nor had they gotten any signal that someone was coming from the other side. Their immediate reaction was to go on the defensive.

But the moment they brandished their spears, Leonel smiled and tapped at the air.

Suddenly, the spears in their hands crumbled to ash, taking them aback.

Spear Sovereign?!

Their hearts trembled.

One had to remember that not all Spears fell beneath Leonel's Spear Sovereignty. Weren't the treasure spears of the Spear Domain able to withstand him?

Spears of a certain caliber were always able to resist the influence of a Spear Sovereign, and that went for weapons in general.

This was the Owlman World, they were the best Crafters of the Demi-Gods even when they tried to distance themselves from the Minerva Race, this was a fact that couldn't be changed.

For their spears to fall beneath Leonel's Spear Sovereignty...

Just how profound was it.

"Is this how the Owlman Race greets its guests?" Leonel asked with a smile.

"Halt." A voice came to stop the winged Knights from following up with another attack.

By this point, Leonel's appearance had garnered a lot of attention. There was only one teleportation pad that the Owlans had opened up to the outside world, so all of the traffic was centered in this region.

In this large and grand city hall-like region, there were many youths already in the process of registering their information and there was a long line of administrative members and winged knights to keep the peace.

The one who had just spoken to stop the incoming winged knights was an older gentleman with extremely pale pink hair, so pale in fact that it almost looked white beneath the bright golden lights.

"Please," the older Owlman stretched out a hand and a wing away from Leonel and Aina, escorting them toward registration.

The winged knights looked toward each other in confusion but ultimately didn't say much.

"Yes, we'll both be participating," Leonel said with a smile.

Aina raised an internal eyebrow, but her expression was placid. She realized after Leonel said it that the Owlans were extremely strict with who they allowed into the world. If Leonel said that Aina wasn't a participant, it could go one of two ways.

Either they would force Aina to go back and use her to track the whereabouts of the Human Bubble. Or, they would find another excuse to detain her and cause trouble for Leonel.

Obviously, even if Leonel was going to be unruly, he wouldn't give the Owlans such an easy chance to make things difficult for him. Aina would just forfeit every round.

As for using the Segmented Cube, now that Aina had appeared that was obviously impossible.

"And in which stream?"

"We'll both be taking part in the Crafter stream."

"Alright," the old man nodded. "Here are your registration tokens, they also double as a GPS to bring you to your assigned lodgings. Feel free to enjoy the accommodations and events prepared for in the city. The exchange will begin in two and a half months."

Leonel smiled and nodded, taking Aina's hand and leaving.

Watching him disappear, the older man's gaze darkened.

"Lyric, is that all you're going to do?"

An older woman appeared in a flicker. She too was dressed like a winged knight. While Lyric was in charge of administrative matters, this woman, Aurora, was in charge of the winged knights.

"No one dares to say this in front of the miss, but this child forced her to suffer a loss. We can't unilaterally act on our own. I truly didn't expect him to actually appear, but clearly this young man's arrogance knows no bounds..."

"Or maybe it's just confidence. He's good and he knows it. Unless he steps out of line, dealing with him in untoward ways will just ruin our reputation. Remember that it is the Pluto Race that gave us the right to host this event. Although we are the acting host, it's only by proxy of their grace.

"We can't do anything that infringes upon our own reputation because it will infringe upon theirs. Be mindful of your actions, or else the Owlans will cease to be."

Aurora fell into silence, not responding. But her gaze did flash with a cold light as she glanced toward the direction Leonel had gone.

...

Leonel and Aina began to enjoy the city sites. They enjoyed foods they had never tasted before and even found some interesting entertainment to pass the time with.

They didn't seem to notice that they were being watched in everything they did, nor did they seem to care.

Soon, the Crafting Geniuses who hadn't participated in the Gathering of Kingdoms quickly came to know of them as well.

"Oh, they're here. Want to go see them?" Leonel asked Aina.

It seemed that Yuri and Savahn had made an appearance as well.

## **Chapter 2653: You Are?**

Leonel allowed the three women to have their fun. He was a bit curious about which stream Savahn and Yuri had chosen, but not enough to interrogate them about it. He'd find out soon enough.

He kept a part of his mind focused on them in case anything went wrong, but honestly, he knew that he was just being paranoid. Even so, better paranoid now than regret

later. There were some things that simply couldn't be reversed after they were done, and he wouldn't play such games of probability with his wife's life.

The rest of Leonel's mind, though, paid closer attention to the city than he had before.

Truthfully, he wasn't planning some great scheme, he was just truly taking a look at the city planning and learning quite a lot as he did so.

The city was a delicate balance of advancement and nature, but what was odd was that it didn't feel like there was very much "nature" at all.

There weren't trees or grass, and yet just the smells alone made him feel like he was in the depth of a forest of purity.

As Leonel observed, he realized that the entire city was arranged into something that almost felt like a Natural Force Art, but wasn't quite. That single half-step it was missing was a huge chasm that was nigh impossible for most to cross.

So you can plan a city like this, huh... I wonder what would happen if I filled in that half step? Would I create a city beyond this one?

This was probably one of if not the best city of the Owlans. Just by virtue of this, it was bound to be one of the best cities in existence beneath God Cities.

It definitely opened up Leonel's eyes to certain things... he had always thought of Force Arts like runes drawn of Dream Force... but that wasn't exactly entirely true.

The Magic System of Camelot drew Force Arts with other Forces and formed them into spells. That was another branch of Force Art usage.

Then there was the Luxnix Force Art Language that could form constructs that looked like real, living, breathing beings.

It wasn't just Force Art Languages themselves that he could tweak and create at will... but couldn't he also decide the medium the Force Art was formed from as well?

As Leonel walked, wisps of Auspicious Air formed and fused around him, leaving a trail of an intoxicating scent and bronze tendrils.

