

# Dimensional Descent

## - Chapter 2761: Havoc

Leonel gave Patriarch Khafra a glance and then left without a word. He didn't need to say anything, not right now. He didn't feel like speaking at all. His thoughts were consumed with crushing this person until they had absolutely nothing left to give.

Soon, Leonel could see the gorgeous clouds of the Dream Pavilion once more. He looked up and into the skies in silence, his mind drifting elsewhere.

"Are you alright? We don't have to do any of this, you know," Aina said softly.

They really didn't need to, she was right. With their capabilities, they could probably just hide away in a place in silence. They didn't need to be at the center of every storm. While it was true that some things that had happened had forced their hand, by now they didn't need to pay attention to such things anymore.

They needed the Challenge Sequence to protect the Dream Pavilion. Without it, the Human Domains would be far too vulnerable.

They needed the Gathering of Kingdoms to prevent the world from having the right to wipe them all from existence.

They needed the Gathering of Minds because it was the only way to divert attention from themselves. Because of the Challenge Sequence and the Gathering of Kingdoms, they were right in the middle of the spotlight and they needed a method of cleansing themselves of that responsibility.

But what about now?

The next Gathering of Kingdoms would be for generations. The Gathering of Minds had successfully turned everyone's attention to the Owlans. The Dream Pavilion was protected for the foreseeable future and unless the upper echelon went entirely mask-off, there was no legitimate way of taking it away from Leonel either.

It had to be remembered that even without the Life Tablet, Leonel had met the requirements to be a Pavilion Head on his own the moment his Dream Force entered the Life State.

He didn't need the word of anyone else anymore.

All of the immediate problems were fixed, they'd done their duty to the Human Race, they had the Segmented Cube and could vanish into some obscure corner of the world and not deal with any of this anymore until they had grown strong enough. And even then it would still be their choice.

Right now, they were at least strong enough to make that choice.

Sure, if they left there would be no one left to protect the Human Race. Sure, the Dream Asura would almost certainly come for revenge, and the Owlans, and the Spirituals...

But if they didn't want to deal with it, did they have to? Did they have such an obligation? Where were their elders? Their parents? Their grandparents? Why did they have to take on such a burden?

Leonel looked down from the skies and looked at his wife's side profile. She seemed to be gazing up with him.

To think that all of this had started just because they wanted to take a vacation.

"Is that what you want?" Leonel asked.

Aina blinked and looked at Leonel. Was that what she wanted? Not really. In truth, so long as she was by Leonel's side, that was all that ever mattered to her.

In fact...

The gazes of the two met. Even without saying any words, they shared the same understanding.

It was a battle hungriness.

Aina felt a desire for battle that couldn't be satiated by anything else. Maybe even part of the reason she once resented Leonel for always putting himself in danger wasn't just because he could die, but that he always left her out of it.

As for Leonel, he could still remember the first time he stepped on a battlefield. It was that day in the Camelot Sub-Dimensional Zone. He had felt an excitement deep within himself that nothing else could match...

But he didn't have the same battle lust as Aina. No... he just really liked to win and the battlefield was the location that allowed him to bask in that feeling the most viscerally.

"I don't want to take a break right now," Leonel said. "I would prefer to make someone pay."

Aina smiled. "Then what do you want to do, husband?"

"Don't call me that right now. I'm trying to get into murder mode and you're making me feel all bubbly."

Aina laughed, a beautiful chime echoing through the Pavilion.

Suddenly, someone cleared their throat.

Leonel and Aina looked toward Eamon at the same time. The poor fellow had been awkwardly standing there for the entire time, but he had to interrupt lest he feel like he was intruding on something any more intimate than this already was.

"Um... do you need me anymore?"

"Of course I need you!" Leonel replied. "As for what we're going to do now, it's obviously to get revenge. But first, we'll be going to a certain Dwarven Bubble. I'm sure there'll be interesting things over there."

The Dream Asuras plans were interesting. For some reason, they had tried to rope in the Dwarven Race. The position of the Bubbles was the most obvious answer, but Leonel was certain that that wasn't all.

He wondered. What would they get out of Aerin coming to the Spirituals and, likely, being harmed or killed?

In a narrow view of focus, this seemed to be just a smokescreen. But from a larger...

Demonizing humans, riling up the Dwarven Race, roping in the Nomad Race, forcing the Spirituals into becoming a pawn.

There were so many large players of several Races involved, all happening while the Gods had conveniently descended to wreak havoc on the Demi-Gods.

And on top of all of that... wasn't the culling still ongoing?

It was absolute chaos, and someone was thriving in it.

A smile crept onto Leonel's face.

Even Somnus was expelled from his Clan, and he hadn't even taken personal action to do anything wrong. What would happen to this person if their actions were exposed?

"Alright, wife, let's go wreak some havoc."

Aina looked at Leonel with an excited glint in her eyes and Eamon suddenly felt like the third wheel again.

## **- Chapter 2762: Miscalculation**

### **Chapter 2762: Miscalculation**

Flaura slowly closed the book in her hand. Her cherry lips shone particularly bright in the dim lights, and her expression was entirely unreadable. Not many knew Flaura intimately, but it could be said that it was quite rare for her to not be smiling, and even rarer for minutes to tick by without her taking a sip of wine.

A miscalculation.

She never told Leonel to lose on purpose, much like she didn't tell him to win or lose against the Ma'at Bubble.

For the challenge against the Ma'at Bubble, who won or lost didn't matter. She had thought that regardless of the situation, the end result would be the same. If she went too far in giving direction, she would just end up exposing her plans, and that was something she didn't want to do.

What she didn't know was that even before she told Leonel to challenge the Khafra Bubble, he had already known that she would.

But that was exactly why the current situation was so perfect. Flaura had no idea that Leonel had already seen through her. All she could tell was that Leonel's improvement speed was far too fast, and that he had more cards up his sleeves than logic would dictate to be possible.

Flaura waved a hand and the images of Aina's combat appeared.

