

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2721: Could Not Come to Know

BANG!

Almost the instant the Emberheart Lord returned to his Palace, it felt as though all hell broke loose. If not for the protective formations around everything, it was likely that the palace would have been razed to the ground at that very moment.

He couldn't even believe what had just happened. Everything was in hand in one moment, and in the next, it had all slipped through their fingers.

How did the humans have such a hidden expert? And why were they just magically present?

"Shut down all the teleportation platforms. I don't want a single fly escaping the Ma'at Bubble today."

The Emberheart Lord took a breath and forced himself to calm down. He strolled into his royal bedroom and sent his wife away before he pulled out a communication orb and contacted the Moonstone Lord who he had already "expelled" from this world.

The Moonstone Lord responded instantly, a brewing fury practically coming out in palpable waves, but despite what had happened, neither of them were actually enraged toward one another.

Obviously, they were brothers in the truest of senses, and the Moonstone Lord knew that if the Emberheart Lord hadn't acted like he did, they would have both been pulled down from their positions. At that point, the situation would be unsalvageable.

"We will avenge Thalion, brother. I already have the Bubble locked down, he won't be able to go anywhere."

The Moonstone Lord grit his teeth, but eventually took a breath and exhaled in an attempt to control his emotions.

"Do not do anything rash, even if it means letting this person escape, it's better to do that than to bring you into this mess.

"The people aren't fools. Most will suspect how I was somehow able to hide such a large formation from you and build it under your nose. Even if they believe it, they might think you incompetent. If you also force the issue and kill him on my behalf, it will cause problems."

"I understand," the Emberheart Lord nodded. "I won't keep the barricade up for long, I've used the excuse of your Kairo Bubble to justify it. But we will deal with him soon.

"I've also had others scour the video recordings of the event. We know who he came with and who he has connections to. It will be possible to connect some dots and potentially find out who he is this way."

"Yes, that's good. But the plan..." the Moonstone Lord's voice trailed off.

Their situation had gotten much more difficult because of Leonel.

Although Leonel had taken action, there was still one thing he didn't understand... and that was why?

Why were the Spirituals, who had always seemingly been inviting to other Races and humans especially, suddenly so hostile? It was like they had become cartoon villains overnight and he couldn't wrap his head around why.

He had felt that there was the potential that someone was manipulating them, but the Spirituals were not weak, and in the case that it was a Dream Asura like he thought, they weren't a very... united Race of people.

At the very least, the Dream Asuras would have no reason to put their full effort behind trying to deal with a power that was far beneath them.

In that case, it was more than likely just one or a few Dream Asuras, and in that case, the manipulation shouldn't have been nearly so easy.

As had been said many times before, even with Dream Force, you couldn't just make someone act outside of their already ingrained character, you could only take advantage of what they already were.

And according to history and everything Leonel knew... the Spirituals were the exact opposite of the side they were showing now. None of this made any sense at all.

"We have no choice but to see this through to the end. Somehow, this person is aware of the events that happened back then, and the Ancestors are already involved. If we don't take action now and follow their plans, we could end up in the same muddy waters as the humans, and we cannot allow that.

"We are so close to the Demi-God Realms. So long as we take that step, we will be able to secure a foothold for ourselves and might be able to pay them back for the harm we've caused them. But for now, we can only follow this person's wishes..."

"It will be difficult now. Before, we had a good excuse to meld our two Bubbles together, but without the Humans as a catalyst, it will be difficult."

The Emberheart Lord sighed. "This is all because of our Ancestors, we should have been brothers long ago if they didn't insist on separating us like this."

"It was a necessity. Only by creating two independent Pure Bloodlines could we then benefit from melding them together. If we grew together, it's hard to say if we'd even have the chance."

"Yes, but the process of keeping us separate has alienated our people from one another and it has made the integration difficult. If we integrate too forcefully now, it will lead to internal conflict and trouble. If the tensions are too high, then it will have the opposite effect and rather than the population intermarrying like we would hope, they might draw even fiercer lines of division.

"Today's gaff makes that worse. I don't even know if we'll have another opportunity for another several hundred years."

"There's still a chance," the Moonstone Lord said softly. "If we play our cards right, we can reverse the situation and blame everything on the human from today. We can highlight my sacrifice and save ourselves while pushing the responsibility onto his shoulders.

"But we need to first capture him in an above board manner.

"We might also need to contact that person."

The Emberheart Lord paused for a moment and then nodded. This was, indeed, a chance.

The two Lords clenched their fists.

This was what they had to do to erase the past...

The world could not come to know that the Spirituals had descended from Humans.

Chapter 2722: Corporate

Leonel sat in silence, his gaze filled with a gloomy light.

He had been forced to let the matter go for the moment, but he was still inwardly seething. Unfortunately, he wasn't strong enough, and he was unwilling to let Aina expose her true strength at the moment. If he did so, not only would it put her in even more danger, but wouldn't that defeat the purpose?

He was feeling so unsatisfied right now because he constantly put her in the line of fire again, and again, and again. If he were to do it one more time, wouldn't the outcome be the same as every other time?

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. He closed his eyes, taking a breath and slowly calming himself down.

He had made use of his anger to improve his Destruction Sovereignty and enter the Fifth Dimension, and that had also come with a great boost to his strength. But he had also let it take hold of his mind in order to succeed.

It was a give and take, as with everything else. If he let himself sink into that depravity too much, he would end up right back at square one, suffering the same endless fury he had for so long after his father's death.

Honestly, right now, that was exactly the fury he wanted to tap into. He had let them off too easily and he didn't believe they deserved the mercy he had shown them, but what else could he do?

He had been able to match the Moonstone Lord for a short time, but he was a pathetic warrior in Leonel's eyes especially after what he had seen from observing Demi-Gods, let alone Gods.

The Moonstone Lord was at the 1st Tier of the Ninth Dimension, he had one Life State Force which was likely that odd Earth and Water Force he had used to block his arrows, and probably one or two powerful Impetus State Forces.

Then there was, of course, his Race to consider as the baseline talent was also of great importance to a person's individual strength. Leonel had seen this personally after he managed to take advantage of his Northern Star Lineage Factors.

Right now, Leonel's body had the talent of a Demi-God, and the increase to his strength was astonishing. He had managed to cross four Dimensions to do battle with the Moonstone Lord.

But it wasn't nearly enough.

Behind the Moonstone Lord there were countless guards, and behind them there were countless elders, and behind them, countless Ancestors.

Even if the geniuses among them were ignored, there were still trillions upon trillions of Spirituals. Was he supposed to fight them all? With what army?

And now the teleportation platforms out of this world were sealed off and they probably had perfect tabs on his location. They almost certainly controlled the World Spirit of this Bubble as well, so there wasn't anywhere he could hide even if he wanted to.

These last few things weren't actually what Leonel was worried about. Since he dared to act, he had a thousand different ways of leaving this world with these people being none the wiser.

It was just that he didn't want to. He wasn't satisfied.

Once again, he found himself being tugged between what was smart and what wasn't, and this time... the lines were actually much more blurred than it seemed.

'This scheme... it's more than just about snubbing their noses at humans. Their words, if they picked up any sort of steam, could actually lead to the destruction of what's left of us all. They had extremely sinister intentions. I can't ignore this now even if I wanted to... but how am I supposed to change this situation?'

The gloominess around Leonel was practically like a forcefield. He sat in silence, preferring to be alone at the moment as his mind churned.

...

"Is he going to be okay?"

The voice surprisingly came from Yuri. She spoke to Aina, wondering why it was that Aina wasn't trying to do anything.

They had returned to Savahn and Yuri's home, but at this point it wasn't nearly as "homie" as it had been in the past. It felt more like there was a guillotine looming over their heads, ready to fall at any time.

Aina smiled a bit bitterly, looking toward Leonel's back. She then looked at his brothers, and they too, while sending glances at him from time to time, didn't choose to bother him.

After a bit, Aina chuckled.

"Don't worry so much about him. What he's thinking of right now is how best to screw them all over. He's only unhappy because he hasn't thought of the perfect method yet, and he only hasn't thought of the perfect method because we're still lacking information."

Yuri scoffed. "You sound love sick."

Aina laughed. "I can read his mind, you know. It's quite an amazing thing. Now, when are you and Raj having babies?"

Yuri's eyes suddenly began to dart around as though a deer in headlights. She wanted to scurry away like a frightened rabbit, but Savahn was too busy cuddling in Joel's arms to help her out.

"W-we... we're not at the same stage as you and Leonel yet," she looked down and away, before quickly covering Aina's mouth, stopping her from saying anything else. "They all have superhuman hearing, why do you have to talk about this here?!" She hissed.

Raj, who was trying to pretend as though he wasn't paying attention, suddenly coughed, choking on his drink a bit.

Aina laughed through her palm before whisking Yuri away. She really wanted to know the answers to these questions.

At that moment, James plopped down by Leonel and put an arm around him, burping into the night skies. It seemed the alcohol was starting to get to him a bit because his eyes were already hazy.

"You went corporate on me, bud. What's with all this hesitation?"

James' laughter rang through the air as Leonel's gaze sharpened.

Chapter 2723: Next Tier

Leonel entered the Lab Setting.

"Anastasia, cover the whole world. I want information on everything that's happening at any given time. Specifically, any conversations between anyone at the Ninth Dimension or higher. If they mention humans, they're top priority. Second priority is the Cloud Race. Third priority is Demi-God status. Fourth priority is... Dwarven Race.

"Also, map out the entire world. Tell me where the Dream Pavilion of their world is, and also how many experts of this caliber they have."

"You're not worried about them sensing me?" Anastasia asked. She had difficulty deducing and thinking for herself, but that didn't mean that she was a complete dullard. She remembered that the reason Leonel usually restricted her actions was because he didn't want others to sense her.

Although most couldn't feel a thing, at the Ninth Dimension, most would be able to, and considering they were in a world of Spirituals, this was even more so.

"In this situation, them sensing it would be even better. I'd like to see how they deal with a situation where their people feel like they're being spied on. As for those that would know it's us... so what?

"They already know where I am and don't dare to act. I want to see how patient they are, and I also want to see how they're going to make plans when they feel like every step they take is being watched."

"Okay," Anastasia said in a sweet and almost cutesie voice.

Leonel laughed. "What with that voice?"

"What voice?" Anastasia feigned ignorance, pretending like she didn't know what he was talking about.

Leonel smiled. Though she didn't answer, he somewhat knew why.

Anastasia had broken down into tears after being sent on a mission by Leonel, but that wasn't because she didn't want to help him, it was because she was scared and because she was worried about what might happen if she failed.

There was no one more aware of her weaknesses than herself, and without Leonel constantly there to guide her, she worried that any next step she might take might end up being a mistake, and in that situation, she would never be able to see Leonel again.

Much of her life had been spent drifting aimlessly through the world, and after the fall of the Minerva, she had passed through so many epochs, so many hands, without ever truly understanding anything about herself or her purpose.

It wasn't until she met Leonel's grandfather that her life took a turn for the better, but then he died... but then she was lucky to be passed on to Leonel's father... but then he died as well.

She didn't know if she could stand losing another, and it would be even worse if it was her fault.

She could have saved Velasco. If only she wasn't so stupid, if only she could have seen through his intentions, if only she could think for herself, she would have been able to do what she did last time and protect Velasco from the Regulator.

Velasco hadn't wanted to allow it because the first time, not only had Anastasia fallen from the Ninth to barely the Third Dimension, but she had almost died. If she truly stepped in again, this time, it would be a true death. That he was certain of.

He had come to look at Anastasia like a little sister, how could he allow her to make such a sacrifice for him?

