

# Dimensional Descent

## Chapter 3261: Returned

Aina swept out her battle ax, her blood roses rotating like a garden of blades, blackened lightning forming their thorns and painting the skies across in an array of death, destruction, and oddly...

Life.

With a step, Aina's black feathered wings fluttered, her armor pulsing with a bright vitality.

The amusement drained from her eyes, replaced by a deathly stillness and cold. The Life Force of the world seemed to drain continuously, a whine that came from the depths of the World Spirit's soul making those that called this place home tremble, a sense of loss overwhelming their hearts.

BANG!

Dozens of Brazingers couldn't hold on. Aina did nothing more than walk toward them, but their blood ripped out from their bodies, unable to hold back under the call of their mistress.

Without the strength to fight back, their Life Force was almost eager to hand themselves over.

Their Queen had beckoned them forward.

How could they not oblige.

The Brazingers, for their credit, charged ahead. They were warriors down to the depths of their souls, and they didn't shrink in the face of challenge.

However, they were little different from moths to a flame. And every time they acted so recklessly, they only added to Aina's strength.

One would have thought that the skies would be painted by grief, by pain, that that outpouring of a daughter's love would rip their psyches to shred.

But Aina was eerily calm, not like a lake, but rather like a slumbering volcano, a dragon coiled deep within their cave.

With every step closer she came to Anselma, the deeper that calm seemed to become. Her soul was awash with a refreshing dew, her body swaddled in the caring caress of the skies and the tender call of the earth.

The deaths continued to accumulate, not a single one managing to approach within several dozen meters of Aina. They flew forward like moths to a flame, adding to the garden of blood forming around the Queen.

Dark clouds rumbled in the skies, blackened lightning an even deeper shade of

darkness and brooding than them tearing across their body like dancing shards of electricity.

A large amount of stamina should have been used up by now, and maybe that was precisely what the higher-ups of the Brazingers were waiting for... for her to tire, for her to waver.

However, the smoldering ember seemed to be gently cradled by a pair of fair hands, that ember carrying a hatred she had held in herself since the day her mother suffered on that stake, since the day her face was torn asunder, cursed to suffer to the end of her days by a woman spurned by nothing more than petty jealousy.

A life upturned, a mother ripped from her daughter, a pain buried years deep.

But it no longer consumed her, no longer weeded into her soul.

Instead, it became a gentle fuel no different from any other.

A fuel meant to burn for an eternity and into infinity.

Along with the memory of the Brazingers' fall on this day. BANG!

Aina took a step onto the walls of the Brazinger family compound. Not once had she decreased her pace. All the while, her gait was steady, her expression a lukewarm sort of coldness that chilled the heart and yet somehow calmed the spirit.

She gently raised her battle ax for the first time.

The moment she did so, a cascade of powerful auras erupted from the distance.

The Ancestors of the Brazingers had finally made their move.

And yet.

Her blade descended.

There was nothing more than the slightest ripple in the air. A scythe of Force didn't take shape. It almost looked like a heat wave passing through the air, distorting nothing more than the image on the other side of it and not much more.

But this simple swing made the hearts of the Brazinger Ancestors leap into their throats. Fear colored their expressions, and one after another, they summoned their Manifestations.

Giants of illusion, clad in reds and bejeweled by a bright vitality and a fiery will for battle and victory, appeared.

And just as quickly, they were torn in two.

The invisible blade passed right through them and their bodies split of their own accord. Their own blood formed the scythe within them, splitting their bone, their skin, their flesh right down the middle.

They stood frozen in place, not realizing just what had happened to them until it was far too late.

PUCHI.

The sound of wet flesh and split bone echoed through the air. They fell to the ground in two pieces, their bodies flopping in a sickening blend of noise.

The roses that floated around Aina pulsed with life, her control over Life increasing as the corpses of the Brazinger Ancestors were sucked dry.

But right when the blood was about to be incorporated into her strength, they froze in the air.

A woman had appeared.

Adorned by a fluttering red dress, she and her bright red lips seemed to stand out in the skies no less than the rivers of blood that surfed the wind.

These rivers, however, stilled, seemingly frozen in time.

Anselma looked at the blood calmly before turning to Aina. She scanned the young woman's face and then her eyes landed on the battle ax.

A light smile tugged at her lips.

It had been a very long time since she laid eyes on this treasured weapon of hers. It was about time that it returned home.

