

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2701: Ridiculous Asks

20%... 30%... 50%... 65%... 80%... 95%... 99%... 100%.

BOOM!

Leonel's aura exploded forth and the world seemed to bend to his whim. Acrid smoke billowed from the corner of his eyes and the soles of his feet, as he suddenly shot into the skies, standing within them without the help of any other might.

Leonel looked down at his hands, somewhat in shock. In Complete Worlds. The only existences that could fly were Ninth Dimensional, and even then, it was dependent on their personal strength and the strength of the worlds they were in.

In terms of worlds, Anastasia's own should be the cream of the crop, likely only a small bit shy of God Realms. As for why she was shy of them, that was because the foolish Crafters of the Minerva Race had whittled away her potential with their foolish ambitions.

However, even so... flying in the Fourth Dimension? Even if it was the Peak of the Fourth... In fact, he could be considered a Quasi Fifth Dimensional expert now... but even so, wasn't it too ridiculous?

Leonel punched out and the world seemed to collapse around him. He could feel as though there was a push and pull between the World inside of him and the World his body was within. That push and pull reminded him a lot of [Domain] and [Universe], almost as though his Force was pressing its Will down into the world and imposing his might.

But this time, instead of targeting specific people or persons... it was the world itself.

'Wow...'

Leonel had only just had the idea of giving Tolliver a Destruction affinity. But did he even need to anymore? It felt like his father had thought of it long before he did.

His very will was Destruction itself now. If managed to comprehend the Self, then all of his Crafts would naturally have such characteristics as well.

BOOM!

Leonel's head suddenly snapped in a certain direction before a grin spread across his face. The pillar that shot into the skies was a bloody red, fueled by a Blood Force so dense that the world seemed awash in its aura.

He didn't need to look to know that it was his wife breaking into the Eighth Dimension.

Now, the duo had more than just a small bit of capital at their beck and call.

'Hm... I just have to comprehend Black True Destruction Sovereignty now to take the final step and enter the Fifth Dimension. But... I guess I should check the requirements for completing the Fifth and going into the Sixth now...'

Leonel sighed to himself. He knew it would be best to know exactly what he was looking for before he and Aina took the next steps. Wouldn't it be a shame if he had a chance to procure a treasure he needed, but missed out because he didn't even know to look?

He took a breath and peeked at the silver dictionary.

'Ahaha...' he chuckled dryly. '... you've got to be kidding me...'

The Fifth Dimension was all about undoing the shackles of the mind. Leonel had begun some pondering about why his father insisted on separating his mind and body, but now it felt even more obvious why.

For every cell of his body, just to progress through the Fourth Dimension, he needs an entire Essence's worth of Ninth Dimension Reinforced Urbe Ore-an absolutely ridiculous cost, and one that only got worse after his number of cells multiplied by another hundred.

Somnus' Urbe Ores hadn't even been enough and he had been forced to drain one of his Ninth Dimension Urbe Ore mines, leaving him with just two now.

But this was just on another level.

[For every Tier of the Fifth Dimension, absorb one World Spirit with God-Realm potential].

Leonel didn't even know what to say to this. First he needed a Demi-God World Spirit, but now he needed nine God World Spirits? Was his father trying to get him killed?

This wasn't even the requirement for entering the Sixth Dimension either, it was solely for the purpose of moving through the Fifth. It seemed that his feeling of becoming a World Spirit wasn't entirely unfounded. And as for the requirements to enter the Sixth...

[Elevate all Forces to the Life State]

[Comprehend Silver Constellation Realm]

[Comprehend Silver True Destruction Sovereignty]

[Comprehend Silver True Dream Sovereignty]

[Refine a World with God Realm Potential using your Natural Force Art]

'...'

Leonel rubbed his eyes, trying to make sure he was seeing correctly.

He had already become numb to the ridiculous asks of his comprehension, so he didn't even look at them, just focusing on the last line.

What in the hell did that mean?

His father wasn't even asking for World Spirits anymore, but actual entire worlds?

Leonel rubbed his temples.

'Okay, that's the second time the word "potential" was used. I assume that's on purpose or else it wouldn't be there. Does that mean there is a difference? But I thought World Spirits were all born at their peak potential?'

Leonel fell into his thoughts, trying to ignore the fact his father wanted him to swallow up a world like he was some sort of Void Beast.

If he really did that, and he was caught, it wasn't just a matter of himself anymore, the entire Human Race would definitely be finished.

The difficulty wasn't just in the task itself, but the implications behind it as well. There was no way that the world would allow a World-swallowing monster to roam free,

especially since there was no real confirmation that this was the last time he would have to do it.

'Maybe it's related to the fact that some worlds can become Demi-God or even God while their inhabitants are still Mortals or Demi-Gods? In that case, maybe there is a path for World Spirits to evolve... it's just not as obvious.

'It seems I'll need to learn that as well... There was definitely a clue in the research papers Somnus brought along with him, I just have to rearrange the info and...'

Leonel's eyes glowed with a twin pair of lanterns.

Chapter 2702: Blood Streaks

Minerva was practically catatonic. She seemed to have completely forgotten that the Void Race Pavilion Head was still here. Even now, she couldn't believe that she had fallen so far.

The reason these tears of blood were falling from her eyes wasn't due to despair, that emotion had vanished as soon as it appeared. Instead, it was rage and fury.

Anger toward the fact that this had happened.

Anger toward the fact she had been outplayed by a mere child.

Anger toward the realization of what had to happen now.

She took a breath, the voice of Drae'Von flickering into and out of attention for her. She seemed to have almost entirely tuned out the man, if not for his power, maybe she wouldn't have heard anything at all.

Slowly, her gaze became more and more focused, a sparking ember dancing within.

Soon, she took a breath and looked up.

"Esteemed Elder, please give us a chance. I understand how this matter might look, but this was never the intention of my Race. With your might, you should be able to tell whether I am lying or not, I have not stepped into the Realms of Creation with my Dream Force."

Minerva already knew the response to this. In the eyes of the Void Race Elder, she was a mere pawn. Of course she wouldn't know anything, the truth would be in the hands of her Ancestors.

But that was the thing about a conversation between Dream Force experts. Their minds worked quickly, and anything that could have fooled them before, so long as a small corner of it was unveiled, would expose the rest of it.

If Drae'Von felt that Minerva was ignorant to the matters before, he should have also concluded that she had "figured" all of this out by his own reactions.

In such a situation, he would assume that Minerva's response was in one part related to her wanting to confirm whether or not her Ancestors had truly betrayed the current Gods or not.

"You are aware that I will not allow you to leave."

"Esteemed Elder, I do not ask for this. I only ask for two things. One to inform my elders of your presence, and two that you also apply this same pressure to the Celestial Embers. Whether Elder believes my words or not, or believes that my Owlman Race has done anything untoward, I hope you would understand that I saw the Ancestor of the Celestial Ember take away the tablet with my very own eyes.

"This is the truth."

Drae'Von looked at her, the galaxies and stars across his body pulsing in silence.

"We will establish a connection with the Celestial Embers right here and now."

A communication device was ripped out from Minerva's spatial device and put on full display. Then, with a wave of his hand, it shattered, its bits and pieces absorbing tendrils of darkness until with a swirling flash, a portal was torn between worlds and suddenly the image of a flaming bird appeared on the other side.

Nova looked up, noticing the change to her surroundings immediately.

When she saw the Void Race Elder, she bowed slightly, lowering her long neck before looking up.

"Might I ask why you've contacted me, your lordship?"

Drae'Von's presence bloomed, but the Celestial Ember didn't falter, looking at him earnestly and still waiting for her answer.

"The Life Tablet, return it."

Nova blinked. "Life Tablet? I do not have it, nor was I able to procure it. I guess it was in my possession for a short time, but it vanished by methods unknown to me."

Drae'Von frowned, or so it seemed. Rather than his expression changing, nebulas began to explode across his body...

Because he could tell that Nova wasn't lying either.

How could they both not be lying? It was one thing for Minerva to not be lying, but the Celestial Ember?

Nova blinked. "Would you believe me if I said a young human boy was responsible?"

Drae'Von's temper suddenly snapped and he lashed out, grabbing toward the void. But in that moment, Minerva suddenly stood to her feet.

BOOM!

Drae'Von's fluttering image was repelled and sent back to his Dream Pavilion, having been expelled by Minerva herself.

With tears of blood quickly drying on her cheeks, she looked toward the Celestial Ember who was already chuckling.

"You've done this to our Race..." Minerva said lightly.

"Have I? I believe you have a certain little boy to blame far more than myself."

"I promise you that I will kill you both with my own two hands."

"Is that so?" Nova chortled. "I welcome it. But know that this is an opportunity for you, not a failure. You get the chance to rise up like you always have."

Minerva frowned. "What are you-"

"You've chosen to call yourself Minerva. Do you believe that anyone would believe you?"

Minerva fell into the silence. She was not the one who had chosen her name contrary to popular belief, and her parents had chosen the name during a completely different environment.

"Run along, now. I would suggest you inform your Ancestors as quickly as possible as this matter is beyond your ability to withstand."

"And what will you do?"

"Me? I will, of course, support my allies."

With that, Nova softly whistled and the void portal gently closed, leaving Minerva standing in silence.

After a long while, she plucked a feather from her wings, bringing its tip to her face.

She sliced into her skin, following the streaking lines of blood without the slightest change to her expression.

Blood flowed even faster, but her hands didn't pause, even to the point of cutting down to the bone.

Three streaks... five... seven...

Her beautiful face was completely ruined.

Without another word, she turned and left the Dream Pavilion, locking it down before she disappeared into the distance. As for her destination, it was none other than the core regions of the Owlán Race.

War was coming whether they liked it or not.

Chapter 2703: Tread Lightly

Minerva at the bottom of a large mountain of crystal. High above, meditating Ancestors sat on clouds of pink, their eyes closed and the postures filled with a disgusting sort of superiority and feigned indifference. Under normal circumstances, Minerva should have waited for their acknowledgment to speak. Even now, they hadn't even cast a single glance toward her. But at the moment, she couldn't be bothered to give a damn.

"The Void Race will likely send someone to wipe us all out soon," she said lightly.

Dozens of eyes flashed open at once, their gazes landing on Minerva in unison, an unbridled pressure that could crush a Mortal in an instant rippling out from them in all directions.

The words Minerva had just spoken were far too ridiculous, far too shocking. It sounded like a joke, but it also didn't make any sense for it to be one.

Minerva blandly explained everything that had happened. The shock of the Ancestors grew one after another, and when she finished, a frightening pressure blasted her away.

Minerva rolled away, only using her wings to stabilize herself after she had flown past what must have been at least several kilometers. But to experts on their level, this might as well have been no distance at all.

A man stood from his pink cloud, his gaze fuming. His wings even began to pulse with red runes as though he might burn the world down at any moment.

"Calm yourself, Solarius. Killing her will lose us control over the Dream Pavilion, she remains our strongest Dream Force user and right now access to it is one of our greatest trump cards currently," a female Ancestor spoke.

Minerva wasn't surprised by this response.

Ancestor Solarius was the great grandfather of Elrik. There was nothing more he wanted to see than her swollen of foot and big bellied. But now it seemed that she had thrust them into the eye of the storm.

There were probably no small number of these so-called "experts" who thought that she had done all of this on purpose.

In the past, Minerva's parents had been among this group. They were exceptionally young, all things considered. But they were still among the Ancestors of their Race, and they were likewise Dream Force experts.

Unfortunately, they had died too soon via methods that Minerva was still uncertain of... ultimately destroying what remained of her backing in this family.

What was left was entirely built up in her hands.

There was no doubt in her mind that there were some here related to the demise of her parents. In fact, they might have all been involved.

Even so, she seemed entirely unfazed by what was happening.