It was just a subtle change to his perspective, but he felt like it had opened up a new door.

Hadn't he already known all of this? What were teleportation platforms if not ores infused with Spatial Force that were refined into Force Arts? Wasn't a city just another example of this?

No.

Three dimensional... Leonel thought, his mind a bit absent.

Those casual words were thrown to the back of Leonel's mind. It was something deeper than that. He had seen three-dimensional Force Arts before; they were quite complicated, but overall less special than they seemed.

After a certain point, a Crafter's mind was so sharp that even analyzing such Force Arts was easy.

And it also wasn't like a teleportation pad at all. There were no grooves for Force Art lines in the city, and even if he shot into the skies and looked at the city from above, he doubted that he would see the obvious arrangement of a Force Art either.

It wasn't the streets, it wasn't the formation of the buildings... and yet it was also somehow both.

Leonel grasped at something that was slipping through his fingers and then he suddenly smiled.

He thought of the Ancient Earthen concept of Feng Shui. He wondered, what decided the affinity of a world? Was it its world spirit? But what decided the affinity of a World Spirit? Was it coincidence?

That sounded silly.

Air flow. No, Force flow.

**BANG!**

Leonel felt like something exploded in his mind, a whirlwind of Force spiraling around him as he walked down the busy streets.

Several people were alerted instantly, but he didn't seem to notice at all. The buildings were so sturdy that even their glass hardly flexed beneath the Force of a mere Fourth Dimensional existence like Leonel, so he didn't even worry about being blamed for damage. His mind was entirely occupied by his thoughts.

He finally understood why this city felt so special.

It wasn't just the buildings or the streets and their patterns, but rather what their position did to the Force in the air. It was the way they forced the Force to move and flow that gave the city its hints of specialness.

In that way, it was very much like an application of Simplicity, but on an entirely different level than what Leonel was capable of... or had been capable of... Until now.

Leonel's lip curled. "Thanks for the lesson," he said in a soft voice.

The flow of Force...

Leonel changed the arrangement of his Natural Force Art and it seemed to evolve into an entirely different level. At the same time, he could feel that his Constellation Realm had inexplicably entered the Black Grade due to a breakthrough that seemed entirely unrelated.

But how could they ever be truly unrelated? If they weren't, then why were they part of the same list of requirements his father had for him?

Leonel looked up to find that several people were looking at him, but he just smiled. He continued walking until he found a shadow blocking his path.

He looked up... or, rather, a little less than down. It was weird, this man cast such a large shadow, but he was actually an inch or two shorter than he was.

This man was none other than Talon of the Barbarian Race. He was looking at Leonel as though he was a juicy piece of meat, Leonel could almost swear he saw some drool coming from the corner of his lips.

"And you are?" Leonel asked with a smile.

## **Chapter 2654: Replace**

Talon's head tilted to the side. He wasn't used to looking up at people, he was even less used to people dressing as casually as himself, and, even less than that, he was very much not used to people being able to maintain eye contact with him.

As a Demi-God, Talon obviously didn't participate in the Gathering of Kingdoms, and he had also paid little attention to it. But even if he had, it wasn't like anyone had seen Leonel fight. And even if he had seen Aina fight, and came to know that Aina was his wife, he still wouldn't have cared.

He couldn't really take anyone beneath Demi-God status seriously... but he sensed something odd from Leonel.

Talon sniffed. "... You're a Destruction Sovereign."

"Oh?" Leonel chuckled. "What's it to you?"



Talon's brows shot up. Did Leonel not know who he was? Even a Demi-God youth would do an about face if they saw him walking down the same street. It was well known that the Barbarian Race was among the last you should dare to offend.

"Interesting!" Talon really spoke this time. Rather than just mumbling out his thoughts, he boomed out with his real voice. The sound was like a roaring beast and the wind pressure alone sent Leonel's hair wildly fluttering.

Leonel showed a strand of surprise.

Talon's brows shot up. Did Leonel not know who he was? Even a Demi-God youth would do an about face if they saw him walking down the same street. It was well known that the Barbarian Race was among the last you should dare to offend.

"Interesting!" Talon really spoke this time. Rather than just mumbling out his thoughts, he boomed out with his real voice. The sound was like a roaring beast and the wind pressure alone sent Leonel's hair wildly fluttering.

Leonel showed a strand of surprise.

Talon laughed boisterously. "Finally realize how strong I am?"

Leonel blinked, confused for a moment before he suddenly understood and shook his head.

"No, I'm just surprised your breath doesn't smell like a pile of shit."

Those in the surroundings froze. What was this boy saying?

Talon was surprised again. He thought for a moment that Leonel was just trying to save some face, but when he looked into the latter's eyes, he could feel it...

It was a battle intent that made him quake.

The only reason Leonel hadn't attacked already was because of the rules of the city, but he was hoping for it, almost praying for Talon to attack first.

His will was so powerful that it practically took tangible form, echoing through the air with the same repeated words.

Do it.Do it.Do it.

Talon's finger twitched and he almost really attacked, but he restrained himself in time.

Who was this ant to goad him into attacking? Who was this ant to dictate his actions?

"You're lucky," Talon said in his booming voice. "I can't tell if you did this as a reverse psychological attack, or if you really wanted me to attack, but it doesn't really matter.

"I came here to be a great Crafter, and that's what I will be."

Leonel chuckled. "That's a shame."

Talon frowned. "What is a shame?"

Leonel took a step and walked by him. As he disappeared into the distance, his voice echoed.

"If you had chosen to use your fists, you might stand a chance. In a battle of Crafting? Even if a God descended they would lose."

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"What an arrogant little..."

Aurora's voice trailed off. It was beneath her status to curse in such a way, but this Leonel Morales really had a way of pissing her off.

He hadn't even been here for long but he had already caused so much trouble.