Passing Anastasia down to his son was as good as entrusting Leonel with the hopes that he would one day be able to help her break free of her shackles...

But the wishes of Velasco were one thing, while the wishes of Anastasia were another.

So long as she could stay by Leonel's side, she was willing to help him to the best of her abilities. Having him give her tasks like this gave her a great sense of accomplishment and it made her smile more brightly than she had in a long time.

Leonel smiled to himself, swearing that he would one day release her of those shackles.

He stood before his Workbench, his mind whirling with thoughts.

James was right. He was still tiptoeing around things.

In a situation where there wasn't enough information, and his opponents seemed capable of making an infinite number of moves, there was another path outside of just sitting and waiting...

And that was to force their hand, to suppress them until they were suffocated, until there were only a small number of moves they could even begin to make in retaliation.

And when they were only left with those few moves, that would be when he would strike.

'It's time to make my Fifth Dimensional Divine Armor. But first...'

With a thought, large piles of Mine Cores began to appear around Leonel. On his list, there were several lines that asked for what amounted to millions of Mine Cores of various kinds for the sake of tempering his Metal Body.

Mine Cores, luckily, while valuable, were overall less so than whole mines. Even if one had a Mine Core, it would take generations for a fully fledged Mine to be born from it, and there were often times when these Mine Cores would have only just been birthed and had yet to have the time to form a mine around them to begin with.

In the latter case, families and organizations with powerful abilities were able to find these Mine Cores ahead of time, and move them to optimal locations. Most often, these Mine Cores would be stored away as a method of controlling resources. This was because there were only so many Mine Cores that a World Spirit could support at a time, and there was great benefit in concentrating its focus on a few at a time.

It was even easier to collect these when the Mine Cores he had asked for started at the Fourth Dimension.

Leonel had absorbed 738 928 Fourth Dimensional Mine Cores to reach the peak of his physical potential. But since then, his potential had greatly increased once more.

He would need to reaffirm the foundation of his Fourth Dimensional Metal Body before breaking through to his Fifth Dimensional Metal body as well.

Then, he would forge the next tier of his Divine Armor.

Chapter 2724: Saturation

Leonel's thoughts were consumed by the consumption of Mine Cores. Every one he swallowed didn't seem like enough, and his consumption quickly crossed the seven figure mark and rapidly approached eight figures. He left behind his previous capacity by so far that his power practically became its own engine, thrumming with power and energy so much so that the air around him trembled.

Leonel realized that he had been too neglectful before. He had been obsessed with improving his Dimension, but he had forgotten that this wasn't the only path to improving himself.

No... it wasn't that he had forgotten. It was probably impossible for him to forget most things. The main issue was that he only had so much time in the day and everything he had to do was so draining and all-consuming. He had come to enjoy the time he spent with his wife instead and he didn't want to spend all the time in the world consumed by improvement.

So, though he knew the room he had to improve his Metal Body was there, the idea of sitting down and swallowing up millions of Mine Cores, especially when it wouldn't help him destroy the enemies he really wanted to destroy, just felt like something he could put off until later.

But now, feeling the vast difference, it was akin to a new sky opening up.

From over 700,000, he shot over a million, then two, then four, he didn't even begin to see his potential limits until after he had crossed 6,000,000, and even then he showed no signs of slowing down until over eight.

The problem was that even though he could split his mind, there was only so much energy his body could consume at once. With his skin, it was easy because it was external, but if he was targeting individual cells inside his body, he had no choice but to use more roundabout methods...

Until something suddenly clicked.

After consuming so many Mine Cores, it felt to Leonel as though he had sensed something different. He opened himself up to that new feeling and he felt his Destruction World layer on top of the world around him.

In that moment, the Mine Cores around him shattered like glass, being crushed beneath the pressure.

Leonel's first reaction was panic. He had reacted on instinct, but didn't his Destruction World, well... destroy? What did he think was going to happen? Where had that feeling even come from?

But as soon as those thoughts of panic appeared, he washed it away with several more thoughts as he realized several things in quick succession.

First, just now, he had reacted on instinct, as though he knew how best to do something that would benefit him. But this obviously wasn't a feeling that he should have had naturally, that meant that it was a new phenomena, and by extension, could only be related to his new status as a Quasi World Spirit.

Anastasia never had to learn how to use time and space because it came to her naturally. There was a reason the Segmented Cube managed to have so many time-altering treasures within it.

And much the same way, just now, he had naturally felt that he could do something related to his Destruction World. Whatever that feeling was, it shouldn't have stirred him wrong, and that helped him to calm down.

The second thing he recalled was his own comprehension of Destruction and Creation to begin with.

Scarlet Star Force was at such an extreme of Creation that it manifested to the world as Destruction... but shouldn't that mean that the opposite was also possible?

Right now, it might be called his Destruction World, but wasn't he creating it in a sense? And in this situation, although he had "destroyed" the Mine Cores, weren't they still living in another form, ready to be reborn as a part of him?

There was a reason why after wild forest fires, forests would often grow back more vibrant. If from Creation you could take so much that you ended up Destroying, then why was it that you couldn't do the same from the opposite direction?

The moment he thought of this, it clicked for Leonel.

The benefit of tempering each one of his cells didn't just open him up to using Force through everything single one of them, but didn't it also mean that he could absorb Force from all of them as well?

While it was true that [Final Destruction] was a Dimension strengthening and improvement method... who said that the foundation it laid couldn't help him to improve his Metal Body as well?

After this thought, Leonel's approach completely changed and the Mine Core Essence around him split into countless tiny streams, tempering each one of his cells individually and forming a comprehensive Metal Body that was on an entirely different level.

To Leonel's surprise, he didn't need more Mine Cores to do this. In fact, he needed less.

As he did so, the other streams of wasted Mine Core Essence were pulled out and used to temper his cells individually until Leonel's body practically glistened.

Flashes of gold and dark gold danced across his body, the light gliding off his bronzed skin as though he had become a glass fixture in a room of bright rays.

His strength increased by leaps and bounds and he realized that his father was, indeed, a Morales.

Velasco seemed to have separated himself from the normal path of his lineages, but that didn't mean that he didn't pull from them in some way.

When he created [Final Destruction], he would have kept in mind its compatibility with methods that Leonel was already practicing.

And in that sort of situation, how could they not play into one another hand in hand.

Leonel's Metal Body began to form a balance with his Destruction World, stabilizing and anchoring to a greater degree.

Finally, his Fourth Dimension Metal Body reached a point of absolute saturation.

Chapter 2725: Human Skin

Leonel's body exploded with power, every movement causing space to shudder.

He remembered the feeling of being in control of El'Rion's body. For a Pluto, even a single drop of blood could pierce through a Void Beast's corpse as though it was made of nothing more than wet paper. That had taught him just how powerful the Race was, and it was what made him certain that he was still far away from that stage.

However, even while acknowledging this, Leonel had come to understand something else.

Every step forward he took was enormous, and the changes to himself weren't to be underestimated just because they didn't match up to the greatest standard of bodily strength here was.

In terms of sheer body strength, at least in comparison to any other Fourth Dimensional existence Leonel could come across, he believed that there was no Demi-God that was a match for him. And even that was likely selling himself short.

The changes to Leonel's body couldn't just be measured in terms of his strength alone. That was because every improvement he made to his body was tied to his Northern Star Lineage Factor and his Morales Lineage Factor. By extension, that made them related to his Light, Dark, Star and Earth Force, which were well into the Life State by now.

This was to say because everything was so wrapped up into one, it was hard to distinguish between what was purely Leonel's bodily strength and what was related to his comprehension and use of Force. The two couldn't be divorced.

As a result, while Leonel's body was "only" at a Demi-God standard, a Fourth Dimensional Demi-God wouldn't be able to withstand a single punch from him even if he only used his body strength and nothing else. In fact, even a Fifth Dimensional one would be no match for him in this regard. It would take one on the verge of entering the Sixth Dimension to match up to his raw physical strength alone.

And he had yet to even form his Fifth Dimensional Metal Body.

Leonel didn't hesitate. Now that the time he needed to accomplish this had been shortened considerably, he didn't feel the need to shirk the effort and simply went all out.

After absorbing nearly 10,000,000 Mine Cores at the Fourth Dimension, shattered that many Fifth Dimensional Mine Cores instantly and then all hell seemed to break loose.

Leonel's blood sounded like raging rivers and thunderous storms in his veins. At that moment, he thought of the Dragon that was his mother's Emperor's Might manifestation and that seemed to form the core of his improvement.

Almost the moment he thought of it, his King's Might Lineage Factor, which had remained dormant and unused for so long, suddenly came roaring back.

Dream Force rolled off of him in waves, but this time, it was anchored by something even greater.

As he quickly absorbed the Fifth Dimensional Mine Cores, Leonel realized that his King's Might Lineage Factor had mutated once again, and this time the changes were shocking.

Gervaise was practically invincible within Ascension Empire territory. This was because his Emperor's Might Lineage Factor was tied to his Empire, and thus his strength could be fueled by not just his own power, but that of his citizens, their Dream Force, and other mysterious Forces that Leonel had gained faint inklings about, but lacked the full pictures of.

But what about Leonel?

He had experienced some of that shocking strength when he took over the Morales family, but it had only been a short time and he never really got to experience the full effect of it all...

But now, he had become a Quasi World Spirit, and his Lineage Factor seemed to have anchored itself in his Destruction World.

Leonel couldn't avoid it. This was because the separation of his soul in the first place was done for the sake of allowing all of this to happen, and now, it was like his King's Might had found an anchor for itself as well.

It was a full circle moment, not just because in the past Leonel had built his King's Might off the back of Destruction before changing his mind, but also because of a more important reason...

His Destruction World needed his body as an anchor... his body needed his soul as an anchor... and now, his soul, with his King's Might as a conduit, needed his Destruction World as an anchor!

It was hard for Leonel to tell immediately if this was a good or a bad thing.

On the one hand, it sounded exceptional. This would give him way more control over his world, and he could imagine the synergy it would have with [Domain], [Universe], and [Finality]. In fact, Leonel had already been having some thoughts about how his Destruction World could even improve these already overpowered techniques and make them even more powerful.

But the trouble was that he seemed to have cut himself off from one of the strongest benefits of King's Might...

People.

Even if Leonel could by some miracle allow people into his Destruction World, would they even be able to survive? How would he even be able to pull from them to strengthen himself? Didn't this mean that his King's Might, at least in this regard, was permanently neutered?

He shrugged it off. By now, he had already given up on becoming some great King of the people, so even if that was the case, it didn't change much for him. Also, he didn't have the mind to investigate it right now because he was completely focused on increasing the strength of his Metal Body.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Every echo of Leonel's heartbeat caused the air to shudder. Veins bulged across his body, not out of pain, but because his blood was rushing around so fast and so furiously that they dilated, and in order to make sure that his body wasn't dealing with large, bloodless gaps, it was forced to produce more and more.

Leonel had practically become a beast in human skin.

Chapter 2726: Picked Up

Leonel's eyes snapped open, flashing of purple lightning sparking through him as his hair danced beneath wind of his own making. His Force rushed about so furiously that cyclones formed and roared around him, seemingly wanting to slice apart reality itself.

He took a breath and everything rushed back into him, the world becoming still.

His gaze was sharp and everything he looked at seemed to quiver on the verge of collapsing before he spared them another glance.

He exhaled slowly, the wind pressure causing small claps of thunder all on their own as though even his breath had broken the sound barrier.

Leonel stood and walked to his Workbench, his mind accelerating through several thoughts.

His plan for his Divine Armor was just the same. The fusion of Little Tolly and himself was perfect and he believed it to be the truest manifestation of the Life State, a level of Craftsmanship that stood on a level all to its own.