As expected, every use of Dream Force was so crude and unrefined. It seemed that Aina had a large Dream Force affinity, maybe one she had only recently come into contact with. This made sense considering the two were from an Incomplete World, she

couldn't find any flaws, at least not without being there to witness it personally. Ultimately, these were just projections, they couldn't grasp the whole picture.

"Some of this is still salvageable. This Aina killed a child in full view of the public, it would only make it easier to demonize them. A few will be able to tell that Little Fox isn't really a toddler, but the vast majority won't think so far."

Flaura organized her thoughts and slotted many other things into place. Even so, she couldn't quite feel satisfied, as though she was missing something.

Should she take action personally?

No, that was far too dangerous. The tradeoff wouldn't be worth it, and it would leave too much of a trail for those with sinister intentions to follow.

Plus, now that the Khafra Bubble had been dealt such a blow, things would be even more troublesome now.

They had fallen out of the top 200, and it would be a great deal of effort to get them to climb back up without...

"No, not necessarily. We can use Little Fox's death again. It will be of great use..."

If Patriarch Khafra played the role of grieving Pavilion Head, it would be very easy to make up for the losses.

When Flaura thought to this point, some of her annoyance had finally ebbed away.

The tradeoff was that the Khafra Pavilion wouldn't really be able to remain beneath the radar anymore, but that was fine. So long as she was strategic about it, this could maybe be an even better outcome.

"Leonel Morales..." She said slowly as though she was rolling the syllables across her tongue.

A sharp killing intent flashed in her eyes.

She had enough information to bury Leonel right now, but where would the benefit be? A Dream Asura didn't work based on emotion, they worked based on benefits. Even betraying their own family members was a common and acceptable practice.

She didn't just want to crush Leonel for the sake of crushing Leonel, that wouldn't further her goals.

She wanted something more.

She leaned back, tapping her finger on her armrest and finally taking another swig of wine. A sigh of satisfaction that sounded a lot more like a moan came from her lips as she reclined.

"That little boy, he should be looking for his reward, huh?" Flaure chuckled.

With another flick of her finger, the projection before her changed. However, to her surprise, there was nothing but a blank screen looking back.

"Hohoho..." her laughter deepened, but the dangerous light in her eyes had returned.

That was two now. Two slippery fish had escaped from her palms.

Leonel appeared in the Dwarven Bubble with Aina by his side.

Of course, he knew that Aina killing Little Fox was terrible optics, but there wasn't another choice. The only way to ensure victory was to not only complete the maze very quickly, but to also ensure that Little Fox could not.

It could be said that while he had won, he had paid the price. Not only was Aina stuck in the Fourth Dimension for the foreseeable future, but now there were very troublesome problems lurking in the wing.

But he didn't plan on just sitting on his hands and hoping for the best either. He would have to make his own opportunities, starting with what was going on here.

The Dwarven Bubble wasn't open to outsiders. So, in order to step into it, Leonel actually had to make use of a very special method. It could be said that this was repayment for saving Aerin.

Aerin was precisely the key he had used to enter. Or, more accurately, Leonel had replicated a special key that Aerin had on his person.

This special key needed to be used for any teleportation platform connected to the Dwarven Bubble to work, and Leonel wondered if this was also part of what the Dream Asura wanted to gain by killing Aerin.

These keys were, obviously, only in the hands of a select few, and Aerin happened to be one of them.

Of course, appearing using this key had its own share of problems because what did it mean for a teleportation platform that was rarely used to suddenly be used by two people at once?

But Leonel was already prepared.

When they were just about to touch down, his Dream Force spread and his Emulation Spatial Force acted.

By the time the Dwarven warriors rushed to the teleportation pad, there was no one there.

## **Chapter 2763: Conversation**

The Dwarven Bubble was in a bit of an uproar, but the culprits had vanished into thin air, unbeknownst to anyone else.

Much of the Dwarven Race lived underground, their culture not much different from what Leonel had seen in the Incomplete Worlds. Their societies were couched in winding tunnels and quasi darkness.

Of course, there were some beads of light here and there, mostly lining their walls and ceilings, but it was nothing like the sun could provide. In fact, a normal human from Earth might find it hard to even see very much further than a couple meters ahead of themselves.

One would think that a race of people like this would feel depressed all the time, but even from just being here a few minutes, Leonel found a sweet sort of ambience hanging in the air.

After the improvement to his Dream Force, the Dream Force of others practically felt tangible to his eyes. This world was filled with peace and prosperity.

Who was he to tell these people what would make them happy? Just because a human would feel stuffy and depressed being stuck underground for such a long time, couldn't the Pixies and Sparrows feel different?

The Dwarven Race felt at once with the earth. They had evolved as a weak Race that needed to protect themselves, and over time, they grew to accept their underground worlds with open arms. Rather than a form of oppression, it became a source of peace and prosperity for them.

It was this world that Leonel and Aina entered. Disguising themselves as a Pixie and Sparrow wasn't too difficult. With the improvement to his Dream Force, although his Emulation Spatial Force hadn't been brought along, Leonel still felt like he could control it with greater precision.

At this point, unless an expert had mastered a Creation State Force, seeing through his disguises would be almost impossible. The only other way was to have a Quasi Creation State Dream or Soul Force.

While it wasn't impossible for the Dwarven Race to have such an expert lingering around, Leonel didn't plan on running into them any time soon.

"I'll need to just observe this world for a while. Let's try part two of our vacation now," Leonel said with a chuckle.

"Mm," Aina nodded, not minding. She looked around curiously, finding everything fascinating. She quite liked the ambience of the Dwarven Race, it was exactly this kind of atmosphere she wanted to recreate with her and Leonel's children. If they had a few little princes and princesses running around, wouldn't it feel a lot like this?

A smile couldn't help but bloom on her face.

Soon, the couple had found a hotel of sorts to stay in. Rather than working like Earth, though, the penthouses of this hotel were located much deeper into the ground. The closer to the world's core, the more expensive it was.

Leonel didn't want to be too conspicuous, so he picked out a mid-tier room for himself and Aina.