First, he destroyed ten Fourth Order Spears. That was just a drop in the bucket for the Owlans, but having to do the paperwork to replace them had fallen on Lyric's shoulders. How could she feel happy about her husband having to do more work just because of a brat's whims?

Second, he ate a ridiculous amount. All of the accommodations were free, and watching Leonel eat piles of gourmet meals really felt like a knife in her gut.

That alone was fine, but when he ordered this ridiculous amount of food he actually had his wife improve them as though they weren't good enough alone.

Third there was the sudden breakthrough in the streets. As far as their reports knew, he was just randomly strolling and then had an epiphany. There was nothing more impossibly annoying than seeing an arrogant bastard succeed. It made her teeth itch.

And finally all of that was capped off with his interaction with Talon.

It felt like he was leaping off their backs to improve his prestige. In all this time, she hadn't even heard of a single person refer to him as "human". It was like they had all subconsciously erased that tidbit from their memories.

She felt like she was stifling a belly full of anger and she had nowhere to vent it.

She took a breath and exhaled. She was already an old lady but she had actually let a brat piss her off to this extent. If Leonel didn't disrespect her winged knights, she wouldn't even hate him so much. But the moment he appeared, it was like the first thing he had done was slap her across the face.

She was practically watching him like a hawk, waiting for him to slip up so that she could bring the hammer down. But the man was just too good at toeing the line.

Aurora slowly calmed down. The Sage Minerva had yet to do or say anything, so why should she? This wasn't the stage to deal with Leonel. Not yet.

Leonel seemed to waste his days away until the three month period was finally up. As the date approached, the cheeriness and awe of the environment seemed to float away, replaced by a sinking heaviness instead.

Although they weren't fighting for the survival of their worlds, this was a different battlefield entirely and there was a lot riding on this matter... whether that be tangibly, in terms of the rewards, or more intangibly...

Many had their own speculations as to why the Pluto Race had chosen to do this, and it felt like yet another clue that the descendants of the Minerva Race were coopted for this duty.

Not many talked about why the Minerva Race was destroyed, but everyone knew the open secret...

What did it mean for the Pluto Race to try and raise up the descendants of the Race that tried to replace the Infinity Beast?

## **Chapter 2655: Holding Back Laughter**

Leonel walked into a grand arena that was oddly silent.

He followed along with a group of participants, Aina, Savahn and Yuri following behind him along with one guest... Lyra Emberheart.

Lyra had only appeared today and had hardly said a word outside of a light greeting.

There was another interesting guest as well, though she wasn't a part of Leonel's group. In fact, she was doing her best to stay the largest distance away possible.

This person was none other than Lumina, an Owlman with blood too impure to be considered a Demi-God. She was also the very same woman who cried out in defeat before she and Aina had exchanged even a single move.

It seemed that while there wasn't good overlap between Crafting and battle geniuses, there were still some among them that could do both.

Even so, most beneath the Demi-God level were seen as only here to fill in the numbers, and that counted those with only trace amounts of Demi-God blood.

There was a surprisingly low number of Demi-God participants, though... which was something Leonel took note of.

It seemed that every Race had only brought forward a single representative, and that included the Owlans. It looked as though they had some sort of tacit understanding with one another. But what that tacit understanding was, Leonel wasn't sure.

Aside from Talon, the member of the Barbarian Race, there was of course Celestia of the Owlans, there was a flaming bird that seemed to lack any sort of corporeal body aside from golden run etched bones that could be vaguely seen through their flaming feathers, and finally, there was a Demon.

The flaming bird was a female beast known as Verma. Despite the fact she was a literal ball of flames, the heat she exuded was quite gentle, and though she held her head up proudly, she didn't exude an air of haughtiness.

This race of beasts was known as the Celestial Ember Race.

As for the Demon...

It was a Dream Asura.

He stood tall, almost three meters. His body was covered in purple scales and his eyes had a dreamy, almost cloudy mystery to them. Even with the horns rising from his forehead, rather than demonic, he was devilishly handsome, almost blindingly so. There was no shortage of women casting long glances at him before catching themselves... only to fall into the same trance moments later.

Even without trying, the Dream Force he exuded was palpable, the light smile on his face painting its own dreamy scenery.

Leonel had learned of this man's existence over a month ago, but he hadn't done anything about it.

He was finally coming across the Dream Asuras that had seemingly haunted three generations of his family, and yet he was frighteningly calm.

He hadn't been in the mood to keep up his arrogant young master facade in recent weeks... But he would unleash it all today.

When Leonel got a good look at the arena, he realized why there was no noise. There were almost no spectators at all. But he realized that this was only logical. The Owlans were only allowing the participants to enter their world. So as to not be accused of bias, they probably also didn't invite their own citizens.

Taking a step back, the Gathering of Minds was meant to be an exchange between the geniuses of the Crafting world. Only the second aspect would be actual Crafting, while it could be said that the first round was more of a debate than not.

It was based on the disagreements that took place during the debate that the challenges would commence afterward.

The judges would note down the ideologies, and then mark whose superseded that of the others. Like this, an undisputed King would eventually be crowned.

In this sort of environment, a rowdy crowd was actually completely unnecessary.

Luckily, there were also a far smaller number of participants for the Gathering of Minds as well. Only a few ten thousand compared to the trillions that took part in the Gathering of Kingdoms.

Even the weakest could fight, but fools without any inclination toward the Crafting Art would only embarrass themselves by coming here.

Plus, the barrier for entry was much higher. Not only did they have to travel for months, but who would dare to come here and waste the time of a Demi-God Race?

Then... there was the fact that the Demi-God Races who cared enough to participate only sent one representative each.

Leonel wondered if that was a soft warning of sorts to not do exactly that...