She raised her hand and softly beckoned. It seemed like a gentle gesture, but the clouds above almost dispersed beneath the power of the almost careless curl of her fingers.

A strong, pulsing might came from the battle ax.

Aina looked down at it as her arm tugged forward, the force so great her shoulder nearly popped out from its socket. She too was calm as she gazed at it.

Then... the Founder's Ax was ripped out from her hands, whizzing through then snapping into place on Anselma's with a satisfying slap.

It had returned home.

## **Chapter 3262: Four**

Anselma took a breath, her chest shuddering as she felt a rush of power weave through her. The world shook as though bowing to the return of an Empress.

The Imperatress.

"Ah, it has now truly returned home. Now, let's end this quickly, shall we?"

Anselma took a step and appeared before Aina in a flash. She swung the ax with a single arm, its unruly and long polearm seemingly not much of a problem to her at all. Although the battle ax's form was more than a head tall than her, she wielded it like a normal single-handed hand ax.

Yet, the power behind it was so great that the body bent into a crescent moon, the laws of the world whining and then bending into obedience as well.

Aina struck out with a palm.

**BANG!**

The wind shattered to pieces, or so it seemed. Volatile currents, spinning, churning, and thrusting in all sorts of directions made it confused, not knowing which ones to follow,

But soon after this shattering, space quaked along with it.

The two women, however, were unmoved.

"Oh?" Anselma blinked.

She was calm and casual, but her indifferent arrogance caused her to almost miss the fact Aina had followed up on her attack instantly.

A second palm descended as though Aina didn't fear the blade meeting her flesh at all. With how much she had been through her life, with how many weapons she had gone through, how much pain she had forced herself to endure...

How was this worth much of anything?

Anselma failed to react as a palm drove into her chest. Her ribs rebounded back, being compressed at an awkward angle before she was sent flying back.

Aina took a step forward, her hips twisting slightly as her wings flapped a single time. All of her momentum transferred to her attacking arm.

BANG!

Anselma's body shot out like a rocket, the air she passed through superheating as concentric circles of shattering wind rippled out.

She tore a line so straight down and through the city one could have easily mistaken the streak of crimson for a laser piercing through the air.

She crashed into several buildings, not slowing until she was embedded into the central castle.

The earth rumbled so fiercely the skies quaked along with it. At the same time, the wall beneath Aina's feet cracked down to its very foundation.

This wall was one meant to anchor the earlier, large-scale formation. And yet now, it could hardly withstand the might of a single "light" step from Aina.

Then Aina vanished.

There was a rumble and the wall collapsed. As though a spherical bomb of energy had been set off, a perfectly smooth section was left behind.

But Aina herself was nowhere to be seen.

A beam of light passed through right where she had just been, and her figure itself appeared in the rubble along with Anselma.

BANG!

Another sphere.

BANG!

Another.

BANG!

Yet another.

Anselma and Aina flickered around the city, their powerful strikes leaving smooth, almost too perfectly controlled pulses of destruction in their wake.

And every time, Anselma found herself crushed.

Her battle ax's blade was blocked, her body was bombarded, her head was snapped to the side, her blood leaked from her lips and her wounds.

It was a complete, one-sided, utterly contemptuous sort of battle.

Aina flashed by the swing blade, her fist cutting across the side of Anselma's face as sending one of her teeth flying into the distance. But before Anselma's body could even head in that direction, a second fist came even faster, driving into her gut so far Aina almost felt her spine on her knuckles.

Anselma keeled over before her body accelerated, shooting off into the distance and digging a deep trench into the ground.

The Imperatress coughed off a mouthful of blood as Aina stood in the skies. The latter's head turned, looking off into the distance as though she had sensed something. But even now, her expression was shockingly calm.

Anselma slowly stood to her feet, wiping the blood from her cherry lips. It was an action that should have smeared that bright red lipstick she wore, but somehow, that color seemed infused into her very flesh itself.

It didn't fade even the slightest bit. If anything, it only grew brighter, sharper. The Imperatress didn't seem to be distressed. There was a hint of shock in her eyes, but it wasn't to the point that she had lost herself to despair.

This was only to be expected. Even with the Founder's Ax back in her hands, this body was too weak. She had planned to use the next few years to rebuild her foundation and return to her original strength slowly before the final battle, but Aina had come before she could do this.