As they descended to their room, he listened to the various conversations.

More than once, he picked up some mention of Aerin. He could hear their pride in their voices and he even felt somewhat bad.

The entire world had all but forgotten about Aerin, when in reality he was just as important to the duo as Lyra had been. In fact, in some respects, he was even more important.

He knew when to advance and when to retreat, and Leonel actually had quite a good impression of him.

But then his ears suddenly twitched as he picked up a peculiar stream amongst the cloud of positivity.

"It really is inappropriate. Our Dwarven Race has always hidden in the shadows, suddenly being thrust into the spotlight like this will only do us no good."

"I agree. Although Prince Aerin brought us great pride, there's been more pressure at the borders recently. A lot of Bubbles have sent envoys to act as ambassadors, but King Mulin has rejected them all. Although he did so politely, how would the other Bubbles take this?"

"You're right. Even if they don't take offense, they'll take it as a sign of weakness and use it as an opportunity to oppress us. The rewards Prince Aerin brought back this time are too extraordinary, and there are a lot of people eyeing us now. I think the



ambassadors are just a pretext to "exchange" goods, and it won't be long before the knowledge they want to exchange ends up being those high Order Blueprints."

The two Sparrows clicked their tongue, lamenting about the state of their world.

Leonel's eyes narrowed.

It had to be remembered that Internal Sight was an extension of all five senses, whether it was sight or touch or smell, it didn't matter.

Right now, Leonel had stripped down his Internal Sight of everything but his hearing sense. It made it easier for him to control and stop others from detecting. So even though he was walking leisurely and even chatting with Aina, his actual senses were spreading across hundreds of kilometers.

Unfortunately, Anastasia couldn't control her senses like this, so it was best for Leonel to do it.

His Ability Index directly filtered out useless conversations and narrowed in on the ones that triggered any sparks in his Dreamscape, and this one was particularly fascinating, especially since the situation on the outside didn't reflect their thoughts.

The outside world was completely enamored with Lyra, they weren't talking about Aerin at all. So was this just a coincidence? Or did it reflect something deeper?

With how isolated the Dwarven Bubble was, it could easily be an either/or type of situation. But wasn't it precisely because they were so isolated that their situation was so easy to predict?

'No. I don't believe that the Dwarven Race's higher ups are foolish enough to not pay attention to the outside world at all... Wait-'

The conversation continued and Leonel picked up on something that made his eyes narrow.

## **Chapter 2764: Ear to Ear**

"The Nomads and Cloud Race are especially pushy. But there's just no way we can let the Cloud Race in, what kind of commotion would that cause? Once you let them in, you'll never be able to kick them out. We'll have rats scurrying around our world again and again."

'Cloud and Nomad?' Leonel's thoughts sped through several deductions. 'Are the Cloud Race related? No, unlikely. I don't believe that this Dream Asura can just puppeteer so many Races at the same time, it's too much.'

'If they did control so many Races, what would even be the point in slinking around like this? They could just directly declare war.'

'The only explanation is that they either only control strategic populations of these Races and are ready to use them to change the situation at any time, or they're taking advantage of the Cloud Race's character to act as a smokescreen for their real intentions.'

Leonel's gaze flashed. '... Aerin is in trouble. His disappearance could still work against him, even now.'

Leonel jumped from thought to thought, his deductions hard to follow for anyone on the outside looking in, but the more he thought, the more assured he felt about certain things until his thought process landed on one thing.

Didn't that Cloud Race genius pair up with an Owlman descendent during the Gathering of Minds?

A flash of lightning sparked through Leonel's mind and a strong impulse suddenly fuelled him. He realized something interesting at that point.

Did he really force the Owlmen into their current situation? Or was it that he just moved their plans up and caught them off balance a bit?

'I only have 12% assurance in that deduction. I need more information.'

Leonel switched off his thoughts before they spilled over with Auspicious Air. That wouldn't help with his attempt to stay incognito.

Soon, he and Aina reached their hotel room and slipped inside.

Aina went to take a shower and Leonel checked around the place with particular focus on the Force Arts that protected it.

There was nothing out of order, and by this point, even the Ninth Dimensional experts of the Dwarven Race had no right to pull the wool over his eyes. After touching the threshold of the Self State, it would be a tall task to trick him with Force Arts alone. The way he saw the world seemed to have bloomed like a flower. He was simply on an entirely different level.

After he was done, Leonel flicked his fingers a few times and changed the Force Arts in a beat.

Then, he sat on the bed and pulled out Little Fox's hands. Aina had grabbed them after his death.

Technically speaking, any part of their enemy's body that survived should have been teleported back to the Nomads. But Leonel had been able to stop that while he controlled Aina's body. It wasn't even particularly difficult to make it look as though the hands had been destroyed while storing them away secretly.

The first time Leonel had seen these hands, he had felt a weird feeling from them. And looking at them now more closely, he felt that it was even more true.

'Angel wings... demonic scales... an aged hand... and beast fur...?'

A spark of lighting as thick as a man's waist barrelled through Leonel's Dreamscape.

'No way...'

Angel wings for the Owlans.

Purple scales for the Dream Asura.

An aged hand? One that looked completely normal aside from its pulsing green veins? Why overthink it, didn't this just reflect Little Fox's true age?

It could be humans. It could be the Cloud Race-other than their Cloud Figures, the amorphous blob of cloud-like Force and runes that acted as their hair and the back of their heads, the Cloud Race looked no different from Humans.

It shouldn't be the Nomad Race, that was because he had seen their Hands of God and this shouldn't be what represented them.

And then the fur... could obviously only be the Beast Race. In fact, when he looked closer, it was a fur almost identical to the fur Leonel had used to make Aina's military uniform... it was just on an even higher level.

Leonel let out a hollow laugh that quickly came from his belly. He couldn't imagine that they would make such a stupid mistake.

But then he understood.

Little Fox hadn't brought out these changes to his hands originally, he only wanted to protect his life. Aina's strength, or rather Aina under the control of Leonel, was so powerful that he had no choice but to bring out these trump cards.