The crowd separated into two streams, one for the Crafting aspect and another for the Force Pill Crafting aspect. However, just as they did so, they were stopped.

Minerva raised up a hand from high above, looking down on the participants below like a lofty queen.

"This year's Gathering of Minds will be different. We would like to start a new tradition.

"Our goal is different from that of the Gathering of Kingdoms. We are not here to fight, and though we may compete, it is out of friendly intentions only. There doesn't need to be just a single winner, it's very possible for us all to come out as winners on this day.

"As such, today, the two Streams will be combined into one.

"I will give you all one hour to hone your collaboration skills and add a new third round. During this round, you will mingle and get to know your fellow Crafters. After this round is finished, you must pick a partner of the opposing stream to pair up with yourself.

"This partner will be with you through the round of debates and challenges, so pick wisely. You will only go as far as your partner is capable.

"Good luck to you all."

Whether by coincidence or not, Minerva's gaze swept over Leonel. However, when she expected to see a frown, some despair, anything...

She found a man desperately trying to hold back his laughter.

Leonel rolled his lips over themselves, not making a sound. But his eyes told a tale of a thousand stories.

'You fucking idiot.'

## **Chapter 2656: Fifteen Minutes**

Objectively speaking, it wasn't a bad plan. All things considered, the fact that Minerva went so far as to do this was actually a net negative for Leonel. This meant that she was no longer choosing to be as arrogant as she was in the past and taking him more seriously.

Honestly speaking, this was bad news for Leonel. Minerva was someone he had only managed to defeat because of her lack of wariness and her overall arrogance. She failed to take Leonel seriously, so she had only brought three people and in the end, she had lowered her guard so far that he was able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

Now that she was actually taking precautions, this meant that the villain he was ready to face off against had changed her deck of cards...

It was just unfortunate she didn't have nearly enough information to play such tricks on him.

He actually didn't want to expose Aina's abilities, as that was yet another net negative for him. However, all things considered, if he were to rank the list of worst outcomes to the best, this was ranked somewhere in the middle.

Of course, the best outcome was that Minerva would still be arrogant enough to not make any contingencies whatsoever. In the worst case, though, she filled the

competition with abstruse lingo only well known and understood in circles who had been formally trained in the Complete Worlds.

Even in the worst case, Leonel wouldn't be completely helpful. He didn't need to understand terms if he could understand the intention of those speaking them through the fluctuations of their Dream Force.

However, if the one explaining the matters was Minerva who had Dream Force far above his own, then there wasn't really much he could do if she hid her intentions.

This was still a problem he might face. However, unless Minerva was an existence who had reached the extreme of both Crafting and Force Pill Crafting, Leonel felt that he would be just fine.

As far as he was concerned, she was the only one who Leonel felt could hide her Dream Force fluctuations from him.

Even though he knew that this wasn't a killing mistake on Minerva's part, and he knew that the game had only just begun, he felt alive.

Crafting with these kids wasn't going to stimulate him in the slightest. However, this game of chess with a woman a half-step from the Creation State...

Now that was stimulating.

Leonel felt a light pinch come from his side and he saw Aina send him a questioning look. Seeing her perfect reaction, Leonel couldn't help but smile brightly and give her a kiss on the forehead.

Aina blew out a breath and rolled her eyes. Compared to the murdering demoness they had all seen just months ago, she was completely different. Restrained, and though not quite docile, she exuded a gentleness that quickly became sharpness when she met the eyes of others.

"What do you want to do?" Aina asked, using her soul to communicate with Leonel.

"That would depend. But partner up with me and I'll take the brunt of it for now. You're going to have to teach me how to Force Pill Craft."

Aina was speechless. What was this man talking about?

They could share their comprehension of Forces, but that and this were two different matters. It wasn't like they had just swapped all of their intelligence for one another's.

The reason they could exchange Force comprehensions was because they were anchored in the soul to begin with. However, matters like Crafting and the like were more complex.

Leonel laughed. "If it wasn't at least this difficult, what would the point be?"

Aina smiled and shook her head.

Leonel made it sound so easy, but she would have to first create an entirely new system of Force Pill Crafting that didn't rely on Blood Sovereignty, and then somehow transfer all that muscle memory and the like to Aina.

"It's easy," Leonel just said. "We'll fuse our souls and they'll never know the difference."

Aina blushed. "You can't be serious."

The first time they had done this was back in the Void Palace. Back then, Aina remembered the feeling quite clearly. It felt far more vulnerable than being stripped naked.

Of course, this wasn't why Aina was blushing. It was more so that doing this was almost like having sex in broad daylight. Leonel was really too much.

Seeing the devious grin on his face, Aina couldn't help but pinch him a little harder until he yelped.

The exchange had already begun, but Aina, Leonel and their cohort hadn't even moved. In fact, the couple were clearly busy flirting while those who hadn't expected the new rules were running around like headless chickens. How were they supposed to vet thousands of people in just an hour? At best, they could just throw a dart at the wall and hope for the best.

Unsurprisingly, the Demi-Gods paired up the quickest.

The Dream Asura, Somnus, paired up with the Barbarian, Talon.

The Owlman and Minerva's disciple, Celestia, paired up with the flaming bird Celestial Ember, Verma.

It suddenly made sense why they had sent just a single representative each. They didn't want to make the bias anymore obvious... now did they?

Orion, a member of the Cloud Race, paired up with Lumina, the branch descendent of the Owlans.



And to Leonel's surprise, Lyra Emberheart seemed to have found a Dwarven Sparrow to pair with... a young man named Aerin.

As for Savahn and Yuri, Leonel wasn't even sure what skills they had. But what he did know was that they had chosen to pair together.

"Excellent," Minerva spoke with a gentle cadence. Her inner thoughts were completely unreadable. "In order to decide the seeding for the debates-

Minerva waved a hand and a large board appeared before everyone. At the same time, a thick and magnificent pillar rose up from the middle of the arena.