But at the same time, it was a path with endless amounts of flexibility and likewise one that could evolve with him one he truly grasped the Self State.

Since Leonel had created the Fourth Dimensional Divine Armor, several things had changed, though.

First and most obvious there was his Destruction World's improvement.

Second was his comprehension breakthrough in the Owlman Race's Bubble, namely their use of Natural Force Arts in their city planning. Or, more accurately... a close approximation of this.

The third was just his increase in strength in general. These thoughts seemed to be jumbled, but they worked well together in Leonel's mind.

'I'm starting to see the path...'

Leonel had already begun seeing how his path could truly fuse into one, but the further along this path he walked, the clearer it became and closer he seemed to mirror Aina.

Of course, this wasn't in terms of strength, but rather in how his abilities blended into one another and how it wasn't obvious where one stopped and another one started.

This was only made more obvious by the fact Leonel felt that these three changes could come together into one.

If he treated his Destruction World like an Owlman City, how much more powerful would his Destruction be? And if he incorporated this as an aspect of his Divine Armor, how much more powerful would its strength become?

It would be a clash of two Spirits, one being himself as an Envoy of Destruction, and the other being Tolliver, an Envoy of Creation.

With that thought, Leonel got to work, losing himself in his own world.

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It was hard to tell how long passed because Leonel truly wasn't paying attention. If something important was happening, Anastasia would awaken him, so by the time he finished, looking up in a daze, his mind had become a bit foggy.

He couldn't remember the last time this had happened. His Dream Force stamina, after a certain point, just felt endless. And after his King's Might awakened once more, it should have been even more so.

'Wait...'

Leonel looked into his body and his lip twitched. Suddenly, he realized why he felt fatigued.

While all his thoughts were true, he had neglected one thing. It seemed that much of his stamina was being drained away by his Destruction World after his soul began to use it as a quasi anchor of its own.

'Hm... I don't actually think that this is the situation by default. Is it...'

Leonel blinked and shook his arm. Suddenly, an armor appeared around his body. In that moment, it almost looked as though he had become a billowing tower of humanoid smoke, like he had sent himself ablaze... and yet there wasn't the slightest hint of fire.

Before the armor could fully form, Leonel dismissed it, feeling surprised.

The armor was stronger than it should be, and that wasn't just because of Evolution Ore. It was like it had stepped into the Self Realm on its own and without his input.

Leonel's skill definitely wasn't this high yet, which meant the only explanation was that his Destruction World had done it on its own with the help of his King's Might, raising it to the Quasi Self Realm.

'Wow...'

Leonel was hardly ever impressed by anything, and that was obviously even less so for himself because he was quite aware of his capabilities and what his limits were.

But this time, he was truly shocked... and it wasn't just by the result, but the mechanisms that allowed it to happen.

He smiled gently. He couldn't help but wonder... if his father wasn't harmed by his own mother, what kind of existence would he have been able to become? Would the Human

Race even be facing such issues right now? Or would they already be among the Gods?

The gentle look in Leonel's eyes didn't give way to rage. Instead, it was determination that came, and with that, the wisps of smoke at the corners of his eyes and the soles of his feet billowed out in waves.

His Destruction Sovereignty didn't need to be fueled by hatred anymore.

He would raze them down in order to allow something else to grow... why did he need rage for that?

Not long after Leonel's Destruction Sovereignty had entered the Black Realm, he entered the Bronze.

With a thought, the wisps of Destruction vanished and he stepped out of the Lab Setting and stepped into a pod. He rested, allowing his mind to recover.

When he stepped out, his eyes were practically flashing with their own light.

"Anything, Anastasia?"

"No," Anastasia replied. "I believe they've taken drastic measures, even going off-world to communicate."

"And the result?"

"There are a lot of people who are feeling restless, but those powerful enough to sense me haven't done anything yet."

Leonel nodded. "I expected as much. If they're that powerful, then they're likely also smart enough to know that if anyone dares to do this, they're powerful enough to get away with it. However, the longer this goes on for, the more discontent they will feel."

"Oh, there's someone coming," Anastasia suddenly said. "I think? I'm not sure. Ah! They suddenly picked up the Segmented Cube!" She spoke in a panic.

Leonel chuckled.

He had expected this too. He hadn't asked Anastasia to monitor anyone coming in his direction because he knew she would have a hard time deciphering a person's intentions, especially since they couldn't send an army after him in this situation.

All they could do was send one or a few powerhouses.

And it seemed one had finally appeared.

Chapter 2727: Bite

Zornoir was a Lord Guard elite sent here by the Emberheart Lord. Despite his status, though, he wore simple black robes and even covered his face with a mask. It was clear that by every observable metric, the last thing the Emberhearts wanted was another scandal.

What he hadn't expected was that the moment he came here, he managed to find the Segmented Cube just sitting without a care in the world. He couldn't see through the treasure, but he was fairly certain that since the probe covering the Bubble was coming from it, that it should mean that this Segmented Cube that looked like a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, should be a treasure capable of housing life. In that case, didn't that mean if he brought it back this would all be over? In fact, if he tossed it into a spatial ring, Leonel and the others would be unable to step out even if they wanted to.

Most spatial devices couldn't house living things, so without the barrier of the Segmented Cube, they wouldn't dare to step out. It would be effectively jailing them.

However, before he did so, he had to make sure that they were actually inside of it. Wouldn't it be too embarrassing if he brought back an empty vessel? Or if he had misjudged the item and it was actually a treasure designed to scan?

However, just as he did so, his expression changed.

"Oh my, I'm blushing," Leonel's chuckle startled the Spiritual into reeling back. But when he realized that he still had his hand in Leonel's palm, he had no choice but to let go, a cold sweat permeating his back.

Zornoir found Leonel standing where the Segmented Cube had been.

Just now, the Segmented Cube was replaced by Leonel's hand and became a finger sleeve on his forefinger.

Zornoir's eyes narrowed. He hadn't thought that it would be possible for Leonel to come out, not with his Soul Force coating the Segmented Cube. There shouldn't have been a lane or channel for him to do so. According to his understanding of spatial devices that could house living things, Leonel shouldn't even be here.

Looking at the cold smile on the human boy's face, though, Zornoir felt a cold shiver down his spine as he remembered something.

Just now, subconsciously when he retreated, he had still been holding onto Leonel's hand. So when he pulled Leonel should have come with him.

But why was it that Leonel was still standing there, unmoved? With how explosively he had retreated, was such a thing even possible?

Leonel raised a hand and grabbed at the air, forming a bow that stood three meters from tip to tip. The aura it radiated was so fierce that Zornoir's heart palpitated. This shouldn't be... why did he feel so much more powerful?

Unfortunately for Zornoir, it wasn't just the change in his Dimension that could unlock more of the power of Leonel's Life State Forces... the increase to his bodily strength could do the same.

The stronger he became, the more obvious the gap between his Forces and that of everyone else around him became.

Zornoir might be in the Ninth Dimension, but he had only grasped a single Lower Life State Force, and unlike the Moonstone Lord, he didn't have even a single other Impetus State Force, having put his everything into this one comprehension.

Seeing this, it was more amusing to Leonel than not that they had chosen to send this man. Could they have made it more obvious that they were trying to plan something?

Unfortunately for Zornoir, he didn't even seem to realize that he was a pawn.

Leonel raised his bow. "We've got a show to perform, Lord Guard. Don't you think you should pull out the best you've got?"

"A ... show?"

Zornoir didn't get to think about it any deeper as Leonel's killing intent locked onto him so fiercely that his years of battle experience roared out like a torrent.

Maybe it would only be moments before his death that he would realize that Leonel's Dream Force had practically ripped it out of him.

Flames erupted from Zornoir's body and his hair danced with them, making it hard to tell if they were the more tangible filaments or if they had become the flames themselves.

'A shame,' Leonel thought. He had been hoping that Zornoir was a Fire Force user...

Because what chance did he stand in that case?

[Domain].

In the moment, it looked like a bucket of cold water had been poured over Zornoir's head.

There was an important factor to consider when [Domain] was activated aside from the obvious... and that was the difference in quality of Forces.

Two people, both using [Domain], both with the same level of Force State, and both with the same Dimension, but using different quality of Forces would display vastly different levels of suppression.

Zornoir wasn't an Emberheart Force user, he used a much lower ranked flame and was clearly not a Pure Blood. But even if he had been...

What was a top 10 Fire Force to the number one Fire Force in all of existence.

"Hey, hey. Even if you're going to lose, you still have to put up a fight or else all of this will be for naught."

[Universe].

Zornoir felt gravity reverse around him and he was suddenly propelled into the air, so high that everyone across the city could see him.

His eyes were set ablaze with fear, the confusion fueling his helplessness and making the turmoil in his heart worse.

Leonel grinned. They sent one person, pretending as though they wanted to keep this hush, but their plot was so obvious Leonel felt like he had read it in an open book.

If they really wanted to keep things hush, shouldn't they have sent one of their powerful Ancestors? Why would they send someone even weaker than Moonstone, what was the point?

Obviously, it was bait. So he would take a bite.

BANG!

Chapter 2728: Another Letter

Flaura swirled a glass of wine in her hand, reading the report she held up with her other.

After a long while, a smile surfaced on her face.

"Interesting... the humans have such a powerful existence? Unknown Dimension, strong Dream Force user, bowman...?"

Her mind flashed with Leonel.

Leonel had only used his Bow Force in public one other place, and that was during his battle in the Challenge Sequence against Minerva and the other Dream Pavilion Heads.

But Flaura felt that the odds were low.

"I'll put it at... 5% for now. It's more likely that the humans have hidden experts rather than a youth like him already being capable of battling against the Moonstone Lord.

"However, I can't outright dismiss it. There are several factors to consider.

"For one, the Moonstone Lord couldn't go all out because there were too many quasi hostages in the situation. Even while holding back, too many of his people were dying. His level of control was weaker than this human.

"The second matter to consider is the fact that this human acted only after disparaging remarks were made about Aina Morales. This is a weaker point because it's hard to tell if he planned to act regardless. After all, he shouldn't have been 100% confident in killing Thalion without the Moonstone and Emberheart Lord being quite a few paces for him, so he had to wait for just the right time.

"Hm... I'll downgrade this thought for now... the first point increases the odds to probably 11%, this reduces it back down to around 9%...

"Then I have to consider the fact that it's unheard of for such a perfect disguise method to exist... at the very least, they're too rare and would have to be built on a special Force of some sort, but this Leonel already had Sovereign Spear and Bow Force, along with Dream Sovereignty and Destruction Sovereignty... how many more Forces could he have?"

There were too many factors at play. In the end, after weighing everything, Flaura landed on 3% odds.

It simply made more sense that it was another expert of the humans.

"The next thing to consider is... does it matter? Whether it is Leonel or someone else..."

Flaura tapped her armrest, her mind swirling with thoughts.

Suddenly, she stood.

"I guess it's time to apply some pressure."

...

Aerin had been in a foul mood these last few days.

He did the smart thing and didn't go. But he didn't even have a method of communicating with Lyra and he was regretting not asking for one.

He knew why he hadn't. He couldn't stand the temptation. It was better to cut it off at the source and not allow those feelings to fester. He couldn't allow his family to get wrapped up in this matter.

Even now, he didn't realize just how smart his decision had been. The Dwarven Race was in a bad situation, not optically, but just in terms of overall status. It was hard for them to carve out their place in the world.

If they got wrapped up in a scandal of "the lost humans", they wouldn't even understand how they died.

As the pride of their Race, though forgotten by the rest of the world, Aerin had a comfortable enough life.

He should stay here, solidify his foundations, marry a beautiful Pixie, have children, and hopefully one day become the third in Dwarven History to form a Dharma and become a God.