"What's that supposed to mean, Uriel? Is she supposed to go unpunished for this clear scheme?" His wrinkled face sneered, his fury towering.

The Owlans had had such peace for so long, and now they were suddenly thrust into this?

"You selfish little bitch. You would rather burn your entire Race down with you than suffer even the slightest loss, right? You and your parents are just the same."

Minerva looked up. "Speak ill of my parents again, and I will disband the Dream Pavilion. I would like to see how you'd defend yourselves then."

"You-!"

"Solarius!"

A booming voice came from the side, so deep and resounding that the air quaked.

The Ancestors and Minerva fell into silence, a middle-aged man with slicked back peppery grey hair commanding their attention.

His name was Elysium, and the current undisputed strongest of the Owlans.

When his gaze met Minerva's, she felt like she was plunged into the deepest depths of the ocean.

"Did you do this on purpose, Minerva?"

"... No. This was the scheme of the Celestial Embers. From the beginning, they wanted to pull us into this mess. It seems that they have the intention of becoming God Beasts once more, and they received an opportunity to pull us into the fray with the sudden appearance of the Life Tablet."

Elysium looked toward Minerva with a deep unknown in his gaze. At the moment, she felt like she was an open book, her thoughts laid out for all to see.

"And the intentions of the Pluto?" Elysium asked.

Minerva looked down. "I have no way of knowing."

Elysium nodded, expecting this.

There was no doubt that the strongest catalyst here wasn't the Life Tablet, it was the stamp of approval from the Pluto.

They were closer to the Gods than most other Races. They were standing near the peak and they had insights most others didn't... especially since they had Gods amongst their ranks as well.

"Elysium, we can't allow this. We-"

"That's enough," Elysium waved a hand. "The situation is untenable. Sacrificing Minerva will do nothing but weaken us. They won't accept such a concession because in their views, she was always set up to be a scapegoat in the first place.

"Even if they smell something fishy, they would rather kill an innocent than let the guilty off. They will crush us for no other reason than to deal a blow to the Pluto and stop any attempt at rising back up.

"This is clearly something the Fallen God Beasts know. Their history is not much unlike our own, even changing their names to the banner of Celestials.

"There is no avoiding this. The Beasts want to regain their title, and the Humanoids won't allow it. This will be a war that will soon sweep up much of Existence.

"If for no other reason, the members of the culling factions will take advantage of this to whittle down worlds in order to ease the presence of the Northern Star.

"You all need to understand this as clearly as possible. Focus on the task at hand and don't turn your blades inward. The first person to do so will be killed by me personally, that I promise.

"And much like the God Races, I would rather kill the innocent than let a guilty party escape.

"Tread lightly."

Chapter 2704: Forgotten

The story of the God Beasts seemed to be one written by just two Races alone, but the reality was that it was much deeper. It could be said that for much of history, the humanoid Races were beneath the beasts, and there were many more God Beasts than just the Infinity and Void Beasts.

After the fall of the God Beasts of Creation and Destruction, there were still other God Beasts remaining, and it could be said that it wasn't just the Minerva Race who tried to replace them.

Ultimately, though, the closest creature to success were the Borne Banes... a Race of white tigers who were steeped in so much murderous intention that they seemed to embody a new form of Destruction.

The rise of the Plutos was actually built off the backs of the eradication of the Borne Banes, and was preceded by the fall of the remaining God Beasts.

In addition, the so-called Fallen God Beasts were the work of the Plutos. Rather than outright killing what remained of the Beast Empire, they instead chose to suppress and banish them.

At the time, this was an incredibly unpopular move, especially by the other humanoid God Races who felt that much of the burden on Existence could be lightened the less of them there were.

But by this stage, the Plutos had already come to feel that a stance on neutrality was the best.

The overindulgence of the Void Beasts had led to the overcorrection of the Infinity Beasts, and in the end it had all resulted in a vicious cycle that seemed impossible to stop... until they both ultimately destroyed one another.

However, one could imagine that while this was an acceptable answer, it didn't mean that everyone believed it wholeheartedly.

There were many to this day who thought that the Fallen God Beasts were simply pawns of Plutos, a convenient side bet in case others tried to snap at their heels and retake their position.

While there might be some resentment amongst the Fallen God Beasts, they were ultimately alive because the Plutos had shown mercy. Who didn't know that it was well within the power of the Plutos to wipe them out to the last beast? The Borne Banes were the perfect examples of this...

Now, of the Borne Bane lineage, none remained. Instead, they had been slowly replaced by another, separate lineage of white tiger that focused instead on wielding space as a weapon.

This was why among the Fallen God Beasts... only the White Spectral Tigers did not share the Celestial moniker because they were the only ones that never had to change their names.

And now... it seemed that all these seeds of pasts long gone had come to bear fruit.

"Execute our war initiatives. We don't have much time."

Drae'Von was more stunned than angry, at least initially. If anything, Minerva's sudden action caused him to second guess things.

Could the Owlans really be innocent? By his deductions, there was a better than 70% likelihood that they were.

And the mention of the human boy? Who else could it be if not Leonel? Drae'Von certainly had a bone to pick with Leonel after what happened during the Challenge Sequence, and there was only one human that Drae'Von would ever bother to remember, and that wasn't because he was impressed by him.

According to what he knew about the Life Tablet, it should be possible for it to return to the one who owned it. The problem was that someone of the Celestial Ember's caliber should have been able to stop and trap it with ease.

The other thing to consider is that there had been enough witnesses to what happened back then to try to use this as a tactic to make him second guess things.

The fact that Nova only brought it up casually too was another point in favor of this line of thought. She likely didn't expect to convince him.

In a game of Dream Force experts, manipulation and "outsmarting" one another never worked. You had to play on people's emotions and circumstances, and this was clearly a play at his own.

"Rio'Shin, come."

In a blur of black and streaking silvers, a young male Void Race member appeared.

"Send this report to the Ancestors."

"Yes!"

Soon, Drae'Von got his response.

As expected, the path of caution was chosen. It was hard to tell what the Plutos might be planning, and the Fallen God Beasts couldn't be underestimated either.

At any moment, they could unshackle themselves and return to Godhood. At that point, they wouldn't just be a middling God Race, but among the top echelon along with the Pluto and Void.

The problem was... they wouldn't do that. And why would they?

There was a reason worlds were ranked as they were. Much like entering an Incomplete World had brought the ire of a Regulator, so too would doing so when entering a world beneath yourself.

The difference was that there were different restrictions.

In the Dimensional Verse, the restriction was just solely of the Ninth Dimension.

In a Complete World, it was multi-variable and difficult to access with ease. It was a function of both your Race, your Race level, and your actual Dimension.

For example, no matter how powerful a Human, a Human Bubble would never reject him or her. However, a Human that was fine in a Human Bubble, might find themselves rejected by the same level of Cloud Bubble.

Of course, if you were strong enough, many of these restrictions could be ignored... but only up to a certain point.

Even the most powerful would be restricted in some way. Even Shan'Rae's Ancestor could only stave off the Regulator for a period of time before he, too, was forced to leave.

And that was the Regulator of an Incomplete World. The standards here were even sharper.

For now, until the former Beast Empire decided to unshackle their worlds and promote to the next tier, the members of the Void Race's faction would have to send those powerful enough to do damage, but weak enough that the Regulators wouldn't lash out against them.

Even so, Drae'Von wasn't worried in the slightest.

A near spread across his lips, a set of pearly white teeth trembling with Star Force appearing in the depths of black.

"It seems the world has forgotten the terror of the Gods. It's time to remind them."

Chapter 2705: Rewarding

Leonel's feet touched down, feeling the cool water beneath the soles of his feet. The power emitting from him seemed somehow both foreign and yet so intimately familiar. He knew that this feeling had to be a product of his ability to exert control over the very world around him.

On the one hand, he had suddenly gained a large boost to his strength, but on the other, because it was built into each one of his cells, and woven into the very fiber of his will, it somehow felt that all this new power was as easy to control as a single thought was for him.

He realized now just how well [Final Destruction] synergized with his Control Ability Index, but it wasn't just Control...

It was the opposite as well.

Especially when his will was to destroy.

"Silence."

Leonel spoke these words lightly and the gentle waves of the ocean seemed to cease. He could still see them, but other than visual cues, it was as though all other interactions with the world had ceased to be.

He realized then that his speculations were correct. Somehow, his father's technique was perfectly tailored for both his Ability Index, and the opposite side of its coin as well.

He could not only more perfectly exert control over himself, but the world around him as well, and weren't these precisely the push and pull of his Ability Index and that of King Alexandre's?

Leonel clenched his fists and then slowly released them.

'Good.'

He nodded.

Right now, he stood at a bit of a crossroads.

He was certain his plan had succeeded. Thanks to the Owlans and the so-called Beast Empire, he and the humans would be forgotten for many years.

He had had no choice but to step into the spotlight because of the matters with the Dream Pavilion, only to soon be followed up by the Gathering of Kingdoms right afterward. If it had been up to him, he would have laid low for a much longer time, but unfortunately that hadn't been in the cards for them.

However, now he had managed to reset them back to square one... at least on the surface.

There was no doubt that the Celestial Embers and Minerva would have a vested interest in finding and dealing with him. But on the other hand, it wasn't as though they had the luxury to spend an endless amount of time on such a thing either.

Very soon, armies of God Races would be descending to deal with what they thought were rebellions, and Leonel had a feeling that they would be in for a much tougher fight than they expected.

To be truthful, Leonel hadn't originally expected for things to go so well. He was intelligent, but he wasn't a god in the realist sense, omnipotence wasn't one of his abilities.

According to his original plan, he wanted to make use of the illusion of the Fallen God Beasts and the Owlans working together to force them into a spotlight not much unlike they had forced him.

He had learned about the Fallen God Beast's history thanks to the Life Tablet, and Minerva had always been nothing more than a useful pawn in his eyes.

When he saw that Celestia and Verma had actually teamed up, he was practically giddy with joy. It was like they had placed it all on a silver platter just for him to enjoy.

However, what he didn't expect was for Verma to actually end up being so aggressive. It was then a wild spark lit in his Dreamscape and he realized that he had actually been too conservative all the while.

The Beast Empire already had plans to rise up again. He didn't need to make use of just an illusion, he could force them into the real thing.

This plan did several things. Not only did it get his enemies off his back, but it also gave the Human Race cover.

The greatest downside was the fact that it was likely to alienate El'Rion. But honestly...

Leonel couldn't say he really cared all that much.

He had an appreciation for El'Rion and his Race's plight. He knew that they were in a slightly precarious situation and they were on the downswing of their long reign.

He just couldn't muster the sympathy for it.

The Pluto had reigned for so long and yet nothing had changed. Maybe they had already resigned themselves to the fate of the end of everything there was, and Leonel would be lying if he said that he had no inkling of such feelings as well, but he couldn't simultaneously feel pity for it at the same time.

If the Pluto had some grand master plan to save all of Existence, maybe he would. But just sitting there and waiting for death, wanting to be hands off while it was the likes of Leonel, his friends and his family that suffered the schemes of behemoth Race after behemoth Race...

Leonel didn't have the patience for it.

The only shame was that he knew it wasn't El'Rion's fault. The large Pluto might have looked big, but he was just a kid. He had more sway than most of his generation, but it wasn't to the point of truly affecting change.

But if Leonel had to choose between hurting El'Rion's feelings and actually giving himself and his family a chance to survive, the choice was obvious to him.

Now, the only real question that lay before him was what to do from here. As he had said, he stood at a crossroads.

On the one hand, there was the exit plan he had been forming in his mind. He now had a whole host of worlds that Somnus had been manipulating in the background to dip his toes into, one of which even had a Dream Pavilion.

On the other... he could try to fish in troubled waters and keep tabs on this war.

One was far more dangerous than the other... and likewise potentially far more rewarding...