Leonel's thoughts flickered toward Wicked and he felt that he pieced it all together.

Now he was absolutely certain. The participants in this war were the Owlans, the Beasts and the Dream Asuras.

Wicked had been able to add to his path just by regressing to a younger age, and wasn't that the same ability Little Fox had displayed?

How could a small Nomad Race member possibly come into contact with not just one, but two Demi-God Races? Now, it should be three! This beast fur was most definitely from a Demi-God Beast on a higher level than the tiger that made up Aina's military uniform.

At that moment, Aina suddenly came out from the bathroom. A towel wrapped around her, and though to the outside world she was a Pixie, how could Leonel's own disguise be hidden from his eyes? He could see her in her full glory.

Aina gave Leonel a weird look because he was holding a dead man's hands and laughing like a maniac, but before she could react, he tossed the hands to the side like they were trash and reached a hand out to grab her.

Aina dodged backward, but a sly grin on Leonel's face made her realize she had misjudged something.

Leonel's hand caught her towel and pulled it toward himself, revealing a gorgeous figure.

Leonel grinned ear to ear.

## **Chapter 2765: Innocence**

Leonel pinned Aina beneath him, wrapping an arm around her waist and intertwining his free hand in one of hers.

It had been a long while since the two had sex on an actual bed, even though this one was only barely large enough for their heights.

Leonel was just over 6'9" and Aina was easily over 6'2". It could be said that the beds meant for the Dwarven Race were very much not designed for them.

Even so, they made do, forgetting the world and having a sweet sort of moment together that strayed from their usual wild antics.

By the time either one actually came up for breath, they were flushed. Aina's skin seemed painted in red, looking so thin and delicate that even her beating heart could be seen between her large breasts.

Leonel flipped her on top of him and wrapped around her waist tighter, his hands sinking into her soft skin. Their hearts beat as one and their movements were slow and deliberate, almost as though they weren't chasing any sort of climax, but rather wanted to enjoy every stroke and every moment.

They wasted the day away, not minding anything else until they fell into one another's embrace.

"Are you going to tell me what happened now?" Aina asked, pinching Leonel's waist. This guy took advantage of her. Had she still been in the Eighth Dimension, there was no way she would have made that mistake earlier.

"Who asked you to take a shower? Clearly, you were seducing me," Leonel said righteously.

Aina rolled her eyes. "I'm so sorry, mighty king. Next time I want to groom myself I'll ask for your permission first."

Leonel's hand reached down as squeezed a cheek, feeling endlessly satisfied.

"As long as you know the error of your ways."

Aina giggled and rolled her eyes again. "Now, quickly, tell me."

In truth, she didn't mind it. Leonel was at least half right. Why would she shower here when she had the best water in the world available to her in the Segmented Cube?

Honestly, her libido was getting higher and higher these days the stronger she grew. Luckily, her husband was more than equipped to keep up.

"They just made a foolish mistake. I'm almost certain that I know the parameters of their alliance now, and that makes things much easier."

Leonel waved a free hand and the green-veined hand shot up toward him.

"The only variable is this hand here, but I'm pretty sure if I analyze it, I can deduce whether it's truly meant to be a Nomad palm, or something else. In fact, Anastasia, what do you think?" Leonel asked.

A World Spirit should be more sensitive about these things. So long as Leonel directed her, it shouldn't be too difficult to tell.

"Human," Anastasia said before shrieking. Covering her eyes with her little palms, she ran away at her fastest speed.

Leonel and Aina burst into laughter.

Anastasia always gave them their privacy. At the very least, she understood this little bit of decorum. She didn't spend her time spying on everyone. As a World Spirit, her concept of time was different from most everyone else, so as long as Leonel interacted with her from time to time, she wouldn't feel lonely.

The existence of a World Spirit was mostly spent in long bouts of solitude. It was just that Anastasia had awakened some sentience of her own, so she wasn't exactly like a normal World Spirit should be. If not, she wouldn't be so embarrassed by Leonel and Aina's display.

"Human, huh?" Leonel looked at the palm. Surprisingly, he still wasn't certain as though he was missing something.

However, regardless of what it was, he still felt confident.

"What does this mean?" Aina asked.

"It means that I know their weakness, and they only think they know mine. A while ago, I overheard a conversation between some Dwarven Races about how outsiders are interested in the rewards they got from the Gathering of Minds. There's some pressure, some artificial, some not.

"This makes it easier to parse through the noise and understand exactly what they want to do. We can, mostly, ignore the Cloud Race and focus our attention on the Nomads. In fact, we can even maybe use the Cloud Race not much unlike they are."

"Then what do you want to do?"

"Well, first... I think it's about time the Pavilion Head of the Dwarven Race's Dream Pavilion changes," Leonel said with a grin.

"You are...?"

"If I was this Dream Asura, after the Khafra Dream Pavilion fell out of the top 300, I'd have them challenge the Dwarven Dream Pavilion for their spot back.

"This would cause two things. Not only would this let the Khafra Bubble rise back up, but it would also be a signal to the world that the Dwarven Race is vulnerable. By then, the artificial pressure would increase and give them a chance to strike.

"The more pressure the Dwarven Race is under, the more chances there would be. If something happens to Aerin at just the right time, it could truly spark the flames of war."

"So you want to hand the Khafra Bubble their second loss in a row."

Leonel grinned. "I haven't had enough fun crushing those bastards yet. In fact, I think it's about time Patriarch Khafra dies."

Aina's gaze flickered. Sensing the determination from Leonel, she suddenly felt something inside of her heating up again. This time, it was her turn to pounce.

"Ah, my innocence!" Leonel called out.

"Shh, shh, don't struggle," Aina whispered into his ear, her coercion leaking and making goosebumps rise up all across his skin. "It'll hurt at first, but then it'll feel good."

Leonel was aghast, what kind of role-play was this? Where was the morality? What happened to their little cute romance? Where was the justice? Why wasn't she putting it inside her yet?