That was what he should do.

But he couldn't get Lyra out of his head.

And that was when a message came.

His eyes widened when he read it. It turned out that Lyra's fiance to be had been killed by the hands of an unknown archer.

Aerin was so confused. Why was this being sent to him? And if this person was targeting him, then why were they revealing this information? Shouldn't they want to keep him in the dark in hopes that he would eventually take action?

His heart skipped several beats as he read the rest of his and his eyes turned red.

The letter was seemingly penned by Lyra again. He could sense the bittersweetness within it. She was in one part disappointed that he didn't come and she had to be saved by another, and another part relieved that she didn't have to marry someone she didn't like...

But then she spoke about how the relationship between the humans was fissured, and how her situation was a bit different now.

Then she spoke about how much gratitude she had for the man who killed her fiancé, and how she could finally be free.

She said that she respected his decision and that she was sorry for overstepping her bounds and asking for his help. She should have known better and understood his precarious situation.

She wished him the best and hoped that he wouldn't reject her letters when she sent them from time to time.

It was just a simple letter. He should have been certain that it wasn't Lyra, but he felt his faith in that verdict wavering... especially when he read about the gratitude she had toward the human that saved her.

When he pieced that together with the fact the relationship between the Humans and Spirituals were fissured, he felt as though a knife was digging into his chest.

And then the waves of guilt came.

It was just a simple letter, why was he reading so much into it? Why was he making so many assumptions?

Tears of frustration pooled in his eyes and threatened to fall.

The mind of a Dream Force expert was far beyond what most could imagine. When they began on a line of thought, it was hard to extricate themselves until they saw it through to the end.

He could feel that Lyra was pulling away from him somewhat through this letter...

And he could see a future where, in order to reforge the broken relationship between the two Races... that Lyra might marry this man who saved her.

And unlike the first time...

She seemed far more open to the idea.

It felt like his heart was being torn off his chest.

Chapter 2729: Trio

Leonel's arrow tore through the skies with such speeds that booming concentric circles of volatile air formed an enormous cone around it, rippling out in all directions.

Each one would start as small as the tip of the arrow and then bloom outward so far that it seemed that all the glass windows in the entire city were blown out in an instant of time.

The first wave broke them into pieces. The second wave crushed them even further. The third turned them into volatile particles in the air so small that they could be breathed in. And the fourth turned them to nothing.

When the arrow finally reached Zornoir, he exploded the instant the tip of the arrow touched him.

[Finality].

Leonel exploded with over 10 times his strength in an instant, causing a firework of blood and gore to rain down from the skies before they were vaporized by the fifth pulse.

It was truly an arrow to end all arrows.

Leonel grinned, grabbing at the air and pulling Zornoir's soul down and into the palm of his hand. Even with all that destruction, he was perfectly intact, painting the perfect picture of Leonel's level of control.

He had forgotten how fun it was to use the bow. By default, he always brought out his spear, partly because of his Lineage Factor and partly because back then, his White Lion Bow had fallen behind considerably in strength compared to what he could take out from the Spear Domain Ring.

But now that he could create his own weapon, and his Lineage Factor had evolved, he felt he shouldn't neglect his bow as much.

The main problem was honestly his Constellation. It was clearly better suited to boosting his spear and his Divine Armor. If he changed it too much, it would begin impacting the other Morales.

He hadn't forgotten about them, it was just that... he felt it was difficult to face them.

They had lost their friends, their family, and he, their Patriarch, wasn't there when they needed him most.

It wasn't his fault, and he even held some resentment toward his grandfather for pulling him away like that without a word, but he had done all he could already.

Emperor Fawkes likely didn't have much of a choice, and without the chance to reform his foundation like this, how could he exhibit the strength he was now?

Even his father knew that this was an inevitable outcome for the Morales, that was why he knew that Leonel would be able to comprehend the Constellation Realm ahead of time. The Demoness would have never allowed them to continue as constructed, it would constitute too many unwanted variables.

Leonel clenched his fists and exhaled. He released his grip when he was just about to crush Zornoir and calmed himself.

"Three... two..."

Leonel looked up, and at that moment, the skies shook as several auras descended in a torrent of energy.

A bright smile spread across Leonel's face.

"How dare-"

Leonel tuned out the rest, cleaning out his ears. He didn't have the patience for the soap opera-like corny lines. Sure, it sounded all very real and good. After all, you'd be highly pressed to find better actors than Soul and Dream Force experts.

But when you were an expert in Dream Force like Leonel, seeing through the quirks in their soul fluctuations was so easy that he could practically feel his bones rusting from the cringe.

For his mental health, it was best he didn't listen.

He raised his bow to the skies, facing off against the small troop of ten.

"Just come already, will you?"

...

"Their teleportation platforms are shut down?"

A man dressed in a black cloak and a mask stood with his frown hidden from the world. All around him, he could hear the complaints of those that wanted to get to the Ma'at Bubble, but couldn't because all of their channels had been shut down.

This man was, unsurprisingly, Aerin.

In the end, he couldn't hold himself back. But he knew that there was no way that he could appear out in the open. Not only had he left behind a body double, he had snuck out with the best channels available to him, not even leaving his father a letter.

As a Dream Force user, he knew the pitfalls, and he knew how to protect the minds of those around him, and also how to fool another Dream Force user.

Everything was perfect until he got here and found out that there was no way in.

'Why would they shut down the teleportation channels? This is unlike what was described in that letter. But if someone really is luring me here, then why would they bar me from entering the place they wanted me to come to in the first place?'

Aerin's expression suddenly changed.

Could it be?

'No, I need to leave. Now.'

Aerin turned away, ready to rush out when a sudden gust of wind blew his cloak's hood off and shattered his mask in a single blow.

A vicious gust of wind swirled in the air. Hurricane force winds seemed prepared to collapse reality itself, tsunamis forming in the oceans and mountains collapsing...

Just beneath a breath.

A trio of Void Race youths stood in the skies.

"This air smells like shit."

"Then don't take in so much of it, fool."

The three bantered like they weren't stepping into a war-torn world.

"I can't believe they sent us here. Who's fighting already anyway?"

"They probably sent the Impures," another responded.

The so-called Impures were to the Gods what Lumina had been to the Owlans... descendants with such impure blood that they couldn't be quite classified as Gods, but they were better than probably most Demi-Gods by virtue of their lineage.

"Even those ants should be enough to deal with them, why did they have to send us?"

"There should be some goodies here. It's a Demi-God World, after all. It's not like we get the real resources back home anyway."

"We should hurry too... I heard Shan'Rae might come. Some mortal pissed her off and she jumped at the chance..."

The three shivered.

Chapter 2730: Assimilate

Leonel took a step and appeared high in the skies. In one hand, he held Zornoir's soul, and in the other, there was his bow. He continued looking at the soul as though he couldn't sense the trembling rage around him from the surging Spirituals. His mind truly seemed lost in thought...

And then he grinned.

He suddenly nocked Zornoir's soul onto his bow, causing the eyes of the Spirituals in the surroundings to widen in shock.

"You want a villain? I'll play the villain role for you nicely."

[Star Fusion: King's Might].

[Assimilate].

At that moment, Zornoir's soul let out endless howls as he was fused into an arrow of world-shuddering proportions. All the strength of a once mighty warrior was infused into a single weapon, pulled and stretched by the will of Leonel's King's Might and his Crafter's touch.

He manipulated the Force Arts until they were perfect for Zornoir, bringing out his full potential.

There was no doubt that King's Might was the biggest nightmare for Ninth Dimensional experts...

Once it was used, they had no chance at a rebirth. Their comprehension, their strength, was no longer their own. Instead, it became Leonel's.

What right did they have to use it to come back in that case?

Like Leonel had said, since they wanted a villain, he would give them one. Not only would he give them one, but on this day...

The Fawkes family would return.

BANG!

The arrow was so fast the air shattered the moment it left his bowstring, a long tail of rippling space being left in its wake.

The approaching troops of Spirituals felt their hearts freeze over. A single thought dominated their minds, forcing their hearts into submission.

Run.

But was that even possible anymore?

Leonel's laughter filled the skies.

"Years ago, the Fawkes were betrayed by their own people and forced into hiding by the feelings of the weak and pitiful.

"Today, we return."

Leonel's hidden Dimension flourished and in that instant, the full brunt of his Fifth Dimensional strength bloomed, shocking the world as it was layered in a fictitious Sixth Dimension aura.

At that moment, they realized that it wasn't a Ninth Dimensional human powerhouse they were facing...

It was a Sixth Dimensional genius!

The Spirituals began to explode one after another before the arrow even reached them. Their Forces were ripped apart, their resistances crumbling beneath its mere presence, let alone its touch.

It soared by them with such speed that they froze in the skies, their bodies cracking apart. The rest of them thought that they had survived by some sort of miracle as it suddenly flashed by them, disappearing into the distance.

But those were the last thoughts they had in this lifetime.

Before the arrow even landed, they shattered to pieces like porcelain. And then, a mountain in the distance crumbled, the world shaking beneath its might.

Leonel's voice boomed, layering atop the cacophony of explosions. It was as though he wouldn't be satisfied until the whole world could hear him.

And then the world itself shook, the might of the explosion being so great that the entire Bubble World suffered an earthquake.

Leonel waved a hand, and the dozen warriors that had come to deal with him were pulled into a bundle of souls. He grabbed at the air with another hand and his Emulation Spatial Force quickly formed into a quiver.

"[Assimilate]."

The most fearsome nature of the Fawkes was put on full display for all to see. It only took victory in one battle for their strength to suddenly steamroll forward.

Without King's Might, not only would Leonel still be battling, he would have already been heavily injured. As powerful as he had become, it wasn't enough for him to treat the pinnacle of the Mortal Races with impunity, especially when they were in the Ninth Dimension.

But did he need to now?

He had already made his decision. Since he was using a separate identity this time, and he was seen as a mysterious human that had come out of nowhere, he would give them some real pressure.

The Fawkes family had been feared enough in the not too distant past that not only had their own fellow humans acted against them, but it also had to be remembered that they were goaded into doing so by much higher Races. The Demi-Gods were certainly involved, and if Leonel was correct, even the Gods might have given a nudge or two here and there.

In that case, the Fawkes was the perfect role for him to step into.

He wanted to see how far they would try to push him. His King's Might Lineage Factor, paired with his Dream Force, was the perfect weapon to use against enemies much more powerful than himself. At the same time, the display of might he had just shown would make them think thrice before they came to deal with him.

Would it create more pressure as well? Almost certainly so. But so what?

He had a feeling that this would only help him, not harm him.

'There are some holes in my identity. The first and most obvious is Savahn and Yuri. What are the odds that they would both be close to myself and Aina, as well as this new Fawkes character?'

Leonel smiled, seemingly not worried at all.

The truth was that the devil was in the details, and where not all flaws were weaknesses... they were also opportunities, and sometimes, when flaws were too obvious, intelligent people might overlook them because they wouldn't assume him to make such a stupid mistake.

This was the sort of game and flow that Leonel liked the most. He felt like someone was trying to put him on their chessboard, and quite frankly...

He found it to be amusing because he could tell that this person wasn't an absolute expert like the Demoness.

They were fallible, and probably thought themselves to be much greater than they were.

And he would crush them because of that.

"There's something, Leonel," Anastasia called out.

Chapter 2731: Choke Point

"What happened?" Leonel asked, standing in the skies and looking toward the horizon.

"Odd movements related to Dwarven Race. There was a report that someone intercepted a prince."

"Got it."

Leonel took a step, prepared to leave the Bubble.

There was a reason that he had asked Anastasia to pay attention to the Dwarven Race. He had several ideas about how this might go, and it seemed that he was correct.