Chapter 2706: Interesting

It was a hard decision to make and even Leonel hadn't quite been able to lock down a decision. He was leaning toward the latter, but that was because before Somnus provided him such an opportunity, it was his original plan to begin with.

But that didn't mean it was a smart plan. It was just born out of necessity and a lack of options.

He needed resources, and a lot of them. The multipliers and hidden traps in the Dream Pavilion's contribution point system left his hands strapped, while his father's asks were getting wilder by the day.

Taking advantage of the smaller worlds was safer and more viable, but the reward was potentially much less as well. While taking the latter option was much the opposite.

At that moment, a sudden flicker of red landed by Leonel.

Aina's hair slowly rescinded from a crimson hue and returned to its usual black, as did her eyes, though they returned to a golden brilliance.

Leonel raised an eyebrow at this change, but didn't say much.

"Are we going?" Aina asked.

"... I think that if I had a real breakdown of exactly what to target and where, it would be worthwhile. But in this situation, it's hard. We'd basically be moving around like headless chickens, trying to find something that caught our attention. And even if we did find something that did, whether or not we could snatch it is a different matter entirely."

Leonel was imagining finding some great weapon or some hidden strategic resource, only for it to be guarded day and night by some elite of the Ninth Dimension.

"In that case, let's return," Aina said firmly.

"You're right," Leonel said with a sigh.

Aina giggled. "You look like someone ripped your heart out. Is it not enough?"

"No!" Leonel said with righteousness spilling out of his voice.

Aina laughed harder.

Leonel had thrust two unblemished powers of the Demi-God ranks into an all-out war where failure meant their demise, and all for the sin of slighting him, but that wasn't enough? How could she not find it hilarious?

That said, Leonel was petty enough to leave behind perfectly good braces just to prove a point. In fact, they were more than just a perfect good, they could easily raise a Demi-God genius of the Seventh Dimension a level in strength.

"You need a vacation." Aina said.

"I just took one," Leonel said somewhat absentmindedly, as though he was still trying to think of a way to screw over the Owlans some more.

Aina chuckled and shook her head. "Our honeymoon was already half a year ago by now."

Leonel blinked and looked up, suddenly realizing that Aina was right.

The Gathering of Kingdoms took a long while, then there was an extended period between, and then the Gathering of Minds was another ordeal. The time had slipped away without him even realizing, and yet he still felt that his last vacation was just a bit ago.

"Do you want to go to Ma'at Bubble, then?"

The Ma'at Bubble was the Bubble that Yuri and Savahn were currently staying in, it also happened to be the Bubble of Lyra and Rowan.

But honestly, Leonel had an ulterior motive when he asked this, and it was Aina's words that shifted his perspective a bit.

Leonel had spun a web that trapped the Owlans, but there were still so many other loose ends that he had yet to account for.

The matter of the Nomads, Thorne, and their God Zoltene was still lingering in his mind, a thread yet to be solved.

It made him curious. If the Beast Empire had been preparing all along, how many had they roped in? Were the Mortal Races also part of it?

Or was there another plan brewing in the darkness that he wasn't aware of?

Until now, his grandfather had still yet to appear, and Leonel could only conclude that there was a very good reason for that.

The more he learned about these murky waters, the more sense it made that Emperor Fawkes was being so cautious with his reappearance.

And that made Leonel want to learn even more about them.

He needed a more holistic view of the picture. He had gotten lucky this time that things fell in line so perfectly, but there was only so much reading history could do for him. Eventually, he would need the real deal.

"Okay," Aina said with a smile, not exposing Leonel. She knew of his intentions, but did it matter much? When you had as many minds as her husband, in many ways, you were always focusing on something other than leisure in small ways. She had learned to deal with it.

With that, they set off.

Somnus' elder sister, Flaura, read a report in silence. Her casual smile was nowhere to be seen, nor was too overly serious either. She just seemed to be entirely indifferent, as though learning of her brother's death didn't mean much to her at all.

'And so it's come to that finally, huh... I guess there really was no avoiding it, it was inevitable. Anything with so much of Ancestor's fingerprints on it was bound to end up like this... the last time she took action, the Fawkes family fell... but what is she playing at this time...?'

Flaura shook her head. She wasn't her brother, she wouldn't meddle in such things, nor would she get an unnecessarily large head. Her goal was very different.

She would nibble around the edges until she was satisfied.

Her fingers flickered and an image of Lyra and Aerin appeared.

'A pair of lovebirds separated by fate and tragedy, what a shame, what a shame...'

Her fingers flickered again and the teleportation routes of Lyra and Aerin appeared in full view of her.

'A Pure Blooded Spiritual and a Sparrow... Both Bubbles have Dream Pavilions... Interesting, interesting...'

Flaura closed her eyes and leaned back, Auspicious Air trembling around her.

She had spotted a weakness, now it was just a matter of seizing it. The Ma'at Bubble, should she succeed, would become her newest shiny toy and her strongest pawn.

Chapter 2707: Ma'at Bubble

The Ma'at Bubble wasn't as beautiful as the Owlman Bubble, but it carried an elegance of its own, especially at a time like this where the mood was festive and inviting.

From Leonel's perspective, the Gathering of Minds had ended in humiliation, but how could it be the same for Lyra Emberheart, who had become the pride of her Race in a single bound?

The victory that she secured was akin to the best in recent history for the Spirituals and even Pure Blooded Spirituals. Her name was already being written into the annals of history.

Although she and Aerin were only third place, they had placed behind two groups of Demi-Gods. This effectively meant that in terms of Mortal talent, she was at the very top. How could the Spirituals not take pride in this?

This was the sort of festive environment that Leonel and Aina stepped into.

Quite frankly, Leonel had expected that entering such a Bubble would have been much harder. But it seemed that with the festivities, everything had become far more lax.

There was also the network of teleportation platforms that had been connected. Because of the Owlman's current situation, they weren't exactly in the position to retract their previous order. So it could be said that Existence was more connected now than it had ever been before.

Leonel and Aina walked through the streets, both of them wearing masks in the fashion of a masquerade ball to fit in.

By now, their faces were too famous between the Gathering of Kingdoms events and the Gathering of Minds. So this was the best option for them now.

They spent a few hours moving through a crowded bazaar and buying cute little trinkets that Aina found cute.

Hours ago, Leonel had brought out his brothers as well. Among them, he had also coaxed Kira out to have some fun as well.

The girl had spent too long with her head buried, studying and improving with the corpse of the Shadow Tail. If Leonel had forgotten himself for a half year, she had forgotten herself for even more time than that.

As the sun began to wane, Leonel looked toward Aina.

"So how do we find them?" He realized that he had been having so much fun that he forgot to ask this question.

Aina smiled. Although she was eager to see her friends, she also wanted to spend some alone time with her husband so she hadn't brought it up either.

"They said that they're staying in the Elysian Fields. It's the region with the highest population of non-Spirituals and Half-Spirituals. They live there in relative peace."

"Relative?" Leonel asked.

"Well, it's not perfectly pleasant 100% of the time. The Ma'at Bubble is far better than other worlds in terms of inclusivity and open-mindedness, but there's still a thinly veiled class system of sorts. The governor of the region is a Half Spiritual, so it's not like the Pure Bloods haven't taken steps to make the situation more balanced. But it can never be perfect."

Leonel nodded.

Earth dealt with a lot of those situations in the past, it wasn't until everyone was brought under one banner and culture that things changed. But even then, rather than a matter of Race, it became a problem of Class, with a certain subsection of people living on the surface and everyone else having to sleep in the skies.

Ultimately, it was those people who died in droves when the Metamorphosis appeared, but Leonel, even with his changes, didn't like the approach his grandfather had taken.

It was too cruel.

In a world like this one where strength ruled above all, and not something as vastly more complex as intelligence, for example, even if you put effort into equalizing everyone, there would always be gaps that couldn't be closed.

Yuri and Savahn were likely doing well for themselves as they had placed decently during the Gathering of Kingdoms, so Leonel wasn't too worried about them. But it was probably best that they prepare for a potential... situation.

Leonel gathered up his brothers again, teasing Joel and Raj.

Joel seemed to let it roll off his shoulders, which was expected. His relationship with Savahn was far more mature and his way of viewing things was far more pragmatic. Leonel could even see that Joel was hiding something deep within his eyes.

Leonel, of course, knew what that was. Joel was bracing himself for the worst.

It had been years since the last time they were together, and it wasn't as though they were husband and wife. Back on Earth, such a separation would effectively mean a break up. The expectation of staying together was... naive at best.

As for Raj, he was a nervous wreck. His relationship with Yuri was best described as a glass canon. The first few times they interacted it was filled with vitriol and they had both said some wildly cruel things to one another. In fact, the first time they hooked up... Raj didn't even know what happened.

One second they were yelling at each other, the next they were making out, and in the next they were sharing a bed.

"... she took my innocence, I'm a victim," Raj mumbled beneath his breath shamelessly.

The boys looked at him, unable to find the words to speak.

Raj looked up, realizing he said that out loud. "Dammit, can't you super human fucks pretend you didn't hear anything?!"

Laughter echoed as the group stepped into the Elysium Fields.

Grasslands and farmlands as far as the eye could see stretched out. Unlike the city, they were thrust into the hub of agriculture now, and the air smelled even more sweet.

'Hm?'

Hundreds of kilometers away, Leonel's senses locked onto something.

It was a small troop of warriors, though it was hard to describe them like that. They were more like the heralds and drummers of an army. Only one of them seemed to be a warrior of some kind, and he clearly had the highest authority.

At the moment, he was moving toward their destination with a scroll in hand.

Leonel's eyes narrowed.

Chapter 2708: Aggressive

Leonel looked away. If he could help it, there was no need to get involved. He was here for a vacation.

'Right, right. Vacation,' Leonel nodded to himself as though he really believed it.

Then, he led the group forward until they had entered a small city.

Though it was described as such, this small city still housed upward of 100,000 people. It was just that in worlds like this one, this was, indeed, a small number. In fact, even back on Earth this would likely be considered a city that was on the smaller side.

Thanks to this, though, the streets and architecture were much more homely. There was a lot more nature sporadically spread through the streets and it wasn't rare to find a home or shop built right into an ancient tree.

Even with this being the case, it didn't really feel like a countryside village either. There just enough of a modern touch to it that one could still feel the aura of a city around them, and once one was inside, it was easy to forget that this place was "small" at all.

Aina was quickly able to lead them toward one of these homes in a tree, but they were surprised to find that it wasn't just Savahn and Yuri present, but also another small group of Spirituals and Half Spirituals. They actually seemed to be having a small get together.

Leonel and Aina hadn't informed them ahead of time, so they were mostly dropping by in surprise. And while Aina knew where they lived, they hadn't had any method of communication anyway.

While they were surprised, though, the people who took part in the gathering were not, at least not for the same reasons. Rather than being surprised more people had shown up, they were actually instead astonished by the fact there were so many humans.

Although this province was the most inclusive of them all, that didn't mean its human population was high. In fact, in this whole city, there might only be a few hundred total, if that.

Leonel's gaze looked through the gathering for a moment before he nodded to himself. Of those here, he only recognized Zephyr and Silvanus, the duo of brothers. He wasn't surprised by their appearance as they had clearly had a decent relationship with the two girls. If there was a party being held, it was only natural that they were present.

With a step, Leonel and the others leapt into the tree house.

Though it was described as such, the region was quite vast and large. There were now what must have been almost three dozen people in the area and it didn't feel crowded at all. In fact, until now, Leonel had still been unable to spot the two women, at least not with his eyes.

"Ah!"

Before Zephyr could greet the new arrivals and ask who they were, a shout came from inside.

Yuri appeared from what must have been the kitchen and screamed out beside herself. She quickly clamped a hand over her mouth, but it caused the tray of food to clatter to the ground, making her even more flustered.