Leonel's face looked like it was painted in horror, but his body didn't resist in the slightest, making Aina let out a bell-like laughter.

## **Chapter 2766: Sensitive**

Through some roundabout methods, Leonel managed to find the location of the Dwarven Bubble's Dream Pavilion. He changed his appearance again and let Aina enter the Segmented Cube. At the moment, he looked like a Sprite of average appearance, standing around five feet tall with a pair of translucent wings and skin that was just barely the faintest touch of green.

Was it a bit ballsy to go to the heart of a Dream Force capital with a disguise formed by Dream Force?

Of course.

Did he care?

Not at all.

Travel between the cities of the Dwarven Bubble was especially lax and the security was even more so. In fact, by the time Leonel got to the city that held the Dream Pavilion, he had realized that it wouldn't be difficult to join at all. All he had to do was take a small test that only had the requirement of reaching the necessary bar for affinity.

The test for Dream Force in Complete Worlds, or more accurately ones that met a necessary standard of quality, were quite benign. They had special formations designed to pull those with improper Dream Force affinity out of a helpless state before they fell into an endless spiral of their own memories.

The prerequisite for this formation to work, though, was for the user to have adequate Soul Force affinity.

For Leonel, this test was obviously easy and he didn't waste any time entering the Dream Pavilion. He didn't have the time to waste even if he wanted to.

He had to find a way to either become the new Dream Pavilion Head, or secure himself a spot on the roster to contend against the Nomads, or else all of this would be for naught.

Logically, there was no reason for a Dream Pavilion to pick him out of the numerous seasoned disciples, so he had to carve out his own path, and for that he had his own ideas.

He had already released the bait, he just had to wait for a bite.

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Aerin spent everyday like he was walking on a bed of nails. He tried to keep his steps as light as possible, and yet his own weight was what did the most harm to him.

Although he had survived, he couldn't stop himself from thinking about what was going on. But the Dwarven Race was too isolated for him to get any solid information. There had to be a better way...

But if he stepped out again, wouldn't he just be throwing himself to the wolves once more?

However, today, he really couldn't sit still.

His father had come to confront him about leaving, something that he thought he had hidden perfectly. But apparently, he knew the whole time... or so Aerin thought.

It was only after Aerin's father left that Aerin realized he had been framed. The timelines for the spike in the formation and his exit didn't line up at all. He had been wronged, but even deeper than that... didn't this mean that there was an infiltrator into their Bubble they had lost complete track of?

Aerin realized immediately that this was his fault. The only way someone could have done this without detection was by using his key. He thought that he had secured it on his person, but clearly this individual had abilities that were far beyond his capability to understand.

Aerin felt like an ant in a frying pan. He wasn't sure what to do.



On the one hand, he felt that he should inform his father, but as a Dream Force expert, he knew exactly how foolish that was. His father wasn't a Dream Force expert, and those that couldn't protect their minds were vulnerable to leaking information.

'I'll have to speak to Old Bastian...'

With that thought, Aerin quickly left. His destination? The Dream Pavilion.

However, he was once again met with a situation that was entirely out of his expectations.

A Sprite he didn't recognize blocked his path on the road toward the main Pavilion. Most greeted him warmly, and he thought that this was yet another until they stepped in front of him.

Aerin blinked and frowned. It couldn't be said that the Dwarven Race was perfectly harmonious, no Race or even power could claim such a thing. However, they were still more cohesive than most.

While he couldn't sense any hostility from this Sprite, he clearly wasn't as respectful or endearing as the other either. But what was oddest was that Aerin felt that he couldn't read his Dream Force at all. When had someone like this appeared? The only people he struggled to do this with were old and wizened.

"Hello, may I help you?"

"Yes, you could," Leonel said with a smile. "I can see that you're in a rush, but I do have something very important to tell the prince. I believe you owe me a favor, no?"

Aerin's pupils constricted. He could tell exactly what Leonel was referring to. This was the man who saved him back then, but who was he? He still didn't know for certain.

Almost immediately, a cold sweat permeated Aerin's back, could it really be that this was the ploy the whole time, to infiltrate the Dream Pavilion? But then why would he expose himself like this? Unless there was a plan in motion already that was far too late to stop?

The more Aerin thought, the more he spiraled into feelings of guilt.

Leonel didn't explain, this wasn't the place to do so.

"Come with me," Leonel said, "it's a bit sensitive."

Some of the Dwarven Race members saw this scene and raised an eyebrow, but they didn't think much of it.

As Aerin had said, they were mostly harmonious. Aerin was also a kind prince that had given many of them pointers before, so it wasn't too weird for someone else to ask for his help. Those who were part of the Dream Pavilion were a small population to begin with.

## Chapter 2767: Imprison

"Who are you?" Aerin asked coldly, furiously pressing down his anxiety.

"I would tell you... but honestly I don't trust your brain to stay your brain," Leonel said with a laugh.

Aerin frowned. It had always been him gatekeeping information because he was worried about the Dream Force of others, when had it become the other way around?

Although there was a proponent of Force Manipulation level when it came to protecting one's mind, affinity was although a huge aspect. If one had a high enough Dream Force Affinity, even if the attacker was in the Creation State, there was a chance you could pick up on the manipulation ahead of time.

Aerin was only in the Impetus State with his Dream Force, but his affinity was so high that he felt confident in protecting himself against most people. He only really had to start worrying if the upper echelon of Demi-Gods started to get involved, but even then they would have to take a slow and winding path to deal with him.

"You don't have to worry too much about it. Doesn't the fact I'm exposing myself to you count for anything?"

Aerin hesitated. This man had saved him, and had come to him first. All the anxiety of what might be going on had been crushed down to a single point. At the very least, he could monitor this man by staying by his side.

"What do you want, then?" Aerin asked.

"It's simple really, just want your Dream Pavilion to follow my orders for a little bit."

"And if we don't?"

"Well, let's see," Leonel began raising up his fingers one by one, "first you'll be embroiled in war, your sacrifices will be used to enrich others, you'll likely end up helping another Mortal Race reach Demi-Godhood before yourselves, your lineage will be wiped out... need I go on?"