The truth of the matter was that the Aeritha Bubble, the home of the Dwarven Race, was one on Somnus' list. In fact, it was the exact same Bubble that Leonel planned to target after he left here because it had a Dream Pavilion. The use of conquering a world with one, or at the very least having it as a chess piece, couldn't be understated.

So, from the very beginning, Leonel had been paying attention to such things.

But what was more interesting than that was how strategic the location of the Aeritha Bubble was. It was positioned in such a way that it was a choke point between the Ma'at and Kairo Bubbles, and it was an unmistakably important location as a result of it.

Most tended to ignore it, but the reality was that it was the perfect springboard to attack either one of these Bubbles, and as a result, it was undeniably important and couldn't be ignored for these very reasons.

However, even this was just surface-level analysis. Anyone could think of this, and Leonel knew even without exposing himself to the reality of it that there was no way that whoever was playing around in the background would take such a simple approach to what was happening here.

Then, he thought a level deeper.

What was the world thinking about everything that had happened at the Gathering of Minds?

Of course, there was Leonel's embarrassment on one hand, but no one cared much that the Demi-Gods had won; that just seemed natural. What was more important to the common man was the fact that a Spiritual and a Sparrow had come together to claim third place. It was these sorts of underdog stories that everyone gravitated toward.

But then what happened after it all ended?

Well, the Spiritual Race basically took all the credit for it, and aside from the Dwarven Race themselves, how many people remember Aerin?

This was by design, of course. The Emberheart Lord and the Moonstone Lord were trying to use this matter as a springboard to help them fuse their Races as one.

The political landscape of Existence was very... precarious to say the least. You couldn't just evolve your Race because you felt like it, and it involved a great deal of trouble.

Simply put: why would the Demi-Gods want to allow another Demi-God Race to appear? Wouldn't that just add more competition for resources that they wanted?

More importantly than that, the more Demi-God Races there were, the more likely it was that the culling, which was an event that only the Mortal Races had to suffer, would soon become a matter that the Demi-God Races also had to deal with.

The end of Existence wasn't slowing down, and the closer they got to that inevitable end, the more drastic the measures taken would be.

Who knew if one day the Gods might decide that their existences were unacceptable and it was best if only Gods remained?

Due to this, the Spirituals had to be very roundabout and clever with how they moved forward in their attempt to become Demi-Gods. They couldn't make it too obvious that this was their goal, but they also couldn't shirk away from it because no one was a fool at these levels of power.

All of this political nonsense felt convoluted and ridiculous, but that was because it was. When everyone had pros and cons to weigh, especially when Gods and Demi-Gods couldn't just casually descend to lower worlds, all of these games of political face and subterfuge became matters of life and death.

And that was where the Dwarven Race came into play.

There was no doubt that Aerin was the most important piece of the Dwarven Race. His talent in Crafting was exceptional, and he had the potential to become their next God.

While the Spirituals were vying for a spot to Demi-Godhood, the Dwarven Race just wanted to be more comfortable and survive.

With every culling, they felt that they came closer and closer to suffering as well, and they had to speed ahead to remain ahead of the curve... Aerin was their hope to do that and live out the next few generations in peace.

Now what happened when a Bubble World in a strategic location, with so much political freedom riding on the life of a single young man, fell in love with the princess of another world that was riding on the end of a thin, sharp blade?

If one wrong move was made, everything might collapse and the world would quickly become embroiled in chaos.

This was a pressure point. If it was pressed down upon, moved, and manipulated correctly, the right person could end up with not just both, but all three worlds in the palm of their hands.

And not only that... but three Dream Pavilions for the price of none.

Even with all of this said, Leonel went one layer deeper than even this.

He was almost certain that a Dream Asura was responsible for all of this after seeing the detailed scheming that Somnus was a part of. He also knew that Somnus had been expelled from his Clan after the matters of the Gathering of Minds.

Was it a coincidence that so soon after Somnus' life and death was in the balance that one of the Bubble Worlds he had so much information about had become the key chess piece in the games of another Dream Asura?

Most definitely not.

As such, he was certain that not only was it a Dream Asura, but it was a Dream Asura with incredibly close ties to Somnus himself.

Chapter 2732: Won

Leonel landed in the mountain range his own arrow had just destroyed. Nothing he did was without purpose, even if it was showing off. Or so he liked to think.

He grinned to himself, sensing the volatile plumes of creation, strands of destruction, and more importantly than any of that, the wild fluctuations of space in the surroundings.

Just now, he used [Assimilate] to fuse a Ninth Dimensional warrior into his arrow of Scarlet Star Force and Emulation Spatial Force. Seeing such potential for creation, his Scarlet Star Force quickly gobbled it up, and the pure Dream and Soul Force coming from the soul bolstered his Emulation Spatial Force considerably.

On top of that, because of his Destruction World's influence, he had been able to force the Craft into a Quasi Self Grade state. And as a result of that, all the potential for creation was quickly forced into a state of complete and utter Destruction.

This was all to say that the arrow wasn't just a little powerful... it was so strong that it was likely capable of lighting up more than 27 Runes on the Truth Pillar, a number that was nine better than the best Leonel or Minerva could do.

[Assimilate] was one of the three most powerful techniques of Emperor's Might. It was designed to allow you to fuse the souls with objects that could raise and elevate its status to another level, but it could also do the reverse.

It was thanks to [Assimilate] that Tolliver had managed to gain the talent of an Infinity Beast, and when it was done in reverse, Leonel's arrows gained the strength of a Ninth Dimensional expert.

No, it wasn't accurate to say it like this. It was more like the Life Force of such an existence, all their potential and everything they had once been or would have ever been exploded all at once. And that was all without even considering the Scarlet Star Force it was fueling.

It wasn't just a Ninth Dimensional level of strength; explaining it that way was too simple... and its power proved that.

This time, though, that wasn't the point of Leonel's current escapade.

The eruption of his arrow had provided him with a good opportunity. The space here was highly unstable, and the gap between it and the in-between world was shrinking and expanding rapidly, fluctuating back and forth.

If he timed it correctly...

Leonel took a step and suddenly vanished.

...

Aerin covered his face with a hand, but he already knew that it was useless. He had disguised himself even beneath his mask, also making himself taller.

His real height was barely over five feet tall; he'd be hard-pressed to get to 5'1" unless he was wearing shoes. That was a dead giveaway to his race, so he had, of course, taken other precautions aside from a cloak and mask.

But the trouble was that without all of them together, anyone stronger than him would be able to see through him.

And just like he feared, the moment his mask was shattered, the Dream Force around him shattered as well.

His translucent wings burst from his back as he continued into a hurried retreat, pulling out his bow.

He still didn't know who was assaulting him. His eyes darted from left to right, his Internal Sight blooming.

When he still couldn't find anything, he circulated a technique, his eyes beginning to glow and his Nodal Pathways pulsing with power.

The earth beneath him trembled despite the fact he was in the air, and a wave of Earth and Spatial Force rippled out in all directions.

The danger Aerin was feeling was on an entirely different level. He had still yet to see this person, and many were looking at him like some sort of madman, but all he could feel was that if he didn't go all out, he would lose his life right here and now.

Geomag Force was a top 10 Earth Force, one known for its fusion between Earth and Space Force, and for its rarity.

Aerin would have normally never displayed his abilities in using this Force. He had spent much of his life hiding his true talent, and if not for the opportunity the Gathering of Minds presented, he would have never taken even a single step out of his world.

But unfortunately, reality was cruel. The moment he stepped out, he found himself stuck in this game of cat and mouse between himself and an existence he had never laid his eyes on before.

Using his Geomag Force, he pushed his senses to the limit, sensing pulsing through the earth and space to locate who had suddenly attacked him...

And that only let him smell his death coming a split second before anyone else. Just a small split moment... not enough for him to do a single thing with, and certainly not enough to save his life.

The sudden attack seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere at once. It bore down on him with such force that his body froze before it even landed. In that moment, he felt like those Spirituals who had just faced Leonel's arrow.

Then it appeared before his eyes, a whirlwind of strength looking to bore a hole through his forehead.

It was then a figure appeared before him, standing tall and proud, he extended out a hand.

"Well, shit, this attack is more powerful than I thought it was," the figure mumbled.

Aerin almost fainted when he heard this. Why act so confidently if this was going to be the end result anyway!?

"Blackstar!" The figure chuckled as though he could hear Aerin's thoughts before calling out to the empty void of space.

At that moment, Aerin felt his vision go black and when it cleared up again, he felt himself shiver. He looked back and found a long, cone-shape trench extending behind him. The city was half destroyed and everything left in its wake had crumbled to ash.

"Welp, looks like they won this round," the figure clicked his tongue.

Aerin's face warped in confusion. What did that mean?

Chapter 2733: 27%

Leonel looked back to face Aerin, but it was clear that the latter didn't recognize him. Though, that much was obvious; if even Aerin could see through his disguise then he might as well not be wearing it at all.

"Let's go," Leonel said.

"Who are you?"

"Not the place to be asking questions."

Aerin frowned, not understanding what this person was trying to get at.

"I'm not taking you with me, I'm just sending you back to your home world. I assume you were lured here due to something related to Lyra? Well, you don't need to worry about it, let's go."

Leonel placed a hand on Aerin's shoulder and whisked him away. At this point, Leonel's strength was too great for Aerin to resist even if he wanted to, but that only made him all the more wary.

Aerin couldn't help but wonder if all of this was a ruse set up by Leonel... the question was for what, though? Was it to get him to trust him?

Leonel chuckled. "There are much easier ways for me to deal with your Bubble, trust me. I wouldn't have the patience to wait for you to grow up and take it all over. Wouldn't I be dead and decrepit by then?"

Aerin frowned and didn't say much. He would just feel out the situation as he went.

But to his astonishment, Leonel actually sent him back to his world... and then directly left as though there was nothing of importance going on with him.

No strings, no communication, there was absolutely nothing.

'... What did he mean by "they won this round"?'

Aerin frowned, feeling an uncomfortable feeling welling up in his chest. He thought he was only a pawn in one game of chess, but it seemed that there were two masters going at it.

Could he really only be an unwitting pawn?

...

Leonel didn't even enter the Dwarven Race's Bubble.

He could understand the gist of this Dream Asura's plans, but he still hadn't grasped the root of it. And more shocking than that, he hadn't sensed where that attack from earlier had come from, and he couldn't find the person who launched it.

That could only mean one thing: there wasn't a person at all, it was triggered by some sort of Force Art.

That was probably the most unfortunate outcome because for one, that certainly meant that whatever traces could have been found were long since wiped out, and on top of that, whatever predictive and scheming ability this individual had was on a completely different level.

'First sowing discord between humans and Spirituals, and now doing the same between the Dwarven Race and the Spirituals... What are they getting at here?'

Leonel walked through the In-between Worlds as though it was any other location, unmoved by everything happening around him. He was missing a piece of the puzzle, an incredibly important piece but he just couldn't grasp what it was.

If he could just figure it out, he felt that everything would fall into place and it would all make sense again.

He entered the Ma'at Bubble once again and almost instantly had Anastasia continue her monitoring.

...

Flaura sat in a familiar recliner and a newly refilled glass of wine. She read another report and she couldn't help but raise up an eyebrow.

"It half worked... I can work with this anyway, but this person caught on? A Fawkes? Hoho..."

The more she read, the more interested she became and the more she felt an excitement bubbling up in her chest.

She had never thought that this mysterious person was a Fawkes, but maybe this made sense.

She had heard rumors that the Fawkes cashed in a favor from the Pluto to just barely survive that catastrophe from all those years ago. But from her understanding, it couldn't have been more than a handful of them that made it through.