She hadn't expected this sort of thing to happen at all, so she reacted before she realized what she was doing, and then she was even more embarrassed afterward.

Realizing that there was no hole to hide in, she immediately did an about-face and rushed back into the kitchen, not even looking back.

Raj looked on and blinked speechlessly for a moment. He raised a hand to chin and rubbed it, feeling at the little hints of stubble he had gotten lazy with trimming in recent days.

"What do you think? Was she shocked by how handsome I am?"

"More like she was stunned you somehow got even fatter," Milan jumped in.

Raj patted his belly. "Did I? Could have sworn I slimmed down. I was a bit disappointed, thought I was losing my peak male physique."

Leonel chuckled. "You got about five seconds."

"Huh?" Raj looked toward Leonel in shock. "What's that supposed to mean, cap?"

Leonel looked at an imaginary watch on his wrist.

"You should trust a married man like me and hurry on now. I bet you if you take more than five seconds to go, you'll be apologizing for it for the next three days. And that's if you're lucky."

Raj was still confused when Milan gave him a kick to the ass that sent him sprawling forward. He barely managed to stop himself from falling on his face, but when he realized what everyone was getting at, he suddenly felt nervous.

"Dammit, why am I afraid of her?!"

Raj stood up straight to a wave of laughter and was about to go forward with a feigned confidence when a frowning man stopped him.

Zephyr stood before Raj and blocked him with a raised hand, his brows furrowed. He didn't really understand what was going on, but he didn't know who these people were and they were speaking in a language that his device had taken quite some time to translate. Because of that, he had only managed to catch the end of their words and still didn't quite understand what was happening, but he still stepped forward.

These people were unknowns and suddenly strolled in. He had assumed they had been invited by Yuri and Savahn which was why he wanted to greet them first, but then Yuri had reacted like that.

From his perspective, it looked like Yuri was afraid of them. In that case, shouldn't he be stepping up to stop them?

Raj blinked. "What are you doing? Get out of my way."

Unsurprisingly, Raj's temper wasn't the best, and after Leonel's five second comment, he felt like he was a frog in a frying pan. He was about this close to losing it.

If not for his temper, why would he and Yuri get into so many arguments?

Zephyr frowned, not understanding why this guy was being so aggressive.

Chapter 2709: Recognize You

Raj tried to move directly past Zephyr, feeling that the time was about to hit zero.

"Hey," Zephyr reached out and put a firm hand on Raj's shoulder, his frown turning more dangerous. "I said to stop. That's my woman in there, who do you think you are?"

Raj froze, blinking once, then a second time.

The anxiousness in his gaze dimmed, and in the end all that was left was irritation.

He didn't like the feeling at all. His heart sunk to the pits of his stomach and his mind felt like it was whirring. He didn't even know what the emotion was, it was mixed in with too many things.

It was rage, but not quite rage. Sadness, but not quite sadness. Even embarrassment, though not quite that either. He had come here with his brothers, just to find out the girl he thought about more than he wanted to admit was with another man?

Was that why she had reacted like that? It wasn't his face at all, but rather that she was embarrassed to be caught in a situation like this?

No, what would she have to be embarrassed about? The two of them were so stubborn that they never really put any official labels on their relationship, and how long had it been since they saw each other?

But he had thought that things would stay the same... hadn't it stayed the same last time?

He had literally died in a war and disappeared for decades from Yuri's perspective, but after they met again she acted like nothing had happened at all and that they were still together.

He had thought that that meant that she was his ride or die. He never said it, but how could he not be a bit jealous about what Leonel and Aina had going on? A lot of times he would prefer to hang out with his wife than them, and Raj couldn't really blame him.

And now, Raj stood in confusion, a stranger's hand on his shoulder, and a great deal of hostility surrounding him.

Why could she wait decades before, but now barely more than a year was too much? Was it because before she was surrounded by humans she always looked down on, and now she was surrounded by people she thought were on her level so she could really cut loose?

She had always been arrogant like that.

"You arrogant son of a-" James started to roll up his sleeves like he was about to burn the tree house down, but Leonel suddenly pointed at his chest.

James looked down to see what was wrong, only to get a flick at his nose.

On the one hand, James felt embarrassed he had fallen for a preschooler's gag, and on the other, he couldn't help but look at Leonel as though he was a bastard.

"After this I'm going to beat your ass," James hissed.

"You're free to try it, short stack."

"As if-"

James' whisper stopped in his throat. He had been so used to being taller than Leonel, for so long he had been at least three inches taller than the latter. But Leonel was no longer than 6'3" academy senior, he stood at almost 6'10", towering over him who was still 6'6".

"... Fuck you," James muttered.

Leonel held back his laugh, waving a hand at everyone and grabbing Aina's wrist. Surprisingly, Aina had reacted before even James had, but this time, he chose to take a step back and let Raj handle it.

Everyone had been stuck in the Segmented Cube for too long. They felt stifled, and they felt too reliant on him.

It wasn't that Leonel didn't want them to rely on him. If it was up to him, he would take all the weight on himself and carry his brothers and family to the finish line.

But he knew that they didn't like it. They were all men at the end of the day, although they had all grown up together, the reason they were all such close friends was because they shared a fondness for one another's backbone.

If his brothers didn't have such fiery spirits, they wouldn't be his brothers to begin with.

Sure, he could kick Zephyr's ass for Raj... but would Raj even want that? Even if he didn't say anything like he normally wouldn't, that didn't mean it wouldn't eat him up inside.

Raj was his left tackle, the man who had protected his blindside for his whole football career. He took pride in that.

But these days, he wasn't able to protect anything.

That said, when he was pushed too far...

BANG!

Raj suddenly moved, striking a palm at Zephyr's chest and pulling on the hand the latter had placed on his shoulder.

Zephyr felt the world turn upside down around him and his vision blurred.

Milan whistled, but it sounded like he was reffing a game rather than cheering Raj on. And his next words only confirmed that.

"Flag on the play! Textbook holding call! You can't pull on his arm like that, tubby!"

The group fell into a laughter that was doused in their own inside joke. There was no way the people who weren't of Earth would recognize it, but that wasn't a martial arts move nor was it a technique of this world. That was a move only an offensive lineman would make. It seemed to teleport them all back to the field.

Zephyr was a hint disoriented. He thought he had perfect control over Raj and didn't expect to land on his ass like this.

"Get the fuck up. I'm going to beat you until your mother doesn't recognize you, then I'm going fuck her up too."

Zephyr was still disoriented, but when he heard this, his eyes flashed with rage.

The surroundings Spirituals and Half-Spirituals were about to take action when they felt several dangerous auras lock onto them. In that moment, they felt as though they had been drenched by their own sweat.

Chapter 2710: *Huff*

Raj and Zephyr were sent flying out into the courtyard and the grassy lands that surrounded the tree house, or so it seemed. It was hard to tell who was flying whom because the way they hand clenched around one another's necks made it impossible to do so.

They crashed with a boom, separating suddenly as Zephyr pulled out a blade. Raj's aura rippled and the world around them seemed to darken.

Zephyr's heart skipped a beat, but by then, four palms of Chaotic Particle Force had appeared in the air. It looked like silvery black beads of polished sand had come together to form the incarnations of a devil's hands. Almost instantly, they crashed down.

Raj saw red.

"You son of a bitch, you think you can cuckold me? I'm going to rip you a new asshole! Let's see if she still likes you after your face is a meat patty!"

Zephyr quickly brandished a blade, Water Force pooling around him spirals as he began a dance. Unfortunately, whatever dance he had prepared was completely stifled.

Two of the palms grabbed onto the snaking rivers of water and ripped them apart, sending a rain of benign water into the surroundings. At the same time, the remaining two surged forward, one slamming against the ground with a BANG! and the other slapping at Zephyr.

The world rolled and whined, wind being moved about with such speed and forcefulness and the air pressure alone left deep trenches in the ground.

Raj's two palms of Earth Force collided at the same time.

Zephyr's balance was thrown off by the shaking ground, and that left him unable to do much else other than leap backward, hoping to mitigate some of the damage.

He couldn't.

His blade shattered and inner organs trembled, blood pooling out from his lips as his back slammed against the thick hide of a tree.

His body shuddered as he slipped down, barely managing to catch a glimpse of Raj coating himself in an armor of sparkling silver-black particles as he gave him a leaping kick into the chest.

"Damn, I didn't know he could be so graceful," Franco commented.

"That was damn near a perfect split, huh?"

"Looking like an Oompa Loompa turned ballerina out there."

Raj couldn't seem to hear anything at all as he wailed on Zephyr.

"Fight back, dammit! You weak piece of shit, shouldn't you have three heads and six arms?! You think you can suck me like this?!"

Raj's fists fell like the rain, practically kneading Zephyr like dough. The latter had already stopped fighting back, but Raj didn't seem to notice, his rage building like a towering tempest. The more pathetic Zephyr was, the angrier he seemed to become.

The Spirituals and Half-Spirituals were in absolute shock.

They had no prejudice against humans... at least not in the normal sense. If not, why would they come to an event hosted by one? However, they still had their biases and they naturally believed that humans could live in harmony with them because they allowed it, because they were kind souls who believed in equality for all.

But seeing a Half-Spiritual get beaten up by a human like that... and even the fact it was Zephyr, who had placed well in the Gathering of Kingdoms... It felt surreal.

By that point, the commotion had finally alerted those deeper on the inside and Savahn along with Yuri came rushing out.

Yuri's eyes widened. "Raj! What are you doing!?"

She rushed down to stop him.

This voice only made Raj angrier. "Dammit! If you protect this piece of trash, I swear I'll never talk to you again!"

Yuri froze, not understanding what was happening. She looked toward Aina and Savahn helplessly, trying to get some help. She really didn't understand.

As for Zephyr, who thought he had been saved, he fell into another pit of despair. Hadn't Yuri come to help him? Why was she just standing there now? Where was the help?

Raj picked up Zephyr by his neck, huffing out deep breaths before tossing him toward Yuri.

A crumpled mass of bruises, broken bones and blood rolled to a stop just before her feet, leaving her without the words to speak.

"There you go. I returned your boyfriend back to you in one piece. Shouldn't you be thanking me?" Raj said through heaving breaths.

Yuri blinked. "Boyfriend?"

Raj froze, then coughed. "Ah, misunderstanding, misunderstanding..."

Yuri looked down at Zephyr, then back up toward Raj.

"You..."

"Ah, ah, ah, ah!" Raj rushed forward, stepping over Zephyr and covering her lips with a palm. "Don't do it, if you say what you want to say, then I'm gonna have to have a quippy come back, and then it's going to start an argument that goes on for the next week, so let's just pretend I didn't say anything, okay? Okay!"

Yuri suddenly bit down on Raj's palm.

"You bastard!" She yelled after she got her lips free. "What do you take me for-"

Since a palm didn't work, Raj used his lips instead.

Milan whistled and James broke out into cheers that were much too lewd for the occasion.

As for Yuri, her eyes widened, then her anger dimmed a bit, but then it flared back up. Sensing that, Raj pushed his tongue into her mouth and it was like her flame had been doused again.

Raj was just about to succeed when he felt his lungs screaming.

He came up for air, putting his hands on his knees.

"Dammit... huff... Gimme a sec... huff... This bastard was... huff... no shame... huff..."

Yuri snapped back to reality and she was about to unleash another torrent of curses beneath the jeering laughter of everyone, but this time it wasn't the heaving Raj that interrupted her.

There was a rumble and then there was an approach of guards.

Leonel frowned as he looked over.

The small squadron pushed their way through the gates, their leader frowning as well when they saw Zephyr crumpled into a pile with a pair of lovebirds standing over him.

Chapter 2711: Real Reason

Leonel didn't react immediately. Technically speaking, this wasn't his home, and he also wasn't 100% certain of the ongoing situation. Plus, he and Aina had come here wearing masks, so their intentions to stay out of the spotlight were both clear and obvious.