If she was honest, she thought it wouldn't matter. The shadow she was chasing was that of the Demoness, not this child. So she thought that even without much effort, she would win this battle-especially after Aina lost her weapon.

But it seemed that she had... underestimated this child.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three auras appeared, each one just as powerful as the last.

The Dreadarch Eryvon, a man wreathed in golden light. There was a sharpness to him and his yellowed eyes that exuded the air of a refined blade. Even looking into his gaze seemed to hurt.

The Thronebearer Loryth, a woman coated in vines and poisoned buds. A crown of thorns wrapped around her head, piercing into her skin and leaving scars as it greedily drank her blood.

The Regentrix Myxor, a man wearing... nothing at all. He stood there, almost too confident. He was offensive to the gaze, and yet it didn't seem to faze him even in the slightest.

The four didn't say a single word as they moved.

Loryth's vines spread, Eryvon shot into the skies, drawing on air and pulling a bow and arrow from the light, and Myxor shot for Aina.

All the while, Anselma watched in a calm silence, the gentle pitter patter of her own blood falling to the ground not fazing her in the slightest.

## **- Chapter 3263: Thronebearer**

### **Chapter 3263: Thronebearer**

Aina found her control of Life Force being constrained by the Thronebearer's Domain of Thorns. Her own bloodied roses dimmed as a large amount of the blood she had gathered was sucked away in the blink of an eye.

Before she could handle this situation, though, Loryth's arrows sealed off her exit routes and Myxor's fist had flashed before her face, reflecting a subtle crystal bed of scales on their knuckles.

Aina struck out with a palm in retaliation, but the moment their fists connected, she felt a great deal of her power turned back on her. She arm shot and the bones of her wrists almost shattered.

BANG! BANG!

Twin arrows bombarded her from the side and she managed to use her roses to block. But they only lasted a single exchange before they fell in a rain of crimson. Too weakened by the Thronebearer Loryth's Domain, they were already at a tipping point of fragility.

And none of this stopped the Regentrix's second fist.

Myxor erupted with a combination of attacks, becoming a fierce tanker while taking advantage of the Adurna family's powerful defenses. Not only was he practically indestructible, but her forced Aina to endure what felt like over 70% of her own power, reflecting it back at her.

His naked body became coated by reflective scales, finally covering up some of his decency, but they still blinked in and out of existence.

Aina was on her back foot, forced to retreat again and again. She tried to take advantage of it to make some distance between herself and Eyvon's arrows, but the Dreadarch didn't even bother to move from his position in the air. His range was... Existence itself.

What would a few hundred meters do?

BANG!

Aina suffered a blow to her chest, her ribs rattling. She had tried to dodge, but Loryth's Domain bound her feet, slowing her reaction time. By the time her blood roses shredded the restraint apart, the fist was already too close to dodge.

But...

She grabbed onto Myxor's wrist. As blood fell from her lips, her inner organs rattling beneath the strain, she released a delicate roar, her wings flapping. A surge of strength pulsed through her body as she raised Myxor up, flipping him through the air and slamming him to the ground.

Myxor's body swatted a golden arrow out of the air, the sparks of light spreading across his body like flames dancing across marble.

Aina raised her foot high in the skies, ready to levy an ax kick right to his head without regard for the damage she would suffer. But the Thronebearer's bed of thorns sucked



the Adurna Head into its soft folds and Aina hit nothing but this bed of thorns that was anything but soft to her.

Poison thorns pierced into Aina's foot, ripping through her armor and releasing a pulse that almost sucked her body dry of blood in a single instant.

It would have worked too had Aina's Blood Force not been at a practically unachievable level. But, not only did she manage to resist, but... for as long as she could remember she had always been impervious to poison.

**BANG!**

A large portion of the Thronebearer's Domain was shredded to pieces.

Her brows shot up in shock, but she realized what happened instantly. She hadn't managed to take up a large amount of Aina's blood, but she did take a few droplets. Just when she thought she would be able to easily refine it, Aina's control won out.

Loryth realized then that Aina could have probably stopped her from taking any blood at all, but she didn't precisely for this opportunity right here and now.

There wasn't enough time to rebuild the Domain.

Aina appeared before Loryth, her eyes flashing a bloody red.

**BANG!**

Vines to Loryth's back exploded just as she tried to retreat. Her body was sent flinging toward Aina's fist.