To think that from that small minority, such a genius had risen up.

'But why expose themselves like this? What are they getting at? Are they a fool who overestimates themselves? That can't be the case because he saw through my plot, so it has to have a purpose.'

Blaring warning signs echoed in Flaura's head as it all pointed to one truth: why announce this if he wasn't trying to hide another identity? Could he really be Leonel Morales?

But then how did he mimic the Emperor's Might Lineage Factor without being a Fawkes?

The odds that were at 3% began to tick upward...

Flaura hadn't put much thought into it in the past, but if it was the case that he was Leonel, what would that mean?

'The Fawkes have quite a well-hidden history. The humans don't talk about it because it's a shame, and the others certainly won't talk about how they had to gang up and scheme to deal with a human family.

'But, Leonel Morales has the Life Tablet, or... had the Tablet. It should document histories, in which case, learning about the Fawkes wouldn't be difficult at all.

'As for why he's pretending, it's likely because he's using this opportunity to step out of the spotlight. He already failed at the Gathering of Minds, and there was even a war triggered as a result of it. There would be no better chance than to step out of the spotlight.

'Unfortunately, he was pulled back into it because the Moonlight Lord targeted his wife, and effectively the Human Race as a whole.

'The Fawkes is an interesting angle to take because they are part of the Human Race, and yet also separate at the same time. Because they were betrayed, it's easy to think of them as two separate identities...

'With that sort of framing, I'd say it's gone from just a 3% chance to 27%...'

Flaura took a sip of her wine, wondering if this would be useful. But first, she needed more information.

She called forward a steward and asked for some very specific things.

Chapter 2734: Threat

Soon, the reports she wanted were on her lap. She went through them all one by one until she found what seemed to be a true smoking gun.

'Savahn and Yuri...'

She narrowed her eyes.

What were the odds that both this Fawkes and Leonel knew and were close to the same people? Almost zero, especially since she could find any information on Savahn and Yuri dating more than a handful of years back.

'Oh...? Fascinating...'

As she flipped through the report, Flaura got to a portion that intrigued her.

It turned out that years ago, the Human Bubbles took the initiative to ship out several Races back to their homes. They should have been grown and raised in those Incomplete Worlds. The Human Race was scared of being targeted because they controlled Races that were clearly above them, so they took preventative measures.

If this report was correct, Savahn and Yuri appeared around the same time, as did many other unexpected geniuses.

Further than that, one of the geniuses of the Spirituals, a Spiritual sent in by the Kairo Bubble, in fact, was personally killed by Leonel during the Gathering of Kingdoms. In fact, it was because of this that Leonel wasn't able to participate and he had his wife do so in his stead.

Could it be a coincidence?

Why would Leonel have a grudge with this Spiritual he should have never met?

"Leonel Morales is not only a Human, but a Human of an Incomplete World?"

Flaura let out a bell-like laughter. 'Fascinating, fascinating, far too fascinating...'

She would have never guessed such a thing. She made a mental note that she should go down any interesting lines of investigation, even if it felt that there was only a 3% chance.

By now, that 27% chance had ballooned to 42%. It was practically 50-50 on whether this man was truly Leonel or a Fawkes.

But that left other questions. What ability did Leonel use to mimic Emperor's Might? Could it have nothing to do with Emperor's Might and she was being led by the nose by his words?

Her heart skipped a beat. Could it be that Leonel Morales was both? Who said a Fawkes had to have Fawkes as a last name?

The two streams of thought melded into one and Flaura felt an unshakeable resolve toward them. It was hard for her to even think of shaking them off.

The images overlapped in her mind.

That was right. Didn't the Pluto owe the Fawkes a favor? Could it be, then, that this favor was repaid using Incomplete Worlds? How else could the weak Human Race get their hands on such worlds?

'The real question is... How do I use this to my advantage...?'

A sly grin spread across Flaura's face.

...

Leonel returned to Savahn and Yuri's home. Although it was empty now, he still did so, his thoughts churning.

It was at that moment that a flash of light landed before him. He opened it up without much care and when he read it, a sneer crept onto his lip.

The first line was as clear as day.

"Greetings, Leonel Morales."

The letter was polite, but the implied threat was as clear as day. It wasn't just that the threat was clear, but also that the demands were almost... easy in comparison to the weight of the threat.

It claimed that it knew that he was both a Fawkes and a Morales, but that they had no need to tell everyone about this so long as he helped them out with a few tasks.

As for what those tasks were, they were all related to his Dream Pavilion. They wanted him to issue a Challenge Sequence, actually. But this time, a targeted one. Namely, it was akin to a dojo challenge of an Ancient Japanese culture.

There were two forms of a Challenge Sequence. The first was the one that Leonel had used previously, and the second one was a one on one challenge. The restriction, of course, was that it had to be executed by those in the same "bracket", so to speak and both parties had to willingly accept the challenge, or else it wouldn't go through.

As for what was meant by "bracket", this was decided in groups of a thousand up until the top 1000, which was decided in groups of 100, until the top 100, which was decided in groups of 10.

Essentially, the 9999th Dream Pavilion could challenge up to the 9000th. The 999th, though, could only challenge up to the 900th, while the 100th could only challenge up to the 91st. So on and so forth.

In the end, this person didn't even say whether they wanted him to win or not, they just wanted him to send the challenge. As for who he was challenging? It wanted him to challenge the Kairo Bubble.

'This person really is playing with fire.'

Leonel felt that the intentions were quite obvious.

If he challenged the Kairo Bubble, several things would happen in quick succession.

First, he would be back in the spotlight he had taken such care to get out of.

Of course, this wasn't too bad because the spotlight wouldn't be too bright, and it would even play into his whole arrogant, can't be bothered persona. They would think that this was his attempt at snatching back some of the pride he had lost at the Gathering of Minds.

If this was where it stopped, he might consider doing it for no other reason than the fact it actually helped him in the long run. If he really just faded into the shadows without a word, some might be suspicious.

But that wasn't where it stopped.

Leonel smirked and pulled up a list.

102nd - Vast Dream Pavilion

183rd - Ma'at Dream Pavilion

211th - Khafra Dream Pavilion

Seeing this, Leonel's sneer deepened. He had to admit, this person was a good schemer, indeed.

The Khafra Dream Pavilion was a Nomad Race Dream Pavilion. It seemed that he was correct.

This person was tied to Wicked and God Zoltene.

And clearly, they thought themselves to be more clever than they really were.

Chapter 2735: Writhe

The plan wasn't obvious on the surface, and honestly Leonel was being a bit unfair to the Dream Asura pulling strings in the background. However, when you were dancing on a tightrope like they were, any flaws could be taken advantage of. It was honestly just a question of who among them would be the first to reveal a fatal flaw.

To Flaura, it seemed that that person was Leonel, and there was honestly nothing wrong with her thought process. Even Leonel had to admit that it was quite good... if it wasn't for the fact he had revealed such a flaw on purpose... at least in part.

The reality was that whether he drew the line between the Fawkes and him at this point or not, it was inevitable that it would come out.

The line of logic that Flaura had used, connecting the Incomplete Worlds to Savahn and Yuri, and then to Leonel and the Fawkes, was something that anyone with the information on hand could attest to.

Of course, "anyone" was actually a much smaller piece of the pie than it seemed. That was because this person not only had to know about the exchange between the Pluto and Fawkes, they also had to be aware of a covert action taken by the Human Bubbles who practically no one paid attention to, and finally they had to be able to gather information from a segment of the Gathering of Kingdoms that wasn't broadcasted to everyone.

All three of these hurdles were enormous, but the first was especially large. How many could claim to know about the motives and actions of the Pluto?

As far as Leonel was concerned, though, this was a confirmation of things. It seemed like he was the one backed into a corner, but Flaura had shown off her dragon's tail.

Now that he knew that she could piece such information together, it meant that the person he was dealing with wasn't normal in the slightest and he went from a barely 60% assurance that he was dealing with a Dream Asura, to over 97% certain.

And at the same time, he had caught onto Flaura's weakness.

The Vast Dream Pavilion had fallen from 100th place the day they won the Challenge Sequence, but since then the Owlans had made their move to return to the top 100 as well, pushing them down yet another spot.

But that wasn't what was of note here. What made Leonel sneer was the existence of the Khafra Dream Pavilion.

As he had said, the Khafra Dream Pavilion was a Nomad Pavilion. However, there were large numbers of Nomad Pavilions. Although they weren't as prolific as Spirituals in terms of Soul Force and Dream Force, they weren't too far behind either. In fact, they and the Cloud Race were neck and neck for second place.

So why was he so certain?

In reality, all Leonel needed was the fact Flaura had asked him to do this with no strings attached. But, there was a more complex train of logic as well.

Why ask him to attack the Ma'at Bubble in specific and not the Kairo Bubble? The latter had a Dream Pavilion too and their ranking was almost identical. They were just barely in the top 200 as well, so logically speaking, Leonel should be able to get at them too.

The problem was that if he attacked the Kairo Dream Pavilion and they lost, they would fall outside of the top 300 and thus lose the right to challenge the Khafra Dream Pavilion.

The math was close, but Leonel was certain that he was right.

With how casual the rest of the letter was, letting him attack whenever he wanted, not telling him whether he had to win or lose, it all became supremely obvious.

If he fought the Ma'at Bubble, whether the Vast Bubble or Ma'at Bubble won, both would fall between the 200th to 299th rank. However, the Kairo Bubble, should they lose, would fall between the 300th and 399th rank.

Obviously, according to the rules, this would mean that it wouldn't be able to challenge the Khafra Dream Pavilion at that point, and all of this would be useless.

But then that left another question: why did she want the Khafra Dream Pavilion to rise?

If Leonel put himself in this person's shoes, he could see the long game they were trying to play.

Right now, the Owlans had just returned to the top 100 and had gained themselves some power, only to then be suddenly thrust into a war.

What would happen over the course of that war?

If another Race suddenly swooped in and claimed the top 100 spot that had already changed hands so frequently in the last few months alone, would it be that shocking anymore?

No, that matter would most definitely go under the radar.

However, she couldn't just have them leap to the top 100, it was easier to take it slow. If they were suddenly challenged out of the blue by a fiery tempered youth like Leonel or an embarrassed world like the Ma'at Bubble, wouldn't it be natural for them to enter the top 200?

The point gap between the higher ranks was so large that even if Leonel ended up winning this challenge, it would at most return to the 100th spot, where he would quickly be kicked down again.

At which point Flaure would make him issue another challenge, this time to the Khafra Dream Pavilion.

If it was the Ma'at Dream Pavilion that won, it would be even easier. Flaure would just make him lose to the Khafra on purpose and then have the Ma'at lose subsequently.

Either way, she would be able to get her pawn into the top 100, and who knew what she would do from there.

The Dream Asuras almost certainly had a top 100 Dream Pavilion already, but was it under Flaura's control?

Of course, there was another even simpler reason Leonel was certain of all of this.

According to the Life Tablet... Khafra was God Zoltene's homeland.

'These are the games Dream Asuras like to play, huh...?'

Leonel didn't find himself being angry. In fact... he felt faint hints of excitement as something stirred inside of him.

A vile thought crept up from within his soul.

Wouldn't it be fun to watch this person writhe in despair?

Chapter 2736: Third

Leonel fell into his thoughts, spun the tip of the letter on his finger before he burnt it to ash. The smile on his face was still there.

The question was... how best to use this?

"Let's return to the Human Bubble," Leonel suddenly said.

"Why?" Anastasia frowned. She didn't understand what was happening, but she had read the letter. There was nothing but bad that could come from it. Why was Leonel smiling? And wasn't returning to the Human Bubble exactly what Flaura wanted? It wasn't like Leonel to fall into the schemes of others so easily.