He didn't want to get into any trouble if he didn't have to.

Although he hadn't checked the rules of the city, this was the greater world where the power of an average person could probably level a home without too much effort. In this sort of situation, one couldn't expect the rules to be the same as Earth.

That was to say that Leonel didn't believe that they had come here because of the fighting, especially since everything had taken place on private property. It was likely that they had already planned on coming to this home from the very beginning for whatever reason, and just so happened to run into this situation.

'Warriors like them shouldn't blink an eye to such a childish thing, but why are they frowning so hard?'

For a moment, Leonel thought that it was because of Zephyr, but Yuri was a Half Spiritual as well, and when she wasn't scowling, she had the same beautiful countenance that most of Spiritual descent had. Raj seemed a bit out of place, but it wasn't to the point they should be this shocked.

'Am I overthinking things? Or is there something I missed?'

The herald of the group, one that Leonel had picked out from afar long before they even stepped into the city, unfurled his scroll as though double-checking something.

'What the hell are their methods so primitive...!' Leonel shook his head. He found himself getting annoyed, not because of the situation per se, but because of an odd, foulness hanging in the air that he didn't like one bit. He was fairly certain that this was related to

Dream Force, but this was the world of Spirituals. Getting a reading on people was much more difficult here.

The Spirituals had a grasp on the soul and Soul Force, and sometimes by extension Dream Force, that could rival Demi-Gods. They were, without a doubt, the Race closest to Demi-God status and they had produced several God figures in their history.

Even the common of them had great protections against others prying into their minds, let alone seasoned warriors like this group. Even for Leonel, it was difficult to get a read on them and he could only mostly follow his instinct.

"Yes, yes," the herald nodded to himself. "This home should be under the dual ownership of a Human and a Half-Spiritual, yes? Then you should also be among the census. Can the Human please step forward?"

Savahn blinked, wondering what this was all about.

Joel subconsciously stepped in front of her when he saw that she was about to go. He didn't really think about it, he just acted on impulse. However, Savahn smiled and patted his arm in reassurance.

"Hello, I'm the human that owns half of this property," Savahn spoke up.

The herald swept a gaze over Joel then went back to Savahn.

"Good. By decree of the current Lord of our Realm, the Emberheart Lord, all humans must gather in the capital within the fortnight. As for any further details, they will be explained once you are there."

The herald snapped the scroll close and then, with guards in tow, moved on to what Leonel assumed would be the next home.

'... Odd...' Leonel thought.

After some hesitation, he waved a hand.

Before the herald could react, the scroll in his hands shot out of his hands and soared through the air, slapping against Leonel's palm with a satisfying PA!

Leonel unfurled the scroll and took a look. It had a weird protection on it that made it difficult for him to use his Internal Sight to pry into its pages earlier, but he couldn't help himself now.

He had just gotten out of one set of trouble and didn't want to thrust himself into another right after he got the first monkey off his back. At the same time, he couldn't ignore whatever plight Savahn was in either.

He had a fondness for Savahn that went back a long way.

When they first met, she was the more aggressive party, taking on Yuri's current role. It was funny now that he thought about it because considering how calm and gentle she was now, it was all the more obvious how calculating her previous actions had been.

While Yuri's antagonism was almost entirely based on emotional outbursts, Savahn was smart and protective. She had acted like an overprotective best friend because she felt like she needed to, not because it was just in her nature to do so. And that gave her personality interesting wrinkles that fascinated Leonel.

Of course... this was only a very small part of the reason Leonel took action. The truth was that these were his wife's friends, and she treated them like sisters. Much like he had known his brothers for life, she had grown up with Yuri and Savahn, the former of which was her literal adoptive sister.

As far as he was concerned, their problems were his problems.

With the scroll in hand, Leonel saw through the restrictions with ease and a light of curiosity lit deep within his irises.

Indeed, it was just a list of humans and their living accommodations. It was basically just a summary census of just a singular group of people. But there was no other explanation as to why.

By the time Leonel finished reading and memorizing everything, the sound of a sword unsheathing echoed in his ears. But he didn't seem to react to it much at all.

He cast a gaze over and tossed the scroll back. However, this didn't make the leading guard who had barged in and frowned in the first place lower his guard.

But that was fine too... because Leonel didn't want him to.

"You're not explaining, but you all probably know the real reason, right?"

Chapter 2712: To Go or Not?

Leonel didn't receive an answer. Instead, he got a slash of a sword. However, he acted as though he hadn't even seen it.

Aina suddenly took a step forward and threw out a punch. The blade light shattered like glass in the air, raining with the echo of slashing swords.

The guard's pupils constricted. He was in the Eighth Dimension, but he was already in Tier 4. He didn't understand how what looked to be a human could possibly block that blow so casually.

Aina hadn't used anything other than her physical strength, but the blade light didn't even reach her knuckles, instead shattering beneath the air pressure alone.

She took another step, movements not slowing in the slightest. Once again, it was just her physical prowess, and yet she moved like the wind, blurring and warping light around her until she appeared before the guard in an instant.

BANG!

The sight was shocking enough to send the others reeling. Aina didn't punch, she didn't kick, she didn't even bring out a weapon. She simply went from an extraordinarily fast speed to a stop on the dime. The wind pressure from the sudden jolt alone sent the guards and herald flying, flailing through the air like headless chickens.

However, other than a slight shock, they seemed completely fine... though, that was entirely the point. Leonel and Aina had never wanted to kill them in the first place.

Aina waved out a hand and Emulation Spatial Force converged into a palm, wrapping around the entire group and holding them up.

Even being a bit clumsy with the novel Force, they simply weren't a match for her. They might have been in the Eighth Dimension, but as people tasked with going door to door to deliver messages, how could they possibly be even close to the upper echelon of this society?

Of course, Leonel knew the real reason why they were going door to door like this.

The Emberheart Lord could have easily sent out a Bubble-wide message heard by everyone. So why were they using such primitive methods...?

The answer was obvious: deterrence.

They wanted the humans they were inviting to both know that they were aware of who they were, where they lived, and could even call them out by name.

If they didn't do it, there might be some humans scared off, not daring to go to the capital as instructed. But in this situation, which one of them would dare?

At the same time, this also aided the Emberhearts too. If they just blasted out such a message, would they be able to keep the cloak of equality and fairness? Even if they had no intention of harming the humans they called for, public perception could often make or break a lineage.

Stuck in fear, the guards could only explain what they knew, and once they were done, Leonel simply let them go.

He wasn't worried about them reporting this matter, honestly. They were just grunts, who was the highest form of authority they could even speak to? And even if they did, how seriously would they take it, especially if Savahn actually showed up in the end.

'That's the reason, though? Is that just a surface reason? Or is there something deeper...?'

Leonel was actually partly inclined to just take everyone away and return to the Human Bubble, there wasn't really a need to get involved in all of this. Plus, he still had to deal with the Godlens.

Until now, of the human powers, what remained of the Three Finger Cult was under his control, the Dream Pavilion was being revitalized, and the Great Families had disappeared. This only left the Godlens as the only force he had yet to deal with.

Of course, this was partly because he was enjoying his honeymoon and partly because trouble kept coming from all angles. But the main reason was that King's Crafting skill had been beyond him for a long while so there was nothing he could do about their protective formation...

Until now.

However... where there was danger, there was also opportunity. And what Leonel also had to consider was the feelings of his brothers and his wife's sisters.

If he just swept them away and locked them up for their own "safety" again, would they appreciate it?

He was suffocating them. They were their own people too, entitled to make their own decisions even if he felt his own were best.

'So the Ma'at Bubble is going to be visited by the Kairos Bubble, another group of elite Spirituals, and they want to prove the viability of their path...? It sounds like a children's game...'

The Ma'at Bubble and Kairos Bubble were the two most powerful Spiritual Bubbles in Existence. There were others, but these two had the strongest Pure Bloods and they stood near the top.

He didn't know much about their history, but just listening to the words of the guards, it seemed that both Bubbles felt they had a great chance to rise to the Demi-God Realms if they combined, but the Kairos Bubble felt that the Ma'at were pissing away their chances because they kept intermarrying with "lesser Races".

The Ma'at disagreed, believing that the mutations possible through intermarriages could give them the spark they were looking for to take the next step. After all, they had many Half Spirituals who were just as powerful as their Spiritual counterparts.

The Kairos argued that their strongest geniuses were Pure Bloods for a reason, and if they combined their lineages, there would be great hope for a breakthrough within a generation or two.

Funny enough, Leonel actually agreed with the Kairos. But what was weird here was the fact that the Ma'at were calling forward their Humans and Half-Spirituals to prove themselves to the Kairos? That sounded ridiculous.

'Someone is playing games in the shadows, maybe?'

Leonel wasn't sure, he had no evidence whatsoever. The only reason he had even thought so was that he had seen Somnus' rolodex of worlds. It made him realize just the scale the powerful played on... even if they were among the younger generation.

And it was also because of this thought that Leonel was hesitating.

To go? Or not to go?

Chapter 2713: Two Halves

Lyra Emberheart had been the subject of great discussion these days. After placing third, she secured a great honor for the Spirituals, but while everyone else was celebrating her success, she seemed to be the only one who couldn't.

Sitting by her windowsill, her chin resting on her palm and her gaze looking out into the world, her breath came out in a steady, slow stream. The wind caught her gauze-like curtains and fluttered her pink nightgown as the sun set.

Her victory was a good thing for the Spirituals, but the ultimate result was that it had emboldened a lot of people.

Despite the clear gap that had been displayed, maybe used the excuse of Aerin as a reason. They felt that if she had paired up with a Spiritual instead, maybe instead of third place, she could have secured at least second, or maybe, she would have made it far closer than it seemed.

The funny part was that Lyra didn't believe they were actually wrong; the trouble was that they blamed the wrong things.

In terms of skill and talent in Force Pill Crafting, she didn't believe herself to be inferior to anyone beneath the Gods. She had seen the geniuses of the Demi-Gods now and she wasn't impressed.

The gap between them lay not in their talent, but rather the breadth of their knowledge. If one had all the talent in the world but no method to apply it, then what good was it?

But that was why her rewards were so good. She had received an Eighth and Ninth Order Standard Force Pill Recipe. If she took her time to study them, she could close the gap...

Just a little bit.

She sighed.

How many blueprints could Celestia study whenever she wanted? What about Verma?

There were just some gaps that couldn't be closed so easily.

Her mind flickered toward Aerin, but the image was immediately overlaid by Leonel, and she sighed an even deeper sigh.

He was so talented, but even he ended up losing everything.

She was smarter than most. How could she not see that the rules had targeted Leonel? And even then, he would have still come out on top had he not had this one, weakness.

She laughed to herself. Was it a weakness to not be perfectly proficient in every secondary profession there was?

She shook her head. Honestly, she preferred Aerin's more low-key personality. She didn't like the spotlight... it was just unfortunate that Aerin had too many worries, as did she.

The fact that he had dared to come as a Sparrow meant that he definitely had a backbone. If not for Leonel taking most of the heat, the discrimination he would have faced would have been absolutely terrible.

However, unlike Leonel, he only seemed to take calculated risks, while Leonel was wild and moved with naked abandon. He just happened to have so much talent and intelligence that things mostly worked out for him...

Until now.

'How amusing. I went from almost being married off to a human, back to being the pawn of a Spiritual marriage...'

It seemed that one way or another, her family was hell-bent on shipping her off.

"What is this?"

Aerin frowned, looking at the letter in his hand. It exuded a scent he recognized all too well, after all, he had spent all his days in the Gathering of Minds by this exact scent.

He had already read the contents of the letter several times, but he didn't believe for a second that Lyra had sent it.

It had her scent. It had her handwriting. It even somewhat sounded like a series of words she might put in order. But she would never send it, he knew it.