"This is our Owlman Race's Pillar of Truth. It is imbued with the wisdom of our ancestors and has the ability to see through the profundities of the word. Thanks to the grace of the mighty Pluto Race, it has been restored to its former glory. It will be an unbiased arbitrator of the round of debates.

"You have 15 minutes. Converse with your partner and converge on an answer to submit for this question."

Leonel looked up at the large board and frowned.

## **Chapter 2657: Stick in the Ass**

"The line that separates Force Pill Crafting and Crafting is a fine one. In her scholarly writing, Lythariel Seeker, noted three particular points of this interweaving tapestry. These points came to be known as the Convergences, an overlapping set of principles that both disciplines rely upon.

"These three Convergences are the Point of Life, Point of Dimension, and the Point of Creation.

"According to the analysis of you and your partner, are these Convergences comprehensive? Are there too many or too little of them? If they are perfect, what does this mean for the disciplines? Is there hope of them one day becoming one under a unified banner?"

Leonel looked up at the ridiculous question and felt like he was back in school again. Which stick-up-the-ass professor concocted this nonsense?

Lythariel Seeker? Who was that? Point of Life? Point of Dimension? Point of Creation? What even were those things? He had not a single clue.

Looking at the general confusion in the region, it seemed that he wasn't alone either.

He shook his head, having already predicted much of this. This was the worst-case scenario for the path Minerva could have taken, it was just a bit annoying to watch it play out.

But the issue with this wasn't just that the question was steeped in countless years of ironic academia speak, but rather that it did so while forcing the fusion of two disciplines.

If it was just about Crafting or just about Force Pill Crafting, it could still be acceptable. But because it was a high esoteric question that touched upon both disciplines made it cross over from the realms of just difficult to outright sinister.

If it was just related to Crafting, Leonel could likely deduce what the meaning of all of these things were. However, there were multiple reasons he couldn't do the same as easily now.

For one, he needed the context of a Force Pill Crafter to do the same. Second, the words hadn't been spoken. Instead, they were just put up on a message board and read. It had already been muddied by so many fluctuations of Dream Force that there was nothing for Leonel to take advantage of.

Third, while he had the Life Tablet, it didn't just give him random tidbits of information on any and everything. It had important documents related to history and it also had the rules of the Dream Pavilion spelled out in detail, but it didn't have academic papers on the philosophy of Crafting lying around.

Leonel looked up at this question for a full three seconds before he looked away, a time interval that might as well have been an eternity to him.

In the end, he shrugged. 'Well played.'

Going as far as to set up this message board was truly a clever move, he couldn't deny it. It seemed that Minerva was being far more cautious than she even needed to be.

Leonel sent a glance toward the other youths, but he almost immediately felt a suppression on his Dream Force. It wasn't just him, but it happened to everybody.

Minerva didn't say a word, but everyone understood. In a gathering of Dream Force experts, cheating could be abound if there were no precautions taken. On the surface, this seemed like a helpful nudge for the lower rungs-after all, if the Demi-Gods wanted to cheat, how could they stop them? But Leonel knew that this was clearly targeted at him.

Demi-God or not, who could resist his Dream Force at this point?

Leonel smiled.

If it wasn't at least this difficult, where would the fun be?

'I actually know who she is,' Aina's voice echoed in Leonel's mind.

'You do?'

'Mm... She's a Blood Sovereign. There are recordings of her in the Golden Tablet. But she was a bit weird in that she didn't use her Blood Sovereignty to concoct pills like I do. She purely used Life Force. I didn't really like her method because it focused too much on imbuing life rather than actually creating it. I thought that it defeated the purpose.'

'Did it mention the Convergences?' Leonel asked.

Aina shook her head. 'No, there was nothing about that. There weren't even methods, honestly. It was just a technique that gave a small introduction to how to refine Force Herbs.'

'Let me see it,' Leonel suddenly said.

Aina nodded and a stream of information was passed on to Leonel.

Leonel fell into his thoughts, scanning through the entire technique in just a split second. It was extremely rudimentary and was clearly designed for children to dip their toes into the concept.

'This woman can't be simple, though... if there is...'

Leonel's eyes narrowed. If this woman was mentioned in the Blood Sovereignty Tablet, she was almost certainly mentioned in the historical records of the Life Tablet.

Leonel had just assumed that she wouldn't be, but he made a mental note to always check just in case in the future.

However, when he tried to communicate with the Life Tablet, his eyes narrowed.

'I can't?'

The limitation was definitely not on the Life Tablet. It was on him. These people couldn't possibly suppress the Life Tablet.

'I see. They didn't just suppress Dream Force, they went deeper, severing our connection with the Second Dimension and the Dream World in general. But in that case, how is it that I can still use my soul to communicate with Aina? That should have been cut off as well...'

Leonel realized that he had no method of finding an immediate answer to this question.

'Wait, if they truly cut off access to the Second Dimension, we would just all die. Our bodies would become fleshly sacks. That means what they're restricting here isn't actually the Second Dimension, but rather the communication between Dimensions.

'Then, that means the reason I can talk with Aina is because she's followed the perfect human path. Her ability to communicate with the Second Dimension isn't cut off because her soul is perfectly fused with her body.

'And because we are husband and wife, she has a sliver of my soul within her... which means.'

Aina felt a pulse in her mind that made her blush. She gave Leonel a glare, but she ultimately didn't resist. This was all really too embarrassing.

Leonel chuckled. Brushing up against Aina's soul might as well have been like caressing her naked body. If you added that on top of this fact his wife was clearly an exhibitionist adjacent, then her reaction was all but expected.

Suddenly, the Life Tablet that wasn't responding to Leonel before began to do so. A smirk curled his lips, but he immediately focused on the task at hand.