"Don't worry your pretty little head, Anastasia. Have I ever taken a loss?"

"Yes." Anastasia pouted. "Pretty little what? Who do you think you're talking to? I'm older than your great, great, great, great, great, great-!"

Anastasia kept adding greats because it seemed that no amount could sufficiently satisfy her, and the funny part was that she was correct, especially due to the time dilation between Earth and the rest of Existence.

Leonel chuckled.

Had he taken losses before? Sure, but they never had to do with intelligence. He would crush this Dream Asura at their own game, and he'd feel good doing it.

Soon, he had used yet another method to step away from the Ma'at Bubble. The suffocating, more quasi or pseudo pressure of Anastasia's constant vigilance over their land faded away, but not soon afterward, they were shocked by a sudden challenge.

...

The Emberheart Lord was stunned. When he received Leonel's challenge for their Dream Pavilion, he wasn't even sure what to think.

Of course, he wasn't the one who ran the Dream Pavilion. His daughter was a member, but personally, he could only use Soul Force. Instead, it was actually his wife and Lyra's mother who was the current Head of the Dream Pavilion.

Normally, she wouldn't bother him with such things, but not only had the message infuriated her, but she also felt that it just might be an opportunity to do exactly what her husband and her brother-in-law wanted to do.

Although she wasn't fully on board with what was happening, she was accepting of it only because of what was at stake. They didn't have the luxury of letting their morality win out at the moment.

The Emberheart Lord read the letter of challenge. The more he read, the more furious he became as well.

~"I've heard that the world of Spirituals is having a grand time praising their little Princess. What a fucking joke. Do you think that if it wasn't for the shamelessness of the Owlans and the Celestial Embers that she would have earned the third place position? She lost to my wife in the Gathering of Kingdoms in humiliating fashion, and she would have lost to me if she had the balls to challenge me.

~"The world seems to think that I, Leonel Morales, am some kind of pushover. In that case, I'll show you what true strength is.

"Accept the challenge if you dare. A good friend of mine informed me that your Lord's so-called brother dared to speak foul words about my wife. Since you think talk is so cheap, I'll run your wife into the ground and humiliate her before the eyes of the entire world. In the future, you'll learn that the Morales aren't the kind of people you can speak about so casually!"

"Fuck!"

The Emberheart Lord barely managed to withstand the desire to shatter the letter of challenge to pieces. Run his wife into the ground? If he was a Dream Force expert he would have accepted already on his wife's behalf.

Everything seemed to be going wrong, and his usually even and controlled temper had been fluctuating wildly for the last few days.

This was practically the straw that broke the camel's back.

He looked toward his wife with a steely gaze. She was a beautiful woman with only the slightest hints of age on her countenance, that being the barely perceptible crows feet at the corners of her eyes. But even with this, she carried the usual grace and elegance of a Spiritual Empress.

She was actually much older than the Emberheart Lord. When he was born, she had already long since entered the Ninth Dimension and reigned supreme for a long time. If not for her status as the Emberheart Lord's wife, she would have already been listed among the elders of the family, though weaker than their true Overlords or Ancestors. Even so, he had pursued her feverishly and in the end, the Emberheart Lady had taken a liking to him and chose to birth a child for him, that being Lyra.

In the end, her choice was correct. The Emberheart Lord was on a trajectory to the peak and he had become their Lord at such a young age. Right now, his potential was only weaker than maybe two or three of their old monsters. He was even said to have a better than 20% chance of becoming a God in the future-though no one would ever dare to guarantee such a thing.

"Do you have confidence?" The Emberheart Lord asked.

She didn't answer immediately, but this was what the Emberheart Lord loved about her. Even though he could feel that she was angry as well, she remained calm and she weighed her options just the same.

"I believe it shouldn't be a problem. The variable is how much he has improved. I watched his Challenge Sequence earlier, and the reason he performed so well was because of the Life Tablet. And even then, it was thanks to others severely underestimating him that he was able to flourish like he did. His final battle with the Owlans was the biggest testament to this.

"First, he no longer has the Life Tablet, and that's the biggest knock. Second, I will not underestimate him and I will mobilize as many of our Dream Pavilion members as is allowed.

"Third, and most importantly, I believe this is a chance we cannot miss. Publicize the letter and use it as the lightning rod we missed out on."

Chapter 2737: Use That

The Emberheart Lady spoke calmly and in the end, her husband couldn't refute anything she said.

Inwardly, though, they both felt complicated about this matter. Nothing in Leonel's letter was wrong. They had disparaged his wife, and they had raised the status of Lyra.

The latter choice was because Lyra's marriage to Thalion was meant to be the catalyst they needed in order to move forward with the next steps of their plan.

Part of their mixed feelings was exactly because of this. They had put their daughter directly in the line of fire not just once, but twice now. Although the world didn't know, how could they not know that they had tried to marry her off to Leonel first.

These matters built up frustration in layers and they felt like they were being painted into a box. But ultimately, they never had a choice...

Until now.

Finally, they could take some of the brunt of the pressure away from their daughter and bear it themselves as her parents. The Emberheart Lady didn't even plan to have Lyra on the participating roster. She would do this for her child... as Lyra's mother.

They accepted Leonel's challenge.

By doing so, they felt that they could better paint the humans as the villains and their plan, which had stalled, could roll forward once more.

...

What the couple didn't know was that this wasn't their choice at all.

Leonel stood on the high clouds of the Dream Pavilion, taking in the beautiful array of blues, pinks and violets. It was truly gorgeous in ways that couldn't be described.

He had seen a lot of the world now, but he was hard pressed to think of a sight that was better.

Of course, he could have made the letter even more vicious, but he didn't, and that was because he wanted them to publicize it. He wanted them to use it as the lightning rod they were looking for.

That was exactly why he didn't mention the fact they had tried to marry Lyra to them. If he had, there was no way they'd go the extra step of publicizing it, and thus they had played right into his hands.

'Beautiful,' Leonel chuckled to himself. 'This is... fun...'

His eyes glowed, a smile that could blot out the sun spreading across his lips.

He turned and with a step, he entered the Pavilion. Inside, he found Goggles exchanging ideas about Crafting with Eamon.

They were startled with Leonel's sudden appearance and were about to hurry to stand but Leonel stopped them first.

"Whoa, whoa, I didn't come here to interrupt you guys. How's everything been going?"

"Perfect!" Eamon said with a gaze filled with excitement.

Goggles eagerly followed up, but Leonel couldn't help but sigh.

Eamon's enthusiasm was very obvious and clear, but Goggles' own was faked. It was too easy to see through. It seemed that even now, he wasn't quite comfortable around Leonel yet.

'This is just the price I have to pay. It will take time. Plus, it isn't as though I've put in as much effort as I should have. Just giving him a bunch of resources isn't going to build a friendship.'

As much as Leonel wanted to revert back to the time they would wrap their arms around one another's shoulders and face off against the world together, his actions had caused that to slip away from him.

Playing with life didn't come without its consequences.

"That's good," Leonel smiled, not showing the thoughts of his heart on his face. "I have something I might need you two for. Soon, we'll be challenging another Dream Pavilion and the rules are somewhat wacky.

"It'll be a dojo style challenge. The number of participants is dependent on myself, though there are some quirky rules we have to be familiar with.

"I'll let you guys know the rules when the time comes, but I'll be depending on you all."

As with everything the Dream Pavilion did, the laundry list of rules was extensive and if Leonel really poured it on them, they wouldn't be able to retain it all. It was better if he just explained things as they came.

"R-really?" Eamon's happy mood immediately plummeted and he felt like the sky was being overturned. He had been having fun learning more about Crafting than he had ever before. But this...

He didn't know if he was ready for this.

Leonel grinned. "You know what your greatest weakness is, Eamon?"

Eamon blinked, blushing down his collarbone.

"You're too unsure of yourself. But I'm sure you know this already. Telling you about it won't change much, I can only throw you into enough situations that you learn to be confident.

"Also, you don't need to worry, even if you lose, I can pick up the slack. Don't take this as life or death, take it as a training exercise."

Only after he heard this did Eamon exhale a breath of relief.

"Okay," he nodded. "I'll do my best."

Leonel smiled and gave Goggles some reassuring words as well before he turned and left.

His words to Eamon had only been half truths. The reality was that although he could "pick up the slack", it was graded on a curve and thus the points he accumulated for Goggles or Eamon would be limited.

Essentially, the other Pavilion had to defeat all three of them. But there was a potential situation on the table where Leonel alone covered for all of their weaknesses, and yet still didn't accumulate enough points to win.

However, Leonel didn't really have a choice in this matter. The minimum number for such a Challenge was three, unlike the other Challenge Sequence where any number could be sent in.

He couldn't use Aina's future step mother for obvious reasons. Not only was she not familiar with using Dream Force yet, but if she did her Snowy Star Owl Lineage Factor could be exposed. He had to hide her for as long as possible.

Plus, there was a great chance.

During the challenges, aside from the Pavilion Heads, it was Dimension to Dimension. Meaning, they would have to send out people at Goggles' and Eamon's level.

'I can use that...' Leonel smiled, his scheme brewing.

Chapter 2738: Victory

"You look like you're scheming something evil. All you're missing is a pitchfork, some horns, and a tail," Aina said, looking at Leonel with a chuckle.

The sudden voice appeared by Leonel's side. He was somewhat caught off guard because Aina had stepped right out from the Segmented Cube, but when he registered what she said he couldn't help but chuckle, reaching over and giving her a pinch she scurried away from.

"It seems like someone has forgotten which between the two of us is the Demon."

Aina blinked innocently. "Both of us?"

Leonel paused. Damn, she was right. But he didn't need to accept such a loss.

Aina giggled, feeling superior. It was hard to win a war of words with Leonel, his thinking speed was too fast. You just had to wait for him to put his foot in his mouth first. Well, that and be able to read his mind like she could.

Instead of trying to find a way to wiggle out of the hole he just buried himself in, Leonel scooped Aina up and rushed away, her squeals of delight filling him with much the same feelings.

**

The days passed quickly and soon there was a tremble that shook the Dream Pavilion.

The Clouds separated and an illusionary projection of the Ma'at Bubble took shape high in the skies. It looked as though the two Dream Pavilions were on a path toward a head-on collision, both rushing toward one another.

But at the final moment, they came to an abrupt stop.

Leonel stood with a smile on his face, looking out toward the approaching Dream Pavilion. His eyes landed on the Emberheart Lady, and he couldn't help but have quite a bit of praise for her inwardly.

Despite the crudeness of his challenge, she didn't seem to have the slightest bit of anger in her heart. In fact, she looked to be completely normal as though this was just another day.

He could tell that she had experienced a lot of life, and her almost regal calmness was a product of that. This wasn't the type of woman it would be easy to knock off a pedestal, nor would it be easy to see through to what she was really thinking.

Behind her, there was a hoard of Dream Force wielding Spirituals. Compared to Leonel's numbers, they were a far cry above. The two couldn't even be compared.

Even if it wasn't for the fact that Leonel was hiding the Dream Force experts he had found across the Human Bubble with Anastasia's help, those more than a thousand still wouldn't be enough to match up to the numbers of the Ma'at Bubble.

If there was any way to see through the true state of mind of this Emberheart Lady, it was as a result of his display of force. Clearly, without saying it in so many words, she was displaying her might and she was doing it in a way that the world couldn't possibly find fault with her.

Leonel's letter had already been publicized and there was simply no escaping the scrutiny the world had placed him under.

It was very easy for one to become a villain in the public eye, and that was the case even if they had once had sympathy for you.

Turning the other cheek wasn't just a pacifist's wet dream, it was also the form of protest that worked the most effectively.