He had only had a few weeks of interaction with Lyra, but he felt like he knew her like the back of his hand.

She was a woman who was quiet and reserved, bordering on shy, even. But she was also very prideful.

Her fight against Aina, at a point where no one else dared to do so, made that plainly obvious. She would never send a letter like a damsel in distress, asking him to come and save her.

Someone was trying to lure him out? But why?

His brows furrowed.

Unlike Lyra's situation, he was in a great one. His Dwarves Race was also celebrating, and he was at the core of the celebrations, but his mood had suddenly plummeted.

Because he knew that he couldn't fall into such a trap.

What could he do even if he went?

The Spirituals wanted to hold a ceremony to show how strong their humans were to prove a point? What place would he have in such a thing?

Aerin crushed the letter and burned it to ash, his gaze flickering.

"Dammit!"

Wind lashed out against the walls of his chambers, his gaze becoming gloomy.

In the end, Leonel chose to go to the capital. His curiosity was sufficiently stoked and he wanted to see just what might be in store for them. In the worst-case scenario, he felt that he and Aina had a better than 80% chance of retreating unscathed.

When they stepped into the capital, he immediately felt that the atmosphere was different.

Masks were no longer an option, so he and Aina settled for using Emulation Spatial Force to change their faces, hoping that they wouldn't run into anyone capable of seeing through it, at least not until they could feel out the situation.

However, they could already feel the glances, not toward their faces, but instead toward their group in general. And it was clear and obvious that this was due to their status as humans.

There wasn't any actual hostility, but it was clear that everyone was curious about what might be going on.

Soon, they made it to their accommodations and the night passed. The next day came and they were all escorted to an arena that seemed divided in two, not physically, but culturally.

On one side, those Ma'at Bubble elders sat, and on the other, there were those of the Kairos.

Chapter 2714: Rounds Passed

The Emberheart Lord stood from his seat. By his side, there was another throne, one of a man who looked almost identical to him. However, this man wasn't an Emberheart, but instead a Moonstone, lord of the Kairo Bubble. Their similar looks were the first thing Leonel took note of, because he hadn't actually expected that they would be related. From everything he had heard, he thought that they...

"Wait. Spirituals construct their own bodies, don't they? So could it be a coincidence? Or did they both use similar methods of construction...? Or, did they do it on purpose? But why?"

Behind the Emberheart Lord there was Lyra. She sat there in silence, not saying a word. And, behind the Moonstone Lord, there was a young man who was equally as silent.

It was hard to grasp anything from these people, but he heard from the chatter of the crowd that the young man's name was Thalion Moonstone.

Leonel didn't pay much attention to the Gathering of Kingdoms, but with his memory, when he saw something it was hard to forget... unless it was as densely packed as the information in the Life Tablet, that is.

He remembered that Thalion's name was on the final top 100 rankings. Lyra was barely in the top 30, just edging in. But Thalion had been just outside the top 10. In fact, he and Rowan had been neck and neck.

This was actually a great feat.

Although the rankings seemed to be for Mortal Races alone, given the fact existences like the White Spectral Tiger and Owlman Descendants had participated, it was obvious that the Demi-Gods participated as well at least in name.

Of course, those participants had such thin bloodlines that they were considered to be Mortals as well. But that didn't stop them from dominating much of the top 100.

These Pure Blooded Spirituals, however, were truly Mortal, and as such, ranking so high underlined an exceptional level of genius and hard work.

Thalion was without a doubt amongst this group.

Of course, in terms of sheer value, it was hard to say who was better between the two of them. That was because Lyra, obviously, spent a lot of her time on Force Pill Crafting. It was only natural her combat prowess lagged behind.

"Hello, everyone," the Emberheart Lord smiled, his handsome, beard countenance warming the hearts of the audience. "I welcome you all. I will keep my statement brief.

"I know that there are many of you wondering what is going on here, worry not. I only want to show off a bit as the Lord of this small world of ours. We have lived in harmony regardless of Race for a very long time now, and I want to display our finer qualities to our visitors today.

"Those who perform well will be rewarded. Please welcome one of my Lord Guards, Alderian."

An older gentleman garbed in what looked like leather elven armor to Leonel's eyes, right down to the leaf embroidery, stepped forward with a bow strapped to his back.

However, what was the most interesting about this wasn't his armor or his bow, instead it was his aura.

He was very much human.

"Line up!" Alderian barked.

His voice echoed with such a boom that the stadium quaked.

As the Emberheart Lord sat down, he chuckled.

"Alderian, take it easy on them. I've chosen untrained humans for a reason."

"Yes, your Lordship!"

Even in response, Alderian's voice was still booming. He was every bit the military mannered man, and very quickly his approach in the eyes of everyone went from overbearing to just natural.

Leonel's eyes narrowed. The group of humans that were called forward filed together.

Leonel realized now that they were all actually quite young, but not too young. None of them were teenagers, but none of them were middle-aged or even in their thirties yet.

He had seen the list, but he had no way of deciphering this until this very moment. Well... unless he had taken his time to follow the herald and his guards around.

This obviously knocked one idea off the table. They weren't here to genocide all the humans, or else why bother to only call forward a small demographic pie within them?

But just the same, that idea never made sense to begin with. If they knew where all the humans were located, why not just send assassins?

Even if a world was prejudiced, they wouldn't just outright kill a large group of people by their Race alone. That wouldn't sit right with anyone and that would make them look weak.

Leonel leaned back, reclining a bit in seats that were quite expensive. By his side, there was Aina and his brothers. Well... aside from Joel who had gone down there.

No one seemed to notice that their numbers had a plus one. Either that, or they didn't care.

Joel, Savahn, and the other humans lined up.

Alderian's voice boomed and another line of Half-Spirituals appeared.

Leonel raised an eyebrow. Where had they come from? And why form a census of humans, but not extend the same toward the Half-Spirituals. Yuri obviously wasn't down there, she was sitting beside Aina.

The two women looked nervous, because much like Leonel, they had their own questions.

None of this made sense. If they wanted to hold an exchange of Humans and Spirituals to show the harmony of the world, why pick untrained humans?

'Are they untrained?' Leonel thought, his eyes narrowing. 'If they have such detailed censuses, then they surely know Savahn participated in the Gathering of Kingdoms, and though she didn't make it anywhere near the Penultimate Round or Finals, she still passed the Preliminaries.

'Could it be that they didn't just pick out youngish experts, but also ones that performed well in the Gathering of Kingdoms?'

Leonel's brows shot up.

"Arion. Passed the Preliminary Round of the Gathering of Kingdoms on his second bout. Come forward."

A young man with a stern face stepped forward, his face still steeped in confusion much like the rest.

Chapter 2715: Kids Being Kids

Arion looked toward the old Lord Guard, but the latter had already begun to speak again.

"Faelon. Passed the Preliminary Round of the Gathering of Kingdoms on his second bout. Forward."

The Preliminary Round had given everyone three chances to win a single battle. So long as they won one, they could make it to the next round. To say that one had passed on their second bout meant that they had lost one before making it to the next.

The fact that both seemed to have the same record painted the picture that the Ma'at Bubble was at least not forming an unfair pairing and it should be a fair battle.

"You two will be sparring. The winner will be based on a tag system and your weapons, should you need them, will be provided, as they will be blunt. A tag will be based on my count and every battle will last one minute total.

"Now, what weapons, if any, do you need?"

The Half-Spiritual spoke first. "I'll take a saber."

The old Lord Guard looked toward Arion. "I... will take a spear."

"Good."

Soon, the two had their blunt weapons and faced off against one another.

"Begin."

The two shot forward.

A minute sounded like a short time, but in reality, for Seventh Dimensional existences of their caliber, it was enough to exchange several hundred moves and even decide a winner if one was superior enough.

A clash of spear and saber resounded. The weapons had a clear heft to them, and every time they collapsed into one another, their bodies would bow and bend as the wind clapped like thunder.

In a rush, the two unleashed a barrage of assaults, forgetting almost instantly about the time they were allotted.

Arion seemed like a clear battle junky, his gaze even becoming somewhat blurred as he lost himself.

"Time!" Alderian spoke out.

Arion didn't seem to hear him and lashed out, his blunt spear tip skewering into Faelon's gut.

The Half-Spiritual felt all the air in his lungs leave his body, his torso bending into a U-shape as he was sent flying backward.

He landed heavily on a foot and a knee, glaring upward at Arion that even seemed like he might continue.

"Enough!" Alderian's voice boomed, knocking Arion out of his weird state.

Arion blinked and slowly lowered his spear, looking around in confusion as though he had forgotten where he was for a moment.

Luckily, his spear didn't have any blood on it as the blunt tip hadn't penetrated skin. But...

Arion's thoughts flooded back to him and his face paled.

He hurriedly bowed in Faelon's direction, not in subservience, but in apology.

"I'm sorry, I lost myself. Please forgive me."

Faelon snorted with unhappiness, but eventually grunted out an acceptance.

Alderian frowned beneath his leather helm, but since Faelon had let it slide and there were no lethal blows dealt, he chose to let it slide. Though, he had mostly chosen to do so because his Lordship had said to go easy on them. If these were military training grounds, he would have already sent Arion to be whipped.

They didn't need loose canons in the military, that was how you ended up with dead brothers.

"The exchange of tags was in a total of 163 to 148. Faelon wins by a narrow margin."

Arion lowered his head and retreated as Alderian called forward the next pair.

"... Really?" Leonel spoke in a low, cold voice. The only person who heard him was Aina, and she looked toward him with an odd glint in her eyes as well.

As the battles went on, from time to time there would be a few who stepped out of line like Arion did, but it wasn't very frequent. Sometimes it would occur just once every five, sometimes only once in a hundred, and the situations were always different, while the end result was just the same.

By the time 300 bouts had been fought, the Half-Spirituals had won almost 200 of them, and of those 300, there were 11 humans that had stepped out of line.

Every battle was close without fail, usually within 50 tags, and even that upper bound only occurred when the duo was strong enough to exchange at least 500 blows in the minute of time.

However, Leonel had already understood what was happening after the very first one.

He just sat back and watched in silence, not saying a single word while his expression was unreadable.

Had he paid attention to the Gathering of Kingdoms, he would have realized what was happening before the first strikes were even exchanged, and that was because he was fairly certain that the records of the Half-Spirituals, at the very least, were nothing more than a farce.

It wasn't even difficult to make it up either. It was even possible that these Half-Spirituals never participated in the Gathering of Kingdoms to begin with just to ensure there were no slip ups.

They were very good, honestly. They were even wrapped in hidden runes and Force Arts that could limit their power so that it wouldn't be obvious. But there was no doubt in Leonel's mind that every Half-Spiritual that stepped forward was actually far more powerful than their opponent.

Who could possibly memorize trillions of faces, let alone which rounds they performed in? Everyone here had to take the word of the Spirituals for it. Even Lyra just assumed that she was being told the truth.

And what was the purpose? To make humans look like barbarians who couldn't even follow simple rules.

"Savahn. Accumulated a total of 47 victories, failed to reach the Penultimate Round. Forward please."

A hint of irritation was in the old Lord Guards words by this point, and his cadence was far more biting.

"Caladon. Accumulated 44 total victories, failed to reach Penultimate Round. Forward please.

"You both have one minute. The next time someone steps outside of that, don't blame me for being impolite, you Lordship."

The Emberheart Lord chuckled and waved a hand.

"They're just kids being kids."

"Begin!" Alderian shouted.

- Chapter 2716: Barbarianism

Chapter 2716: Barbarianism

Savahn steadied herself, lowering her waist into a stance that looked like a martial art Leonel had seen in many movies before. Her palms faced her opponent and her gaze looked tranquil.