Aina's power erupted, her hair dancing in the wind as feathers fell from the skies.

She drove a fist right through Loryth's chest, shredding her heart to pieces as she tore through her spine.

The Thronebearer shook, her body convulsing.

Several arrows stuck out of Aina's back and blood leaked from her lips as well. She had tanked several of Eryvon's arrows just for the sake of this chance, and she had grasped it perfectly.

Aina coughed, blood coming from her lips, but the sharpness in her eyes was only growing. A deep battle lust erupted from her and her blood began to heat up.

It seemed that.... she was only just getting warmed up now.

For a long time now, she had been in mother-mode. She had forgotten the thrill of battle, that rush of adrenaline, that love of the feel of an enemy's blood running

through her fingers.

through her fingers.

**BANG!**

The situation changed.

Loryth's body collapsed into several vines and reformed in the distance. A bloody hole still remained in her chest, and the pain that twisted her gaze was very much real.

However...

She wasn't dead.

A hand suddenly grabbed Aina's ankle, clamping down on it with great power and shattering it to pieces.

The Regentrix.

He had been beneath the bed of vines, but even after Aina destroyed them, he seemed to have buried himself even deeper into the ground.

Aina fell to the side as she lost her balance.

An arrow cut through the skies.

Without a choice, Aina could only ignore Loryth and Myxor, training her attention on the lethal, oncoming arrow.

At the same time, Loryth summoned her Manifestation.

However, rather than a humanoid, it was a throne wreathed in wild plant growth.

Her open wound wiggled and twisted, vines coming out of it and weaving into one another to close it up.

**BANG!**

The arrow pierced through Aina's forearm, her defenses almost giving way entirely.

It jetted through her flesh and bone, the tip just barely stopping before it pierced through her throat.

Myxor pulled hard on her leg, ripping her foot off of her ankle and Achilles. Blood splashed in all directions.

At that very moment, the Thronebearer finally recovered. Spreading out her arms, the plants of the world writhed.

This time, she was truly infuriated.

## **Chapter 3264: Aton**

Loryth shrieked. The banshee-like fury peeled across the skies like flashes of lightning, the echoes painting the harrowing image of an infuriated wraith.

The earth burst apart and the foundations of the city were torn as trees, vines, and poisonous buds burst out from the cracked, paved roads.

A large net of vines wrapped together, spiraling into the skies as they intertwined. They formed a beanstalk that should have only appeared in fairy tales, reaching a peak and then twisting into a mutated, budding lily.

The lily opened its maw, unleashing a roar that sounded akin to a yodelling whale. Rows of teeth lined its petals and a thick mist of poison spread out from it.

The moment this behemoth appeared, it was like the plants of the world bowed in obedience, and the Life Force that Aina had managed to maintain a small bit of control over was torn apart. What remained of her blood roses vanished, sucked into the endless river of vines.

The toothed lily sucked in a strong breath and hurricane-force winds knocked buildings to the ground and stirred the clouds into a spinning vortex.

And then it closed up. Its throat bulged and the world fell into silence for but a moment before it exploded with a bursting breath of fire.

The flaming ball fell toward Aina.

It truly looked like a helpless situation. Her left ankle was nothing more than a stump of pooling blood, her arms were nailed together by an arrow that cut through both of her forearms, and now she was facing off against an attack in what was her worst state since this battle began.

Anselma watched calmly from a distance, not feeling very surprised. They might not have regained their full strength just yet, but their ability to play off of one another and battle in tandem was second to none.

In fact, they were only working at about 10% capacity right now. That was because... She had yet to join.

BOOM!

The attack landed, crashing into Aina's location and enveloping her completely and totally.

A strong vacuum force ripped upward, forming a cyclone that spiralled into the air. With a calm gaze, Aina watched as a figure appeared before her. Her eyes never seemed to carry any fear or surprise. Even seeing this person didn't bring her any excitement or happiness.

Miel swept out his battle ax, standing before his daughter in a protective posture before he slowly looked back.

"I do not know why you've allowed this to happen.... but you can't expect a father to stand on the sidelines and watch this happen, right?"

"..." Aina looked toward her father with a calm gaze, but she eventually parted her lips, speaking out an equally calm set of words. "... You've done it before."

Miel's pupils trembled.

It was clear to him that his daughter was not happy, not happy in the slightest. In fact, she seemed bothered by his appearance.