According to what he understood, the tablets like the Blood Sovereign Tablets weren't created by the God Beasts of Creation like the Wise and Legacy Tablets. Instead, they were created by Wise Star Orders after the fact in homage to the Infinity Beasts.

However, the Wise Star Orders of that time were on a completely different level and still had access to the Northern Star Lineage Factor.

What was more important than that, though, was that the task of documenting events and passing on knowledge that all Wise Star Orders were tasked with was entirely focused on the cream of the crop.

This was to say that if Lythariel appeared in Aina's tablet, she almost certainly appeared in the Life Tablet.

Soon, Leonel found the information he wanted.

'Lythariel ... Van"Wellia?' Leonel didn't expect to see that second name, but he continued to skim.

Unfortunately, he didn't find any direct information about this topic. Instead, it was all focused on her feats and things of the sort. Those two women were mentioned together a lot, mostly due to blood and carnage.

However, as Leonel continued to read, he began to pick up on tidbits of information here and there that helped him build up the context he needed.

'Hm...'

'Did you find it?' Aina asked.

'Maybe like 20% of it? But we'll need to actually collaborate if I want to understand the rest of it. Lay it on me, wife. I'm at your mercy.'

Aina shook her head and laughed. Then, she latched on to Leonel's understanding and started to try and fill in gaps of her own.

In Leonel's mind, he constructed a new Dreamscape, one built around finding the answer to this question in specific so that Aina wouldn't be overwhelmed by his other thoughts and deductions.

Slowly, they started to build up their understanding until a voice suddenly rang out.

"The fifteen minutes are up," Minerva said lightly. She waved a hand and several wooden tablets descended from the skies. "These are Dream Impression Tablets for those of you unfamiliar. This will be another part of your challenge. I will give you three minutes to imprint your answers."

Leonel caught the flying tablet and chuckled. It seemed that they were really intent on making this as difficult as possible, huh?

If he was correct, over 80% here wouldn't even be able to submit an answer.

## **Chapter 2658: Games**

Dream Impression Tablets had much of their abilities inscribed in their very name. You were meant to use your Dream Force to etch the information onto it, but this was more complex than it sounded.

Most didn't have the ability to project their Dream Force out of their bodies. The vast majority of Dream Force related abilities were restricted to within one's body, and only when one was at the level of a Savant, or had a very rare Ability Index was it possible to project it.

That meant that using this tablet for most didn't come naturally.

This was just one of the issues. Using Dream Force was one matter, but controlling Dream Force to convey a particular idea was an entirely different can of worms.

Dream Force was the culmination of one's very being. Stripping it down so that it could convey one thought at a time was nigh impossible unless you had a special method to

do so. There was a reason those without Dream Force affinity found themselves lost in their memories if they should absorb the Force. It represented everything they were and had once been.

However, these weren't the main problems at all.

It had to be remembered that the region was Dream Force locked. No one could use the Force in the first place. So how were they supposed to etch anything onto a tablet like this one?

The answer to this problem alone was yet another thing that both Crafter and Force Pill Crafter had to fix together, because if Leonel was right, it was only possible with the combination of both...

Under normal circumstances, that is.

Leonel tapped a finger and Little Tolly allowed a small strand of itself to seep into the wood block. In an instant, it was done and Leonel flicked his wrist, sending the tablet crashing toward the Pillar of Truth.

However, the moment it looked like the two were going to crash, the wooden tablet zipped right into it.

Leonel's actions, obviously, caught quite a great deal of attention because Minerva never said to do such a thing. Most here didn't even understand how the Pillar of Truth worked, and even if they did they would never have done what Leonel did because it wasn't their place to.

And yet...

**BANG!**

A pillar of light rose into the air with a mighty momentum.

When it cleared, the runes on the Pillar of Truth began to light up one after another, moving so quickly that most couldn't keep up with the exact number until it suddenly came to a quivering stop.

There were a total of 108 runes on the Pillar of Truth, each one shaped into a delicate feather. The closer one looked, the more difficult on the eyes it became until those delicately sculpted feathers became a complex stream of Force Arts that could quickly overwhelm the mind.

And at that moment, 36 of them lit up at once.

Minerva's heart skipped a beat.

36 was just a third of the total number of runes. It looked wholly unimpressive, especially since there was nothing to compare it to. However, This result was enough to shake her down to her soul.

That was because according to her predictions, if anyone lit up even 9 runes, it would be a shocking matter. She never, in her wildest dreams, expected that Leonel would be able to light up 36 after the first question.

She hesitated, suddenly not quite knowing what to do. Before she could solidify her thought process, a second group followed suit, and suddenly, it became impossible for her to blame Leonel for his actions, especially as a third and fourth followed up...

No one understood what was happening because the Pillar of Truth remained at 36 before slowly fading away.

As the new tablets continued to fuse into it, nothing budged as though it had gone completely dormant.

Minerva clenched her jaw, and her disciple, Celestia, watched with a furrowed brow. This wasn't supposed to be what happened. They weren't even supposed to use the Pillar of Truth this round because the question was too profound and her teacher had never expected anyone to come up with satisfactory answers.

Then she realized it... Leonel had done it on purpose. He had likely learned about the Pillar of Truth from the... No, that was impossible. Her teacher's restrictions made it so that he shouldn't be able to reference it. In that case, did he just deduce its use? Or did he guess it?

A world of pressure seemed to fall on Celestia's shoulders and Leonel didn't even look toward her direction even once.

It was Verma who plucked the wooden tablet out of her quivering hands with her beak and tossed it at the pillar.

The pillar flashed, 36 Runes quickly lighting up, before a thunderous boom echoed and a 37th formed.

Leonel smiled and didn't say a word. He didn't seem to mind this in the slightest, because he already knew why. Obviously, these were prepared answers, and it was no wonder why they didn't originally have the intention of using the Pillar of Truth.