Aerin frowned. It didn't sound like Leonel was threatening him with these matters, but rather that this would be the inevitable fallout for what was to come.

"How do you possibly expect me to trust you?"

Suddenly, a Silver Tablet appeared in Leonel's hand.

"Because I could conquer your Dream Pavilion on a whim and we wouldn't even have to have this conversation."

Aerin's eyes opened so wide it seemed that they could fall out from their sockets.

The world didn't know that the Life Tablet was far from the only Tablet Leonel had. In terms of Wise Tablets, he had two. One was the Life Tablet, and the second was the Silver Tablet he had received from the Valiant Heart Zone.

Just due to the existence of the Silver Tablet alone, Leonel could exhibit quite some control over the Challenge Sequences, it was just that he hadn't revealed this trump card yet because it wasn't time.

However, this time, he would thoroughly crush the Nomads.

The Silver Tablet could do everything the Life Tablet could do, just on a smaller scale. Leonel knew that the Nomads, and especially Patriarch Khafra, had hidden much of their strength. Unless he used the tablet, even after his breakthroughs, he had no guarantee of winning.

"You... how..."

Aerin's heart was beating out of his chest and he could hardly control himself.

The Tablets were impossibly rare, however many of them had been scattered across the world, most of which were concentrated in the hands of the Gods that couldn't use them to their full potential. After all, to bring out the full strength of a Wise Tablet, you had to be a Wise Star Order, and only those naturally born with or descended from the Northern Star Lineage Factor could have this title.

Aerin already knew this person was human, but he didn't expect him to be a Wise Star Order!

Leonel put the Silver Tablet away casually.

Slowly, Aerin began to regain his breath and his beating heart settled down.

Originally, he had thought Leonel was trying to treat him like a child. The amount of control a Pavilion Head had over a Dream Pavilion was exceptional, practically no one

could threaten them here. But if there was a Life Tablet, Leonel wasn't exaggerating by saying that he could do it by force if he wanted to. By then, he would have carved out a place in the Dwarven Bubble that Pixies and Sparrows couldn't even step into.

However, even with all of this said, it was still too difficult to trust Leonel, while Leonel wasn't willing to tell Aerin too much.

In reality, the easiest thing to do would be to forcefully cease this Dream Pavilion. It had been so easy getting here that even the Human Bubble had more protections.

The reason he didn't was because this news would almost certainly leak to that Dream Asura, and if they were half as smart as Leonel thought they were, they would link it back to him. He couldn't allow that, not just yet.

"Tell you what," Leonel suddenly said. "If you're willing to be trapped by me for the time it takes for this to blow over, I will tell you everything."

Aerin immediately recoiled.

Leonel didn't say a word, letting him think through it. And, as expected, after several seconds, Aerin nodded solemnly.

At some point, being overly cautious would only harm him. Several times now Leonel had exposed bits and pieces of his plan that would have worked out far better if Aerin was in the dark about them. If Aerin didn't take any risks himself, how much sincerity could he be said to have?

They were both smart people, and Aerin couldn't think of a reason why Leonel would go through all of this when he could have captured him back then. After all, Leonel's strength was far beyond his own.

"Good, in that case, I will tell you everything. Then, you must help me claim the Pavilion Head position before being 'imprisoned'."

Aerin took a breath and nodded again. He listened intently to Leonel's words, and the more he heard, the more his eyes widened.

## **Chapter 2768: Portal**

"Old Bastian, I need to talk to you," Aerin bowed respectfully at the entrance of a Dream Pavilion. He didn't need to be so polite, but Old Bastian was still his elder. That said, the fact he called him Old Bastian at all went to show how close their relationship was.

"Come in, come in," an aged but cheery voice came from the inside.

Aerin smiled a hint bitterly and then entered.

"How many times do I have to tell you there's no need for such formalities, little prince? You've already done more for the Dwarven Race than I've done in my entire lifetime. If anything, I should be bowing to you."

An aged Sparrow with a head of white hair and a face full of wrinkles beckoned Aerin forward, urging him to sit on the prayer mat by his side.

The older Sparrows grew, the larger their wings became. In fact, some of them even showed mutations that allowed them to grow multiple.

Old Bastian had two pairs of wings that looked like they had been plucked from a dragonfly's back. Usually, for the average Sparrow, a wing that was more than a foot long was already a huge boon. But Old Bastian's wings were almost as long as he was tall, spreading out to over four feet.

Though the man looked aged, the one thing that never lagged behind for Sparrows were their wings. He was more agile now than maybe any other person in the Dwarven Kingdom.

"You're flattering me again, Old Bastian," Aerin said a bit sheepishly.

"Only what you deserve, only what you deserve. Now tell me, what've you come here for today?" Old Bastian said with a jovial smile. "I can tell there's something weighing heavily on you."

Aerin took a deep breath. Even though he took a seat on the prayer mat, he had a hard time looking Old Bastian in the eye.

"Old Bastian, will you hate me if I ask you for something unreasonable?"

The old Sparrow looked at Aerin deeply before giving him a meaningful smile.

"You wear your heart on your sleeve too much, little prince. That is why you're so easily manipulated. I've spoken to your father about letting you explore the world, but it seems that you've gone off and done it on your own, hm?"

Aerin's heart jumped.

Old Bastian chuckled. "If you want to sneak away, you need to be sharper than that. And let me guess, the report that was marked false wasn't you, correct? Meaning there's a spy somewhere in our world now?"

"Well, I wouldn't call myself a spy."

The sudden voice nearly made Aerin leap out of his skin. His head snapped back to see the disguised Leonel, wondering what the hell he was doing. Hadn't they already agreed on a strategy?

Indeed they had, but after seeing Old Bastian's reaction, Leonel knew that the original plan had to be scrapped.

Old Bastian looked back as though he wasn't very surprised. "So you're the one who's been manipulating my prince?"