Leonel realized at that moment that he had never bothered to learn much about Savahn's fighting style, he didn't even know what her Ability Index was. Though, honestly speaking, he didn't really know Yuri's either. Everything he did know was thrust upon him at some random time or another, while Savahn had been lost to them for a very long time after the Metamorphosis.

He always wondered how this girl had survived.

Much like Leonel, after she saw Aina kill someone with an arm through the chest, Savahn had alienated herself from Aina and Yuri.

Unlike Leonel, rather than coming back in just a few days to what was basically the same baseline, it took Savahn years to truly get over it. In fact, if not for experiencing the hardships she had, it was unlikely that she would have ever gotten over it.

It took realigning her views on the world and understanding that living in this sort of environment meant that murder was no longer an objective wrong...

The battle began and Savahn's arms moved. A delicate wisp of air seemed to move with her, following the tips of her fingers and leaving trails of a foggy energy everywhere she moved.

Her arms left afterimages in the air despite their slow pace, and when she suddenly accelerated, she seemed to magically bypass the spear of the Half-Spiritual and strike against his chest.

The Half-Spiritual stumbled back a step, a bit surprised, but his spear wasn't slow, dancing in an attempt to counter, but its blunt tip passed right through Savahn's arm and leg as though they were just illusions and a second palm landed right in the same place.

Savahn and the young man should have been on equal footing, but it quickly became obvious that for whatever reason, the young man was no match for her.

Leonel, who was high above, realized the problem instantaneously.

'What an interesting Ability Index... it should be unique... She should be similar to Emna...'

The martial arts style that Savahn was using was very much like kung fu, it was fluid and it also didn't look as though it held much strength or not. In practice, at least on Earth, only a layman would claim that kung fu was a deadly art to begin with.

"Did Savahn practice martial arts?" Leonel asked Aina.

Although he asked, he already knew that answer was no. If Savahn had practiced martial arts in her youth, kung fu would have been the last she chose as the foundation of her combat.

"No," Aina shook her head.

Leonel nodded. That was what he expected.

It was more likely that Savahn hadn't had any experience at all and just used whatever methods she had happened to see before, hoping that it would work.

But what was clear was that over the years, whatever method she was using here wasn't kung fu at all, instead it might as well be her own self-created method because while it had the form, in function... it was nothing like kung fu at all.

The longer Savahn fought, the larger the swirls of energy around her became and the more powerful her strikes were. In the end, it became akin to an endless barrage.

In this sort of situation, though... hand to hand combatants were at a disadvantage. That was because they were used to their hands being lethal, so it wasn't as though they could blunt their attacks without also pulling back on their usual strength to begin with.

Even in this situation, though, there came a point in the battle where the young man's feet couldn't even touch the ground, being hit so many times in succession that his tongue hung out from his mouth and he was continuously sent soaring into the air.

'She's lost herself...' Leonel thought without a word.

As expected, the sickening sound of bone breaking echoed and the Half-Spiritual let out a blood curdling screech.

"Time!" Alderian called out.

Unfortunately, the fluid motion of Savahn's strikes carried on, three attacks erupting before she blinked, realizing what she had done.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Savahn tapped a foot and moved back almost out of instinct. She didn't even have to see it coming, but she felt Alderian's aura erupting even before she saw it.

"I said enough!"

Alderian's temper boiled over and his booming voice shook the stadium. A raging torrent of Force shot toward Savahn, causing her expression to change. She put her hands up to defend, but she was only in the Seventh Dimension while Alderian was in the Ninth. Although the latter obviously hadn't used his full strength, and wasn't trying to kill her either, there was no way she could-

A tall figure appeared before her, brandishing a halberd that glittered with a dark crimson hue beneath the waning sunlight.

BOOM!

Joel's aura shot up like a pillar in the skies before it concentrated into a blade aura so profound and deep that space seemed to split in two at the same time.

SHIIIIIIING!

The aura was split and catapulted toward Alderian, splitting the arena in two. However, before it could attack the old Lord Guard, it dissipated into wisps of energy.

"Are you alright?" Joel turned toward Savahn who was smiling bitterly. She looked into his eyes and somehow felt both happy and helpless at the same time.

Leonel stood up, ready to leave the arena. He knew what was happening, but he had no intentions of doing anything to stop it.

This plan of theirs probably had multiple stages and this was likely just one in a long list of many that had already occurred and were likely to occur in the future.

Right now, he had no intention of getting involved.

The Moonstone Lord stood to his feet, and shook his head just as Leonel did so.

"I think that's enough, Brother Omeron. I've seen it already. If you think this is the path forward, I'll just say that my Bubble won't be able to condone it."

The Emberheart Lord frowned. "This... you can't be truly angry at what's just a little scuffle, right? There's no need to discuss this matter here, let's go back and-"

The Moonstone Lord waved a hand. "Nono, that's perfectly alright. I had already seen their true faces by the barbarianism of their number one ranked. I don't want to be involved in this matter any longer."

Leonel's steps paused.

He didn't look back immediately, probably trying to control his impulses.

He shouldn't be here. He shouldn't get involved. It probably wasn't smart to do so and it wasn't his place to do so.

He still didn't know what the purpose of all of this was. There was a chance that it could be a larger plan set in motion to target humans in general, but he had little evidence of that.

"I should really ignore it."

In the silent atmosphere, even though Leonel whispered, many in his section heard him.

"I really should..." he whispered again.

The Emberheart Lord frowned. "Number one ranked?" Suddenly, his eyes lit up in realization. "Brother, your words are too-

"I won't discuss this matter any further."

Leonel's head slowly turned back, a murderous glint reflecting within them.

Chapter 2717: Every. Fucking. Time.

What was the smart thing to do?

That was obvious.

Turn around. Pretend he hadn't heard anything.

Assume that the Lords up there meant something other than calling his wife a barbarian.

All were good options.

But he had been doing the smart thing for too long already.

It was smart to send his wife to ask another man on a date. It was smart to make her fight alone at the Gathering of Kingdoms. It was smart to feign ignorance and incompetence at the Gathering of Minds.

All of these things were smart, they had progressed his journey further, they had minimized casualties and the only people to suffer were either those he didn't give a damn about or his enemies.

All smart. All very, very smart.

Leonel felt a hand grab onto his. He looked down to find Aina looking at him, smiling reassuringly. She wasn't bothered by the comment at all, she didn't really care.

What she had cared about was when people said she wasn't worthy of being Leonel's wife, but they certainly weren't saying that now. As for everything else, it was just fluff and unimportant.

As for the Gathering of Minds matter, she didn't really care about that either. The only reason she had wanted to participate was purely to get back at Minerva for what she was doing to her husband. As for the spotlight itself, she didn't care for it and never would.

Her only goal in life used to be to destroy the Brazinger family. Now she had two. One remained the same, and the second was to live a happy life with Leonel.

The Moonstone Lord stepped into the air and seemed to drift off before the eyes of everyone, not looking back.

The Emberheart Lord sighed. "My apologies, everyone. I started this matter with good intentions, but it seems that I've miscalculated something. The harmony between the Races is something I've always seen as worthy of protecting, and I will continue to do so."

It was at that moment that Thalion stood from his seat, seemingly prepared to go after his father. But after a moment, he hesitated and then spoke.

"I understand your intention, Lord Emberheart, but there are some things that cannot be changed. I was there that day. I watched this Aina Morales slaughter thousands in droves, endlessly for months on end. Many people saw her entering the arena more and more tired every time, but no one knows that it was due to the atrocities that she, herself, committed.

"It is unlikely to be the fault of the Humans, but there are certain... ties of the past that cannot be overlooked."

With a pointed glance, Thalion seemed to be about to leave as well.

There was a dense silence hanging in the air, one that looked as though it might remain for a long while as the Emberheart Lord seemed to have lost his words for a moment, unable to rebut the statement.

It was obvious to everyone what Thalion was referring to even without him spelling it out. The scars that the Void Beasts, the God Beasts of Destruction had left, were deep and firmly entrenched. It was simply impossible to escape them.

Thalion stepped into the air as well, rising up and seemingly about to catch up with his father. Even after several seconds, the Moonstone Lord was still in the sights of everyone present. He didn't seem to be in a rush, leisurely leaving through the air as though he was personifying a sigh.

And that was when it happened.

Something within Leonel snapped and he grabbed at the air. A roaring tempest of Scarlet Star Force and Emulation Spatial Force pulsed to life, exuding the majesty of the Life State with more fervor than he had ever been able to replicate until now.

A bow formed in his head and his body shimmering with light, the entire section of seats almost collapsing beneath his sudden show of might.

The Lords' expressions changed, but it was already too late.

The arrow was so fast, and it arched through the air with such beauty, that its lethality didn't truly set in until it landed.

BANG!

Thalion's head exploded into a rain of blood and gore.

Leonel's hair danced beneath the billowing might of his Force, his fury practically taking on tangible form. His Dream Force was so powerful that those in his immediate surroundings felt their eyes going red as well, almost as though Leonel's fury was their own.

"Every. Fucking. Time."

Leonel's voice echoed through the arena, a smoldering maleficence within them. The smoke coming from his feet and corner of his eyes sparked and danced with hidden flames, the layers of space around him sparking as well as though they might collapse at any moment.

Lyra's eyes opened wide. She didn't recognize this man, even his voice had changed, but for some reason, she was almost 100% certain of it. She felt that she was looking right at the man that could only be Leonel Morales.

Leonel took a step and landed on the arena. It was a distance of kilometers, and yet he made it look as though it was entirely a breeze.

The shock of everyone in the surroundings was so palpable that not even the Lords knew how to react, let alone the people in the vicinity. They just watched as he razed a clawed hand and suddenly swiped it down, tearing into the hard stone.

Leonel's back and arm flexed as he pulled up violently.

"Stop him!" The Emberheart Lord seemed to finally come back to reality, but it was already too late.

The arena grounds were sheared apart, revealing a pulsing Force Art beneath that reeked of blood.

Chapter 2718: KNEEL.

For a Force Art to be well hidden was one matter. But for it to be capable of targeting one specific subset of people and not another was a whole other matter altogether.

In Leonel's estimation, the best chance to do this was with the weapons they handed out. But then what would they do with those like Savahn who didn't need them? If the Force Art was hidden in the arena, though, it was a problem. In a battle, who could guarantee who would stand where? And even when you started off in one location, you could easily end up in another.

That meant that the size or location of the Force Art couldn't be the answer either. The best way seemed to be to use a targeted method, one where an expert of Dream Force would intentionally push and prod at the human combatants to make them step over the line.

However, this was very difficult. Toying with someone's Dream Force was a tall task, and it required knowing and understanding said person intimately. You also couldn't just make a person who was naturally reserved and controlled like Savahn, suddenly snap for no reason as well. For something like that, you would need a far more permanent method like Leonel's King's Might, for example.

But that was obviously not what was happening here either. And that left this. Below, there were streams of blood, moving through channels that overall formed the face of a Force Art. It was a shocking sight, and one that filled the air with a foul stench.

And it was almost entirely human blood, that Leonel was certain of. He had never heard of such a method, but theoretically it was possible, especially with a Force Art Language created specifically for this purpose.

It was a Force Art tagged with human blood, resulting in its effects only being useful against humans. And just like that, without the dampening effect of the arena's stone present, all the human combatants, and the ones in the stands for that matter, all began to shake. Their eyes turned red and murderous intent shot out from them in all directions. Many even lost control of their Forces, lashing out at the air and those around them.

Leonel slammed the slab of stone down with such force that even though it fit right back into its original location, cracks spread out wildly in all directions. He was entirely unaffected by the stream of blood Force Art, no one here was worthy of attacking his mind, let alone influencing it. However, he didn't need it to be absolutely furious.

The aura of that blood was clear to all that sensed it. It was human blood. This wasn't Earth where the thoughts of people were slow. If any of the most ordinary people here were taken and plopped on Earth, even if they had their strength sealed, they would be akin to the greatest minds to ever exist.