However, he didn't mind it... mostly because he hadn't given the full breadth of the response he could have.

Talon sent his response forward and the Pillar of Truth lit up again, once again forming the same 37 runes.

Many of the groups could only watch pale-faced. Many of them had never come up with an answer in the first place, but there was also an not too insignificant portion that had an answer, but simply couldn't write it down no matter how hard they tried.

They could only watch as the timer ticked down and finally hit zero, the despair setting in.

Of the thousands that came, in the end, not even a hundred were left, leaving just under 50 teams remaining.

Yuri and Savahn hadn't managed to cross over that final barrier, but they didn't seem to mind. They had only come to see Aina in the first place.

'Let's see what other games you have in store...'

## **Chapter 2659: Fourth**

Yuri and Savahn gave the two a worried glance as they moved away to the spectators' stands.

On the one hand, it was a good thing that they had managed to place, and even though they had lost, it was very close... But on the other hand, they had lost.

However, after a while, they exhaled. What were they so worried about? This wasn't the Gathering of Kingdoms, there was no genocide on the line...

Right?

Leonel grinned and gave them a wink, taking Aina's hand and pulling her toward a set of pillars that were slowly coming out from the ground.

One another another, the 50 or so remaining groups each took up a seat on a pillar surrounding the Pillar of Truth.

Minerva watched Leonel from start to finish, an uneasy feeling in her heart. How could she not tell that Aina and Leonel were communicating? The problem was that she couldn't tell how.

She knew their souls were bound, but there was a suppression on that so it couldn't be. In that case, it must be a treasure of some sort, that was the logical answer. But... why was he so casual about the loss? He didn't seem like the type to take such a thing in stride.

Her eyes narrowed, but ultimately, she maintained her composure.



While it wasn't an existential matter that fuelled her desire to take home a victory, she wanted this victory for the Owlans. This would mean their rise back to the status they deserved.

Minerva suddenly relaxed. She had done enough. If her disciple couldn't snatch victory for herself, then it just meant that they were unworthy.

She didn't believe a pure blooded Owlman would lose to a human, let alone two of them.

"Congratulations to those of you that have made it to the round of debates. You've all been acknowledged by the Pillar of Truth one way or another, but ultimately, the Pillar is a tool and it is the minds of the living that created it.

"Often, it isn't the best idea that wins out, but instead the idea that is presented the best. This isn't the truth I want, but is rather just the way of the world. A great con man will outsell a genius ten out of ten times.

"On the middling levels of society, this is meaningless, especially as a Crafter. What others do will never have any effect on your performance so why bother with the foolish thoughts of others?

"However, on the largest scales, when the Convergences collide and Karma begins to play a larger role, you can no longer ignore the minds of others. There is only one Dream World and we all share it."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. His heart trembled at the words and he seemed to have understood something quite profound in that moment. It was just the faintest edges of it, so small and infantile that it could barely be considered an understanding at all. And yet, it still seemed to hit him like a speeding truck.

His surprise was one thing though, his actual reaction to the words being said was another. That was because Minerva was once again using terms he wasn't quite familiar with, and with his Dream Force restrained, he couldn't just analyze her meaning. If it wasn't for the fact he had already come to analyze the language of the Owlans thanks to their earlier encounter, he wouldn't even know how to understand or read any of this stuff.

That said... he was in a much better position now.

He knew what the word Karma meant, and almost the instant she said it, he recalled his conversation with El'Rion about the issues with taking in too many Innate Nodes...

He felt that there was a better than 70% likelihood that these two matters were related.

"There are 48 groups of you right now, and you'll already be ranked from the first to the last seed. Your seeds will decide the priority in speaking. Those with higher seeds have

the right to interject and suppress the voices of those with lower seeds. However, they can only do so to a particular target just a single time, and only when they have a proper rebuttal.

"Should you silence someone but not have an appropriate rebuttal, you will lose silencing rights for an entire hour.

"During this spar of words, you will be rewarded points for every successful rebuttal. Every hour, the seeding will change based on these accumulated points, and thus the silencing rights will also shift.

"After three days have come to an end, the round of debates will come to a close. From then, we will move on to the round of challenges. However, as you might expect, the higher your seed, the better chances you will have when it comes to these rounds as well.

"No, as the two tied for first seed, you two may decide amongst yourselves who will kick off this round of debates with their opening statements."

"HAHA!" Talon laughed boisterously. "As the saying goes, ladies first, no? Any disagreement, Somnus?"

"None," Somnus replied with a light smile.

Verma gently flapped her wings and sparkling embers of gold filled the skies as though she was speaking in agreement.

Celestia took this matter in stride and effortlessly parted her lips. In that moment, she looked like an Empress who was born to rule.

"I will keep this opening statement light and brief. The Convergences, that of the Point of Dimension, the Point of Life and the Point of Creation, has long been a widely accepted theory.

"However, I personally believe that it has many faults that our predecessors have yet to take into account.

"Verma here has posited the existence of a fourth Convergence, however we are just laymen and juniors in the face of the true masters so we can only posit what this fourth Convergence might be.

"It has to be something that both Crafting and Force Pill Crafting share, but also something fundamental enough to lay the foundation of life itself.

"I will open the floor for you all to convey your own personal ideas. What could this fourth Convergence be?"

## Chapter 2660: Statistics

Leonel was a bit surprised. He hadn't thought that they'd take this approach. It was much more nuanced. He had expected them to back the theory in its entirety. But this... He cast a glance toward Minerva, then smiled.

Leonel took a seat on the pillar and Aina sat by his side. She closed her eyes and leaned her head on his thigh, seemingly forgetting about the rest of the world. If Leonel needed her, she'd be here. But for now... It didn't seem necessary.