The old man suddenly released a dignified air. It was clear that even in his old age, he had quite some sharpness remaining.

"No, that wouldn't be me. But I do need your help to deal a blow against that person."

"A convenient story," Old Bastian replied coolly.

Leonel smiled. None of this surprised him, he had given it a 50/50 chance. If anything, he was happy that Old Bastian recognized this flaw, because it meant that the Dwarven Race wasn't incompetent.

From the beginning, the biggest flaw in Leonel sneaking in was never himself, but rather Aerin. If Aerin didn't hide his tracks well enough the first time he left, it would be easy to expose Leonel instead of confusing the first and second break-ins as the same instance.

Without a word, Leonel flipped his palm and revealed the Silver Tablet.

This time, Old Bastian was even quicker on the pick up than Aerin. But this was because unlike Aerin, Old Bastian had a lot of information about the outside world... like how the Spirituals had just started a campaign against the humans for unknown reasons.

"You're here to retaliate against the Spirituals?" Old Bastian asked.

"Close enough." Leonel nodded, not elaborating.

"My Dwarven Race doesn't want to get involved in this."

"I'm sure you're smart enough to know you don't have a choice. Whether it's me or your enemies, someone is going to throw you into the fray one way or another. So why not do it with some flair and show the world your Race isn't to be trifled with?"

Old Bastian fell into silence for a long while and Leonel didn't interrupt him.

"You want my Dream Pavilion Head position?"

"Temporarily."

"I doubt that," Old Bastian chuckled. Even if Leonel kept to his word and abdicated, would their Race ever truly be free of him? Or would they end up in his clutches?

Leonel didn't refute, there was no point in doing so.

With a grunt, Old Bastian slowly stood to his feet.

"If you want it, then show me you're worthy. If you cannot defeat me, what would be the point?"

Leonel chuckled. "Alright, why not?"

Leonel quite liked this old man. He reminded him of coach and Old Hutch. Though his mouth wasn't as foul as either, his temper was surely there.

"What would you like to play?" Old Bastian asked.

"Feel free to choose, or else you won't be convinced, right?" Leonel replied.

"Good. Then we will play a round of portal."

Portal was a game not much unlike Go of Earth. The difference was that the board was constructed of teleportation Force Arts, thus the namesake. Not only did you play your normal pieces, but you also moved the Force Arts around, changing the landscape of the board by either triggering or blocking teleportations.

It was essentially a game within a game.

Because the teleportation Force Arts were incomplete, it relied both heavily on intelligence and knowledge of the game of Go.

Honestly, Leonel had never played Go before, so he was a layman...

But his Force Art comprehension was so far beyond Old Bastian's that it didn't matter. He didn't even bother considering where to put down his pieces, directly bulldozing the old man and teleporting all his pieces away.

In the end, Old Bastian didn't even last a few minutes before he conceded.

## **Chapter 2769: Pacifism**

Leonel grinned as the Go board disappeared. It seemed that Old Bastian had a bit of a temper, though that much should have been obvious after their first interaction.

Truthfully, he was a little embarrassed. The reality was that he planned on giving Leonel a chance even if he lost. That was because he couldn't even remember the last time he lost in a game of Portal. Winning or losing didn't necessarily mean that Leonel was inferior to him, he was just making things a bit difficult on Leonel on purpose.

The reason for this was because the most important aspect of the game, the portals themselves, were meant to be created at random. The issue was that there was no one skilled enough to make them. The game was extraordinarily complex.

As such, usually when you wanted to play with a new person, you would have to buy a board from the Dream Pavilion exchange. Most, though, would have dedicated boards that they used with certain people so that they could maintain a level of fairness.

Every board had a random assortment of portals, and these portals would change and morph over time depending on the moves made, keeping the game fresh. In fact, the number of variations were so numerous that if you only ever planned to play with just one person, you would likely never need to buy another.

This was where Old Bastian's sneakiness came into play. He had several dedicated boards, but this one in particular was the one he always used to play a different number of wide ranging opponents.

Because it had seen several play styles over the years, it was somewhere in the middle—that meaning that Old Bastian was somewhat familiar with its portals, but not to the extent he would have been had he played the same person again and again.

This was all to say that from the beginning, Leonel was playing with a handicap, and yet Old Bastian still lost. It was only right that he was a bit peeved and embarrassed.

Even so, Leonel found it quite adorable. He didn't have much interaction with his own grandfather, but he liked to imagine that Gervaise wouldn't be too dissimilar to this in the event that he lost. Though, it was also difficult for Leonel to imagine that man losing in the first place.

At that moment, there was a sudden tremble and a letter of challenge, wreathed in silvery white fog appeared before Old Bastian.

This was honestly the worst timing. He was already pissed off, and seeing this he almost shattered it with a palm.

The challenge was, unsurprisingly, from the Khafra Bubble. Their intention was clearly to rise back to the top 300, and then hopefully the top 200 soon afterward in a bid to "pay back" Leonel and Aina for their carnage.



What they didn't know was that Leonel was already waiting for them here, ready to slap them back down with a single palm.

He really wanted to see where they would pivot after Patriarch Khafra was dead.

When Old Bastian settled down, though, his gaze couldn't help but flash like lightning. He looked at Leonel as though he could see right through him.

Leonel chuckled and put a finger to his lips, urging Old Bastian to keep quiet.

It only made sense that the old man would figure it out. Even if he couldn't see the whole picture, he was still a Dream Force master. Was it really a coincidence? Who else could this young man be if not him?

"Alright, let's go. We have a challenge to prepare for. How many did they ask to participate?"

"... Two," Old Bastian said softly.

"I see. In that case, my wife and I will enter."

"Hm?" Old Bastian frowned. He wouldn't even get to enter? It was impossible for him to trust Leonel to this extent.

"I can't allow any mistakes and the margins this time will likely be smaller. We need to make sure that we bring out the team with the highest percentage chance of winning."

Old Bastian's frown deepened. Could it really be that even this boy's wife was stronger than him in the aspect of Dream Force? What had he lived all these years for?