He thought that their relationship had taken strides toward the better, he had even met her children and he had taken on the role of grandfather with open arms. He loved those two little babies no less than his own daughter.

However, right now, the dividing line that still existed between them became clear and obvious to him.

"... I am not strong enough yet." Aina continued slowly. "This is my last chance to become so. If you stand in my way now, it will be because of you that he has to stand alone when the time comes. I do not want him to fight alone. Please move."

Miel understood his daughter better than any Imperatress ever could, though maybe that wasn't as much of something to be proud of as he thought. Wasn't it only natural that he be so capable?

But even though he knew that his daughter had been holding her back, he found it very difficult to wait for the result.

The fact that his daughter hadn't even spoken to him before coming here said all that needed to be said. She truly didn't need his help anymore, and maybe right now, while her emotions were so raw, while the pain of her mother's death all those years ago was becoming even more of an open, festering wound...

She didn't want his help either.

Miel seemed to forget that there was danger lurking all around him. He only had eyes for his little girl, his gaze softening considerably.

He was only human. Part of him wanted to scream out that it wasn't his fault, that he had done all he could, that he couldn't have possibly known that things would end the way they had.

But time and time again, he only let this daughter of his down.

He was the reason her mother was dead. He was the reason Atheleys had ended up the target of a vindictive woman, the reason his daughter was almost forced to marry a man she didn't love, the reason she had lived a childhood so broken and full of despair that even when she did find the man she loved... for a long while, she didn't even know how to love him right.

A tear fell from Miel's eye and Aina felt her heart shake. For a moment, she almost broke out of her state of hyper-focus, buried emotions threatening to bubble back up.

But before they could, Miel had already turned away.

"My name is Adam Renier Brazinger." Miel said softly. "This is a name I cast away long ago, but it wasn't for reasons as noble as you, my daughter. I did not want this name because I was ashamed of it, ashamed of what it had forced me to do, ashamed of what I had done in the name of it.

"You, my daughter, do not have the same fate. By now, you've probably realized that death cannot be reversed so easily. But often... neither can life. Much the same way death cannot be atoned with life, sometimes life can only be atoned with death."

Aina's pupils trembled, her lips parting, but no sound came out.

Miel shook his head. "Don't speak. Redemption sounds like a nice story, but there are some sins that can't be taken back no matter how much you wish for it, no matter

how much you bleed for it.

"I cannot give you the life you deserved back. But I can give you a new one."

A powerful soul pressure rippled from Miel in waves.

## **Chapter 3265: Crimson**

Miel's red hair danced in the wind like a flickering stream of magma...

And then his body burst apart.

Blood rained, flesh fell, bones tore the air apart like the shrapnel of a bomb.

Anselma's pupils constricted. Unlike Aina, who was stuck in a state of shock, she knew exactly what was happening. Unfortunately, it was much too late to stop it.

In a silent corner of the world, a woman too weak to take action sat in silence. She looked up, tears falling from her eyes.

"In the end, you could never set your heart down to choose me... but I guess if you did choose me over your daughter, you wouldn't be the man I fell in love with..."

She stood to her feet, hugging a sword to her chest.

Rippling golden light extended from her hair, cascading down her back. Her aura continued to grow as though something had been severed away forward.

Her tears continued to fall, but they had become akin to golden dew drops, falling from her cheeks and rippling against the tides of space like rain besieging a placid lake.

With a step, she became a beam of light, appearing high in the skies.

A great battle was taking place. Clouds shattered like brittle stone, raging air currents leveling mountains and denting worlds. Giants among men wielded plumes of fire and jets of water, bolts of lightning and entire moons of earth.

It was truly a battle that she was too weak to take part in.

Since the moment Leonel took her out of the Slayer Legion and gave her the chance to hone and sharpen her Light Force, she had tried her best to improve.

But in the end, she didn't have the talent.

In truth, she did...

What she really lacked was the time.

She wasn't a monster like Leonel or Aina, nor did she receive the same benefits as those close to him as kin. And now, the only man she held on for, the man she hoped would forget his past life and start a new one with her...

Had made his decision.

In this case, what reason did she have to hold back any longer? To hopefully be protected by the efforts of everyone else?

10.00

Cidra looked down at the sword she held to her bosom, her clear tears falling faster. Then, she unsheathed it.

Like a moth to a flame, she charged into the battle.