The fact Leonel had chosen to lash out now instead of lick his wounds in silence made some turn against him already. The fact that the Spirituals felt like an innocent third party, as most didn't have the context of the slights against him, made it even worse. When this was coupled with the Spiritual's information campaign, and the methods through which they used to disseminate the information, the end result was to be expected.

Although it wasn't by an exaggerated margin, it could be said that more than half of those watching this challenge were on the side of the Ma'at Bubble, and that was doubly so for their own citizens.

It could be said that Leonel had given them exactly what they needed at the perfect time.

"Let's begin," Leonel said with a grin.

"What are the parameters," the Emberheart Lady asked lightly.

"Two people, just me and my Deputy Pavilion Head."

The Emberheart Lady's gaze flashed. Was this young man really so unruly? Who didn't know that the Deputy Pavilion Head was dead? Did Leonel plan to bring his corpse in?

"Let's go," Leonel didn't wait any longer.

The Emberheart Lady looked over to an older woman by her side.

"Vanama, we'll be going."

The older woman nodded and the gazes of every single one of the Spirituals flashed. If the Emberheart Lady was their number one, then Vanama was most definitely their number. And even then, Vanama had willingly abdicated to allow the Emberheart Lady to take her place.

In terms of experience, it could be said that Vanama was actually beyond the empress, and in terms of power... it was hard to tell.

Leonel grinned and didn't mind it. With a step, he entered all alone. There was no need to take Clarence's corpse with him. He wouldn't be disrespectful to that extent, even if he was playing a character.

The world fell into silence as the two entered, and a harrowing battle began to play out. Most knew that Leonel had lost the Life Tablet, so they hadn't thought that he would be able to put up much of a fight, but the result was astonishing to them.

They were neck and neck, and even with Leonel losing out on points because Clarence counted as an automatic loss, he scratched and clawed and gave them hell.

The battle in the Dream Pavilion raged on for months and each step felt just as perilous as the last.

But in the end, there could only be one winner.

By the skin of their teeth...

The Ma'at Bubble took their victory.

Chapter 2739: The Most

Leonel stepped out with a huffing breath, the image of the Ma'at Bubble fading. He could feel the stares of thousands of Spirituals on him as his gaze flickered with an unwillingness. But once they vanished, he rolled his shoulders and settled in.

'Damn, what an annoyance...' he mumbled beneath his breath.

In truth, he had, indeed, gone all out. But without the help of the Life Tablet which he had purposely not used, actually winning was a tall, tall task.

He was just barely better than the two. The problem was that he lost points because of Clarence, and in the end, he had taken a loss as a result.

As he had said previously, the challenge sequence in this format was different. Rather than an open world, there were more one on one challenges, and there was more variety in what could or couldn't happen. Even he wasn't certain of exactly what would happen.

What was ultimately true though was the fact that making up for lost points when you had bad teammates or not teammates at all in Leonel's case was impossible. It was made worse by the fact that he had no rest whatsoever.

He didn't have to fake how tired he was because he truly was at the end of his rope. The only way he could have won was if he could take advantage of the Life Tablet. But if he did that... then what would all his previous plans have been for? He would have been finished and the war happening in the Owlman Bubble right now could come back and fall right on top of his head.

He had to avoid that outcome at all costs.

However, he wasn't helpless. Although he hadn't lost on purpose in the most obvious sense, in a general sense, he still had.

He didn't need teammates that would definitely win, he just needed teammates that would at least accumulate some points.

As for why he had lost on "purpose", that was obviously because he wanted to be the one to fight against the Nomad Race Bubble. If it wasn't him, then what would be the point?

'I'll need to find a way to make it feel more realistic, though. I'm a genius, aren't I? It's about time my Dream Force breakthrough.'

Leonel grinned.

It wasn't like he had gained nothing from this battle other than a loss, and he hadn't wasted months just to force them into a pyrrhic victory either.

He had gained quite a lot from the exchange.

It had to be remembered that the Challenge Sequences between the Dream Pavilions were designed for healthy competition, it was a method of promoting unity, and that was why there were so many chances at improving one's Dream Force.

And, obviously, this time around, Leonel had gained even more of that.

Leonel's Dream Force was at the Lower Life State. Thanks to his Dream Sovereignty, he was easily comparable to the Middle Life State, even the Higher Life State depending on the opponent and the situation.

The Emberheart Lady and Vanama had been in the Higher Life State, the both of them. It was no wonder, then, that Leonel had struggled so much.

The trouble was that whoever the Khafra Dream Pavilion had would almost certainly be far more powerful than this.

But the trouble for them was that much like Leonel, they wouldn't be allowed to display this power without being exposed.

And that would be his opportunity.

Aina suddenly appeared by Leonel's side, giving a smile that wasn't a smile. Of course, this wasn't a threat, but was more so a forced happiness.

She didn't like what Leonel had to do sometimes, and she knew it was eating him up inside.

"You look tired."

Leonel grinned. "I am, but soon it won't matter. Give me a minute."

Leonel stood there in silence, taking a breath and then another breath. He didn't seem intent on exhaling at all.

Suddenly, a Forgetful Orb appeared in his palm and he crushed it.

Seconds later, his aura flourished like a rising tide, his Dream Force multiplying several times over as it finally climbed to the Middle Life State. In fact, it even seemed to show faint inklings of reaching the Higher Life State.

It seemed that even compared to his Fire Force or Bow Force, his talent in Dream Force just felt like... it was on a level all its own.

His aura settled down and he exhaled a breath, feeling much better. The fatigue from the past several months also settled down and he felt alive again.

At that exact moment, he felt a vibration. A message was trying to get through to his Dream Pavilion, but it couldn't.

Leonel chuckled. "Cute."

With a thought, the letter on the outside was burnt to ash without being able to enter.

But the process itself not only told him of what the letter said, but also alerted him to the thinly veiled threat. Obviously, whoever this Dream Asura was happened to be using this opportunity to let him know that they knew exactly where the Vast Dream Pavilion was now.

Leonel didn't take it seriously. After he was done with them, they wouldn't have the luxury to care about the Human Bubble.

'As expected...' Leonel smiled. The letter was telling him to challenge the Khafra Dream Pavilion. And she even wanted him to do it right this moment.

Flaura was feeling confident. She had seen through the limits of Leonel's talent already, and if his fatigue was factored in on top of that, they would have no chance whatsoever.

When it was likewise considered that the members of the Khafra Dream Pavilion were certainly hiding their true strength, she felt that this victory was in the bag. Taking advantage of Leonel's hot-headedness was just the cherry on top.

No one would be thinking about the Khafra Dream Pavilion, they'll just be thinking about the fallen genius that was Leonel Morales.

And it filled her with pleasure.

Watching people writhe beneath her schemes, unable to carve a path out...

She loved it the most.

Leonel took a moment to collect himself, his mind already churning with plans and strategies. He couldn't afford to dwell on his recent loss; there were bigger battles on the horizon.

Turning to Aina, he flashed her a reassuring smile. "I'm ready. Let's see what this Khafra Dream Pavilion is made of."

With renewed determination, Leonel prepared to face his next challenge head-on. The stakes were higher than ever, but he was resolved to emerge victorious, no matter the obstacles in his path. The game was far from over, and Leonel Morales was ready to play his part in shaping its outcome.

Chapter 2740: Opposite

Leonel's immediate challenge to the Khafra Dream Pavilion was received about as well as you might expect.

While the Dream Pavilion Challenge Sequences weren't accessible to the world, they were still projected to all Dream Pavilions and could be watched by all Dream Force masters who were part of this network of organizations.

As such, while the whole of Existence didn't experience his first loss, a large segment of them certainly had. It also didn't help that the Ma'at Bubble wanted to use this point to bolster their claim to their Bubble, so they made great strides to ensure that as many of their people were aware of it, even projecting the images to the Bubble as a whole.

Things didn't go as well as they expected because it was a long and drawn out battle that didn't paint them in the best of lights. But there was no choice. Once they began to project the battle, taking it down midway would only make them look worse and it was something that had to be avoided at all costs. They were already walking a tightrope; they couldn't make things worse for themselves.

The fact that Leonel had kept the battle so close despite it being a one on two confrontation dimmed their light quite considerably.

Luckily, they didn't need to feel too superior. Their message was never that Spirituals were superior to humans; that much was already well acknowledged and accepted. What they wanted was to paint the humans as a barbaric race who lashed out at any opportunity.

As for why Flaure wanted them to do this, that was something maybe only she knew. All the Spirituals knew was that this would help them finally integrate and become Demi-Gods after so long.

What none of them expected, though, was that Leonel would give them another gift on a silver platter...

The Emberheart Lady returned to the Ma'at Dream Pavilion with a sunken, pale face. She had truly gone all out, and it could be said that in the matters of Dream Force... Sovereigns were truly scary.

Leonel was so far beneath her in experience and Dream Force, and yet it took a numbers advantage to win.

Luckily, it had been a win, or else it would be hard to decipher what would have happened otherwise. The consequences weren't something that she could withstand.

She took a step, trying to stabilize her shaky condition. It had been a long time since she had gone all out, let alone pushing so hard for so long. She didn't even know how Leonel had managed to do it because unlike the two of them, he got no rest!

"Hm?"

The Emberheart Lady had only barely managed to slow her breathing when she received a report. When she saw what was happening, she frowned. Leonel had challenged someone else... already?

She could hardly even stand straight and he was challenging again?

There was only one explanation for all of that, and that was that he had let his temper get the best of him again.

That was what everyone else was thinking as well. He likely wanted to charge back into the top 200 to challenge them again.

The Vast Dream Pavilion had fallen to 201st place from 102nd after their loss. There was a harsher penalty for those at a higher ranking, and it was also exacerbated by several other overly verbose formulas that synced up with merits and things of the like.

Leonel not only couldn't access many of the items he could afford due to his Pavilion's standing, but he also got harsher penalties for losing as he did.

He was truly much too eager.

The Emberheart Lady watched this silently before she closed her eyes.

She was old, she had experienced a lot of life. Although her countenance painted the image of a young maiden, mostly... one could see the vicissitudes of life if one looked into her eyes.

She didn't hate Leonel; she had no reason to do so. It was because of their actions that he had been pushed to this point, and it was because of the cruelty of the world that a genius that would be heavily nurtured by any other Race was being constantly suppressed in this way.

She could feel his frustration and understood why he wanted to lash out. And in a motherly sort of way, she almost wanted to embrace him.

All this time, she had never heard of Leonel's parents. Were they already dead? Were they alive but unable to hold a candle to their son and thus remained in the background?

She couldn't imagine the level of pain and suffering they must be enduring to watch the world jeer and jostle their son around like this.

A soft breath came from the Emberheart Lady's mouth as she slowly opened her eyes. The tranquility had returned and the cadence of her breath was even and perfectly spaced.

How she felt about Leonel's plight was one matter, but how she would act on it was a different matter altogether. She still had her own family to worry about, her own daughter.

Somehow, they had to find a way out from underneath the thumb of this mysterious existence. Accepting their demands into perpetuity wasn't a solution, and in the end, it would cost them all their lives.

The only way out was to become a Demi-God.

After so long, she felt that she could finally breakthrough into the Peak Life State. Then, the Creation Life State would just be one step away.

This one step might as well have been an enormous chasm, one that couldn't be crossed by others even if given a lifetime. For the Emberheart Lady, she was more aware of this than anyone else. How many years had it taken her just to make it to this point?

She had lost count...

However, what much of the world didn't know was that the Spirituals were a unique case.

Much of the world thought that Force comprehension, especially related to the elements and the soul, came with ease to them...

But this wasn't true at all.

In fact, it was the opposite.