"How about you define what the three Convergences mean to you first?" Leonel asked with a smile.

Celestia cast a glance toward Leonel. Quite frankly, with all the training she received, she felt this young man was beneath her. Dream Force expertise did not a Crafter make. And even then, her Dream Force was also in the Life State... she just wasn't a Sovereign.

"That's not an appropriate question, don't you think?"

"Isn't it?" Leonel chuckled. "You just asked what we thought the fourth Convergence was but you want to keep all your cards hidden? That's not the magnanimity a first seed should have, right?"

Celestia's eyes narrowed. This wasn't something that she could easily rebut. She had, indeed, been the first one to ask a question, but she hadn't really cared about the answers of the others. She just wanted to start to gather her first points.

"Hey-"

Celestia held up a hand and stopped him. She didn't use her silencing ability, but she also didn't want this man to fight her battles for her.

"In that case, I will begin."

Leonel's pillar trembled and a flickering character for the number "one" appeared. Celestia cast a glance at it but didn't mind it. The pillars wouldn't just take into account things that happened during the debate, but also things outside. So long as it was a spar of words, the winner would come out with a point.

"I can only provide my humble understanding.

"To me the Point of Life and the Point of Creation very clearly refer to the Second and Third Dimensions, the first being where the potential for Life resides and the second being where that potential becomes life itself, thus being Creation.

"Some might believe that the Points of Creation actually refers to the First Dimension, but I don't believe that to be the case. Humanoid and Beast Races alike are entirely unable to access the First Dimension. Even the majestic experts of the Creation State can only tap into an infinitesimally small piece of it, and yet it's capable of granting them so much power.

"Therein lies the trouble. Because without the assumption that the Point of Creation is the First Dimension, then the Point of Dimension seems to lose its meaning.

"It seems that the logical procession of matters should be the Points of Creation, Life and Dimension referring to the First, Second and Third Dimensions respectively.

"However, I believe the Point of Dimension is far more fluid, much like our own prowess can be. It represents the body of the treasure or the pill, and as such can exist in all Dimensions from the Fourth to the Ninth.

"Does that explanation satisfy you?"

Leonel smiled and nodded, not rebutting our providing a counter view. This made Celestia's eyes narrow, especially when it looked as though a dawn of understanding came across several people nearby.

She didn't understand what Leonel was trying to do. Originally, she had thought that he would have some wild haymaker to throw that would put a wrench in her plans, and she even felt somewhat on edge.

But in the end, he just rested in silence and stroked his wife's hair as though the rest of them weren't there.

The rhythm of the debate was thrown off and suddenly more people were lost in thought than those that were willing to speak. It was clear that they were still digesting Celestia's words.

Minerva frowned but she forced her expression to smooth out. This was a "battle" that would go on for three days, there was no need to get angsty. Plus, it seemed her disciple had already figured out what to do.

"And your thoughts?" Celestia asked lightly, her gaze still on Leonel.

"My thoughts?" Leonel chuckled. "I'm just a layman, what thoughts could I possibly have?"

"Is that so? Then you were asking just to learn of my definition?"

Leonel chuckled. "If that's what you want to think."

"And my thoughts are wrong? I believe everyone here can see what's happened."

"I would agree with Celestia," Lumina suddenly spoke lightly. "This is an exchange, not a one-sided affair. If Celestia can take a step back, why can you not?"

Leonel's smile didn't fade. "I just find it interesting. Why would I need your definition, did I not perform the third best?"

"Is third best considered first in your eyes?" Lumina sneered.

"I mean, that would depend. It's all a matter of relativity."

"How can something like that be relative?" Lumina snapped.

"Well, my wife and I at least got our answers ourselves."

Celestia's gaze suddenly became frighteningly cold.

"Is that an accusation? I hope you've brought forward your evidence."

Their pillars trembled and a direct challenge seemed to have been registered.

"Are you sure you want to play this game?" Leonel asked with a grin. "I can give you a chance to back down now."

"I would like to see your evidence," Celestia said calmly.

To the side, Lumina sneered as though this was her own personal victory. As for Talon and Somnus, they watched on with great interest.

"Alright, if you say so," Leonel shrugged. "Are you aware of how the Pillar of Truth works?"

"Of course I am," Celestia said with a frown.

"Then you should know how impossible it is to get 37 runes to light up."

Celestia couldn't help but scoff despite her usual calm demeanor. "That's your evidence? Did you not light up 36? Are you saying you cheated as well?"

Leonel chuckled. "You're not getting it. The runes on the pillar light up in sets of nine and subsections of three. Lighting up just one extra requires being an infinitesimally

small amount better than the one before. It's almost like filling a cup past its brim and then hoping surface tension helps stop it from spilling over. But rather than getting to the point drop by drop, you're pouring in a whole bottle of water and hoping for the same result.

"The default setting of the pillar is sets of three or nine, to light up 37 is highly improbable."

"So what-" Celestia froze as her pupils constricted.

Leonel's lip curled. "Alone, the probability of you doing it is incredibly low. The probability of not just one, but two groups doing it," Leonel looked toward Talon, "and both of them just so happened to be Demi-Gods who chose their partners immediately and without conversation..."

"If my calculations are right, the odds of that are less than one in a trillion."

Celestia quickly recovered. "Those are just statistics, not proof."

Leonel's sneer deepened. "Statistics are the weapon of true scientists and intelligent minds. Those on the cutting edge of research only deal in theories with great backing and high probabilities of being correct, they don't deal in absolutes.

"Do you disagree?"

Celestia's lip quivered. "I..."

Their pillars suddenly lit up.

Celestia froze. She had no idea that Leonel could have gotten 37 as well. In fact, according to his calculations, that was exactly what he would have gotten had he not dialed his answer back a bit.

But he didn't precisely so that he could spring this trap.