She, like many others, would be nothing more than a drop in a vast ocean, drowned out by tsunami-like waves, bent and twisted to the whims of the push and pull of celestial bodies.

Her death was assured. But she hoped that in these last moments, she would find some use to the world.

Like the others, she was someone who had a life of her own. She had shed tears and blood, she had had hopes and aspirations, dreams and loves.

But in the grinding wheel of fate, it hardly held much weight or substance.

Here, on this battlefield, she chose to be another bit of fodder to their canon, a foot soldier who would throw themselves forward to push the line back just an inch.

In her last moments, she forgot about her love. Maybe in another life, she would find a man all to herself, a man who made her no less happy and hopeful than he did.

"Go now, Adam..." Cidra said softly, her sword blazing in a golden light. "... Maybe in another life, I will be lucky enough to meet my Miel..."

In place of Miel's body, a blazing soul stood, wreathed in gold and red light, a powerful, seething sort of intent coming from it.

"I owe... too many people..." Miel said lightly.

Although he didn't put much force into his tone, it traveled far and wide. In those last moments, it felt as though he could hear Cidra's last thoughts as clear as if they were whispered into his very ears.

In life, everyone was given a well of potential. It was up to them to slowly unearth it, pulling it out from the water and using it to irrigate their lives.

Miel had spent too long pulling from a sieve, wasting his own potential, chasing various matters due to his own insecurities, his own indecision, in his selfish, immature choices.

In the end, after chasing after those mistakes for so long, he realized that even if he could survive to the very end, even if he could win this battle for his daughter and help her achieve the happy ending she was looking for...

Would it ever be enough?

Aina felt her body shudder and her Manifestation forcefully took shape.

BOOM!

An enormous area was cleared out around her. Whether it was the Regentrix, the Dreadarch, or the Thronebearer, they were sent spiraling away even faster than they had come.

Her power shot up by hundreds of times, and in that moment, the four Heads seemed to understand just what it was Miel was speaking about earlier.

In that moment, Miel's soul, as though mimicking the actions of an unrequited love, flew into its own flame...

His soul fused into his daughter's Manifestation.

Impacting another's Idol should have been impossible. But there were two reasons that Miel could do so. First because the Manifestation was rooted in the Lineage Factor of the Brazingers, something both he and his daughter shared. And second...

Both he and his daughter had Soul Clairvoyance.

Not only was he in the perfect position to understand and improve his daughter's Idol, she was in the perfect position to accept those changes and integrate them.

At the same time, his flesh and blood began to snap back together, pouring toward his daughter and forcing her Blood Force to respond.

"I wish... you... your husband... your children... eternal happiness, my precious daughter, my little girl... Hopefully, on the other side, I can spend an eternity making it



up to your mother.

"Live well."

Tears fell from Aina's eyes, her wings turning a blinding shade of crimson.

## Chapter 3266: Relief

Aina's pupils trembled violently, pulses of red peeling out from her.

She could feel the changes immediately. She didn't need to think about them, her clairvoyance was already able to pick up on every little thing.

She had already used all nine of her Rebirths, but the end result wasn't as great as she wanted. As great as it was to rely on clairvoyance to get through everything, there was a limit to what her Ability Index was capable of. Ultimately, the Life Tablet only rated it as Gold.

The real reason Aina was so powerful wasn't because of her clairvoyance, but because she had two forms of it, one for her body and the other for her soul. Together, they were able to fuse and work off of one another, forming a resonance that was akin to something the Life Tablet would rate at the Life Grade.

This was great.

In any other era, this would be enough to protect her own little corner of the world. But... in this era... it was far from it. Not if she wanted to stand by her husband's side, not if she wanted to help him hold up the skies as well.

It wasn't enough.

If she wanted to reach the level those Ancestors stood on, that Gervaise stood on, that Nilrem did, that her husband did... that the Demoness certainly did...

Relying on innate talent wasn't enough.

She had to break past it, she had to form her own comprehension or soar beyond what mere intuition could give her.

But by the time she realized this, it was far too late. Or more accurately, it could be said that all this time, she had no choice but to keep doing things this way. If not for her clairvoyance, how could she have ever kept up with Leonel's footsteps? She would have been left behind long ago, and the pain of experiencing such a thing would have killed her slowly.

Now that she stood near that peak, and could feel the enormous gap, she felt that sort of despair once again.