Leonel didn't need to say anything. The truth was clear enough. It really was endless. The bullshit was just continuous.

But he had also come to realize something. He had already promised Aina that he wouldn't stall their happiness for the sake of what was happening in the wider world. And in that case, why should he be forced to swallow grievances either?

At that moment, Alderian had already moved. From the first instant that his Lord had given the command, he had done so. He was shaken by what he saw and sensed beneath that slab, but he was a military man to the core of his being. He was given an order, so he executed it. There was nothing else to think about.

His speed was exceptional, and the wind pressure of Leonel slamming the slab back down had done nothing to sway him at all. In fact, the very reason he could stand there, unaffected in the first place was two fold. First, he was too powerful. But second... why was it that the humans not fighting weren't affected?

The efficacy of the Force Art was clearly tweaked so that it would only be effective when in a state of fight or flight.

In that moments the old Lord Guard hand already appeared before Leonel, his spear streaking outward after appearing in his hand.

However, he had only just begun to thrust it when it shattered and then fell into a current of vicious wind as nothing more than particles of ash.

Leonel looked at him as the old man paused in shock.

Even so, he was a man who had experienced many battles. He threw away what remained of his spear and continued forward with a palm.

"KNEEL!"

Leonel roared.

At that moment, Dream Force erupted around him, the visage of a demon ghost appearing to peel itself out from within his face and roar at the old Lord Guard.

The demon pulsed with a crimson hue, forming horns and hovering before Leonel's face almost like a mask.

King Alexandre's Ability Index and a technique he had taken from Somnus fused into one almost with his burgeoning World Spirit aura.

In the instant the word came out from his mouth, space cracked like glass, the old Lord Guard falling to his knees so heavily he may very well have shattered his kneecaps.

The demon mask slowly faded from Leonel's face and he looked up.

With a wave of his hand, what remained of Thalion's body shot into his palm.

Leonel punched and Thalion's heart was ripped out... or so it seemed. Instead, the soul of a Spiritual Prince who had just lost his body lay there, sputtering and quaking.

"I'm only going to ask you this one time," Leonel said coldly, a chilly wind pervading the arena, so much so that the temperature plummeted. "Who told you to slander the Human Race?"

Leonel didn't have to explain what he meant by one time.

Speak any falsities, and his life would end right here and now, all his potential snuffed out at the hands of a man he didn't even know.

Chapter 2719: No... No...

Leonel stood with waves of Force billowing off of him, Thalion's life and death hanging in the balance at his whim.

After seeing Thalion's head explode like that, even his own father was in a stunned state and had assumed him dead, let alone everyone else. No one would have expected that Leonel was somehow able to control his Force to the extent that he would actually live for this moment, but even more importantly than that, he had no idea how Leonel had managed to deal with the old Lord Guard.

The Lord Guard was obviously in the Ninth Dimension, or else he couldn't have such standing to begin with. Their obvious assumption was that Leonel had to be at this level as well, but they couldn't see through his Dimension at all as though it was being obscured by something.

But this didn't make sense. A human with a treasure that could obscure the senses of Spirituals? That made no sense at all.

Beneath the Demi-God Rank, the senses of Spirituals were unmatched, that was part of the reason Leonel didn't need to explain anything after unveiling what was beneath the arena.

But even further than that, even compared to some Demi-Gods, they were better in this regard.

It didn't make any sense.

Thalion's soul trembled, the fear seeping into his very bones. Without the protection of his body, the influence of Leonel's Dream Force over him skyrocketed to a new level

entirely, and he could hardly formulate thoughts without feeling a great fear wipe them out to a clean white slate.

He couldn't answer the question even if he wanted to.

"Release my son!" The Moonstone Lord's countenance finally became malevolent, a pressure rushing toward Leonel like a tide.

However, in that moment, Leonel's palm squeezed down and Thalion released a horrible screech. The latter's soul was cracked like glass, just moments away from dissipating forever.

"The next time you speak out of turn, I will crush your son-"

"I said unhand hi-!"

BANG!

Leonel's hand squeezed down and Thalion's soul shattered, the last echoes of his screams filling the skies.

The Moonstone Lord froze.

He hadn't expected Leonel to actually do it. It should have been a stalemate, his son should have still been fine. Everything should have been right with the world, everything...

"No... no..."

He didn't want to believe it.

It didn't make any sense. How was Leonel going to threaten him without his son? How was he even going to protect his life? How... How...

The Moonstone Lord unleashed a fury-laced howl. The strength of a Ninth Dimensional expert was mighty, but everything was relative. In the past, Leonel was nothing more than an ant before the humans of this ilk. And now, it was clever that a Spiritual... no, a Pure Blooded Spiritual was on another level entirely.

The arena cracked across its very foundations and a rumbling earthquake shook the city. It looked as though if the Moonstone Lord wanted, he could collapse the entire world in an instant.

He had never thought that things would end up like this. He had been so careless. If he hadn't left without his son, if he had just been a little bit closer, if they had chosen to play

out this little show differently, or if he didn't rope his son in and let him stay beside the Emberheart Lord's side...

If... If...

Of all the deviating paths he thought of, not one was related to not speaking ill of Leonel's wife.

It all seemed so simple. Wasn't it just a few words?

No. No they weren't.

They were malicious to an extreme, linking his wife's apparent barbarianism to a connection with the Void Beasts. What exactly were they trying to get at?

If this sort of narrative got off the ground, how many people would start thinking that it was their moral duty to wipe the humans off the face of Existence again? How many assaults and wars would they face? How many experts would begin to point their blades at them?

Even if there was no intent other than to slander his wife, Leonel would have still taken action. He had allowed Aina to suffer enough for the sake of what was smart.

However, when the true maliciousness of what they Spirituals were trying to do settled in, it was even more impossible for him to let it go.

Let it go and then what? Wait for the armies to come knocking at the last remaining Bubble World? Wait for the sparse populations of humans scattered across Existence to be genocided one after another under a banner of "morality"? Wait until he was one day forced into a corner and had to present his head on a platter for all of these people to spit at and kick around?

"I'll bury you all, raze you to the ground, and if you're lucky, something new might sprout in your place. If not, that's fine too. You deserve to rot in hell."

BOOM!

The aura of Leonel's Destruction Sovereignty skyrocketed, peeling waves of smoky wisps rising from his body and cracking the foundations of the world around him.

An orb appeared in Leonel's palm and he crushed it, the World Spirit inside being shredded to pieces by his aura of Destruction.

As the waves of Force billowed out from him in all directions.

BANG!

Suddenly, a sphere of nothingness appeared around Leonel. Everything that touched seemed to vanish, leaving a perfectly smooth surface as though the destruction had been machined.

Below him was a crater that formed in the arena. Above him, there was a vacuum of both air and Force.

The pressuring wave that the Moonstone Lord tried to throw at him was akin to a pebble falling to the depths of the ocean as Leonel broke from the pinnacle of the Fourth Dimension into the Fifth.

His aura multiplied countless times over, and once again, his Life State Forces gained a huge boost.

Leonel pulled at the air and Little Tolly thrummed.

Chapter 2720: Slander

Leonel's Divine Armor half formed, tendrils of silvery gold coming from the arm Tolliver coated and formed into a bow.

His Scarlet Star Force Innate Nodes spun to life and two Stars appeared behind him.

The moment they did, the world seemed to be forcefully commandeered by Leonel's might, and as he drew his bow back, this world seemed to take a breath along with him.

The arrow was wreathed in flames and silvery-gold space, however, even deeper than that, there seemed to be Dream Force. The world trembled and then solidified, forming a lane for his arrow as a final Force erupted. A streak of golden Bow Force.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Leonel unleashed a torrent of arrows. In that moment, an inverted umbrella of streaks of Force seemed to fill the skies, converging onto a single point.

The Moonstone Lord froze, not expecting this level of attack. He still couldn't see through Leonel's Dimension, but what he could feel were the rain of Life State Forces coming toward him. His mouth went dry.

How could a single person comprehend so many Forces of the Life State? How could they all be under such a level of control?

The Spiritual Lord barely had time to form a wheel of water. A bluish, marble stone took shape, a ring of water surrounding it. Every time it rotated and shifted into a new

position, the world trembled and a waterfall of Water Force would descend, collapsing the space itself.

The arrows and the wheel clashed, a cascade of cacophonous booms filling the skies.

The Emberheart Lord's eyes opened wide, not just because of the level of strength, and not even just because he had never seen a human so powerful, but also because this was the absolute worst situation for such a battle to erupt in.

As expected, the screams began instantaneously.

Leonel's control was exceptional. Somehow, not even a single one of the reverberating plumes of Force was able to harm the arena or the humans that stood on it. However, the same could not be said for the Spirituals in the surroundings. They were quickly finding themselves enveloped by the aftershocks, and many had already died in just a few exchanges.

"STOP! STOP!" The Emberheart Lord roared.

Leonel sneered. A single one of his arrows veered toward the path of the Emberheart Lord and the latter's heart skipped a beat.

It was an attack he could easily deal with. The problem was what if Leonel started to assault him as well? Would he be able to protect his daughter from the aftershocks?

The Emberheart Lord quickly struck out with a palm, containing the arrow, but he didn't dare to speak again.

Secretly, he began sending out commands for a retreat, but he quickly realized that none of his orders were making it through as though someone was interfering with his Soul Force.

His expression changed and his gaze locked onto Leonel again. His face began to change through several shades.

On the one hand, he felt that what Leonel was doing was stupid. Even if he exposed them, so what? If on the tail end of that he ended up unleashing a torrent of attacks that killed many of their friends and family, what difference would it make?

People weren't rational creatures. Even if they felt that Leonel and the Humans had been wronged, if they were losing out due to their path of revenge, they would quickly become resentful.

But on the other hand, as the Lord, he couldn't possibly escape all blame for this. Much like Minerva, neither he nor Moonstone was anywhere near the strongest of the

Spirituals. They had their elders and Ancestors to adhere to as well. With everything that had already happened, losing their Lordships was practically a certainty.

'No, this can't continue, not like this.'

"St-"

"What a mighty Moonstone Lord!" Leonel's voice boomed. "You can't even bother to protect your own people? But I would expect as much from someone willing to slander an entire Race of people for their own ends.

"Your selfishness knows no bounds. I guess if your son died for your misdeeds, everyone needs to die, huh?"

Leonel's words was the most basic of bait. But how simple something was didn't decide how effective or not it was... especially when it was backed by endless tides of Faith.

The people were already feeling resentful, but the shock of the earlier reveal was still in their hearts, so no matter how selfish they were, they hadn't settled on blaming Leonel yet...

And now Leonel had given them an outlet to push all their discontent.

The Emberheart Lord's expression changed.

The people that were here were among the most influential of the whole the Ma'at Bubble and Kairo Bubble. If not, what would have been the point of this spectacle to begin with?

Leonel's words might as well have been like a stone thrown into a calm lake, sending waves of ripples out in every which direction.

Such words practically sealed his fate unless he did something to change it.

The Emberheart Lord realized then what kind of hole Leonel was pushing him into.

On one hand, he stuck by his brother's side and they lost everything as one.

But on the other hand, he dissented and tried to draw a line between them.

He looked up and saw the helplessness and fury in the Moonstone Lord's gaze. They looked toward one another and realized that they had somehow been pushed to this point by a single human.

They had no choice but to take a step back. They would make Leonel pay for this a hundredfold once he couldn't use a stadium full of people as hostages.

"Please stop! I will give you an explanation, I swear on my honor as the Emberheart Lord."

Leonel didn't even look at him, his arrows firing faster and faster.

What was the word of this piece of trash worth?

The Spiritual Lord grit his teeth and boomed out his next words.

"I am greatly disappointed by the actions of the Moonstone Lord. The Ma'at Bubble had no part in the slander of the Human Race!"