Leonel had already expected for them to go with two. Not only would it limit the variables further, they would be able to draw attention to Little Fox's death all the more so. To these people, every one of their actions was meticulously chosen so that they could maximize their benefits.

And this was the game Leonel liked to play the most.

"Don't stop trusting me at the most crucial point, old man. If you're going to bet, don't half ass it. Go all in."

"... You're definitely going to pull my Dwarven Race into a war, aren't you?"

Leonel's smile didn't fade, but he had to admit that this man was sharp. Instead of answering directly, he swiped a hand over his face and suddenly, he looked exactly like Aerin. There wasn't even a single strand of hair that was out of place.

"Does this answer your question?"

Old Bastian's heart trembled. If Leonel really did something wild while using Aerin's face, just what kind of storm would that cause?

"Alright, into the Segmented Cube you go, Aerin."

Aerin could only watch as Leonel clasped a hand over his shoulder. Looking into his own face was surreal, but frightening at the same time. He already understood exactly what Leonel wanted to do.

Once Aerin was gone, Leonel looked right into Old Bastian's eyes, trying to read him.

"When you do things, you have to do them thoroughly. There are enemies knocking on your Dwarven Race's door as we speak, they're pressuring you to hand over treasures your prince fought for, they already tried to kill that very prince once before and they'll do it again.

"Pacifism won't help you, it will only hinder you. Now isn't the time to cower."

## **Chapter 2770: Aerin and...**

The words rung in Old Bastian's heart like a bell. It almost felt like Leonel was attacking his soul with his Dream Force, and maybe he was... but Old Bastian had the clarity nonetheless to realize that he was correct.

They were already in a passive position. If they didn't take action now, when would they? They were already looking for an excuse to target them anyway... so let them come.

At that moment, Old Bastian had the momentum to make a unilateral decision for the whole of the Dwarven Race.

In reality, he had the prestige to do so... but in practice, he knew that he shouldn't.

He was most definitely one of the top three experts of the Race, and due to his position as the head of the Dream Pavilion, he was even faintly beyond the other two. But it wasn't to the point that he could unilaterally suppress them. In fact, in a true battle where he didn't have the support of the Dream Pavilion, he would lose to them both. Dream Force simply didn't translate well to battle for most.

However, when it came to intelligence, they took his word for most things and his thoughts definitely weighed the heaviest.

The camaraderie of the Dwarven Race went all the way to the very top. He saw those two as his siblings and he wouldn't have it any other way.

There was no time to consult them even if he wanted to. The challenge would start very soon, and even if he did have the speed to inform them... would they have the time to have a deep back and forth? What would even be the point in a half-assed conversation?

There was really only one choice to make.

He exhaled slowly.

"I'll trust you in this matter for now."

Leonel nodded. When he turned away, vanishing, his expression was incredibly solemn. He barely registered the Pavilion Head position being transferred over to him.

What he was solemn about wasn't the coming battle. Even if it was a tall mountain, he would climb it if it meant crushing the Nomads.

His solemnity had everything to do with Old Bastian's decision. He knew that it wasn't easy to make such a decision, and it made his respect for the man reach as deep as it could.

For no other reason than the fact he wanted to, he would do right by these people.

...

The Dream Pavilion projections clashed in the air.

"Will it be alright?" Aina's voice entered Leonel's soul. "The situation is a bit odd now. You'll be fine, but I'm still in the Fourth Dimension. If we set things like this..."

As the challenger, it was the Dream Pavilion's choice of who to send up. Because of this, Leonel understood what Aina's worry was. If they suddenly appeared as a man and a woman, and Aina was registered as the Fourth Dimension, it might be too easy to connect them together. Then, what would be the point of disguises.

"You don't have to worry about that," Leonel replied. "The Dimension requirement is a maximum, not a minimum."

Aina's eyes lit up with understanding and she nodded.

As for the fact this meant that Leonel wanted her to use her Fourth Dimensional body to deal with someone who was clearly in the Ninth Dimension, she didn't even blink.

She didn't believe that Leonel would ever put her in danger. If he was doing this, it meant he was confident, and that was only natural. This was a battle of Dream Force, not the real world...

This was his Domain.

Patriarch Khafra frowned when he saw that it wasn't Old Bastian acting. But when he looked at "Aina", he was even more shocked.

That was because it wasn't Aina standing there at all.

It was Lyra.

He didn't even have time to understand how the hell any of this could be happening. Let alone him, even the rest were in complete and utter shock.

It wasn't that he didn't think it was potentially a disguise, but he simply couldn't see any flaws.

But it was too late to retract the command now. They were going in.

...

Soon, their gazes flashed and they entered the courtroom-like region. The whole time, Leonel wasn't paying to Patriarch Khafra at all because his focus was trained on the second man.

This second man was the very same one that had been waiting outside of Patriarch Khafra's pavilion the first time. His Hands of Gods were larger than his three meter tall finger, intertwining their fingers into what looked like a blooming flower of digits.

Leonel found him interesting because he felt no less dangerous than Patriarch Khafra... just in a different sort of way.

Right then, three floating challenge balls appeared... and it was Leonel's right to choose.

...

At that moment, the entire world was in an uproar... or, rather, all those paying attention were. And for the Dwarven Race, that could pretty much be considered to be the all. And when the Spirituals learned of it, they too were in shock.

The Emberheart Lord personally rushed to his daughter's living quarters, and when he found Lyra's confused face looking back at him, he was completely stunned. In fact, for a moment, he thought his own daughter was the fake one so he brought her to his wife

to be checked, only to find out that the Emberheart Lady had entered a state of strict meditation.

Even so, Lyra was eventually able to prove to her father that it was, indeed, her... but that only shocked them further.

How could there be such a perfect disguise technique in this world?

How could they know that Leonel had long treated Emulation Spatial Force like a layman's Infinity Force? On top of that, he not only had immaculate control over both his and Aina's body due to his Ability Index and their marriage bond, but he also had Little Tolly on top of that.

There was simply no seeing through him.