She knew that her husband had allowed her to come here only because he had perfect control of the situation, because he was confident that should things not go the way she hoped, he would be able to interfere.

However, that sort of realization only made her feel more helpless and powerless.

She wanted to really push herself, to give it her all, to break through one final time and reach the same platform as her husband...

10:09

But in the end, it was her father that gave her that chance, unwilling to see her suffer one final time to grasp what she needed.

Shackles that held Aina down shattered one after another. She gained the benefits of her father's deep, diligently laid out foundation to match with her overwhelming talent.

As her power swelled, her eyes brimmed with tears that seemed to refuse to fall, almost as though she knew that the moment she shed that first tear, it would mean that he was really gone.

She had already felt his soul blink out, but maybe denial had set in more fiercely than anything before it. A trepidation, a feeling of guilt that weighed on her soul and made her wonder if she was too cruel.

But then she felt her father's smile. It wasn't one of subterfuge or even just one of kindness... it was one of relief.

The relief of a man who felt that he had given his daughter the final push she needed, the relief of a man who trusted his son-in-law, the relief of a man who was happy to have gotten the opportunity to be a true father at least once in his life.

If he had waited any longer, he knew his daughter would have found her path to break through on her own. He believed in her more than she knew, and he had watched more of her childhood than she knew as well.

He knew his daughter had a grit and determination few could match. She had the heart of a lioness and the pride of a Queen, the regal temperament of a Goddess and the grace of a mother.

His daughter had grown into every bit the woman his wife had once been, stepping into all the potential her mother had once had that he stripped from her.

The last fading of Miel's consciousness reflected a clear image both daughter and father shared, the image of a woman tied to a stake, her flesh rotting and a pained smile adorning her once gorgeous features.

Even while experiencing pain a mortal woman like her should never have to endure, she wanted them to live on without her, not for revenge, but to find happiness. Even in those last moments, she never blamed a single one of them.

It was the last flicker of humanity she had left before the pain rotted her mind and consciousness. What happened afterward, Aina never thought about normally. But in this moment, she did...

She had watched as her mother lost her sense of self, as the pain corroded who she was and corrupted her very being, how her attempts to remain the loving, caring mother and wife crumbled before their eyes as her screams tore through her throat like pale hands clawing up from moistened soil.

By the time she had died, she was no longer the mother Aina remembered, and that was what was the most unforgivable to her, the most unforgivable to Miel, the one thing neither of the two could ever forget.

Miel let go, allowing his daughter the grace of this revenge herself. He didn't deserve it.

And in the end, Aina stood in silence, her aura dimming down and her hair darkening to its jet black hue, her golden eyes piercing through the veil of space and time with the ferocity of a burning sun.

Her crimson pair of wings spread out in a sudden flap, feathers cascading down from their wide bodies.

This little hint of red... she would hold onto it not for the sake of the Brazingers, but for the sake of her father.

## **Chapter 3267: Berserk War Goddess**

The world fell into an eerie lull. Silence clung to its edges and pooled into its core, like sunlight retreating beneath the hues of dusk. The darkness raced against the light, pushing it back and then swallowing it whole.

The only point of brightness that remained at all was a single young woman staring into the void. The world vanished from her sight and her thoughts became a

contradictory vacant mess. Her emotions spiraled akin to static confusion, before, in a suppressed hush, it too was vanquished.

And then there was nothing at all.

Nothing but an unbridled fury.

BOOM!

A pillar wrapped in blood red and demonic blacks shot into the skies, splitting the clouds into a winding cyclone that sparked with ruby lightning.

The wings on the small of Aina's back flared outward, scythes of wind energy splicing space into shards and splitting them into ribbons.

Force accumulated in the skies, and for a moment, it didn't feel like it was a young, vulnerable woman standing before them at all. Instead, it was a towering mass, a natural phenomena, a Matriarch that stood even above a woman that would deign to call herself Imperatress.

Aina moved.

Space folded before her like layers of fabric, trying to fight back beneath her power and maintain its hold and control over the world.

It failed.

The folds shattered, sending mirror-like pieces of space cutting against the wind. The ruby lightning sparked at its edges, grabbing onto the laws of the world and suffocating them into obedience.

Aina reached out a hand just as she appeared before the Thronebearer once again. Loryth's eyes trembled and an overwhelming sense of danger blossomed from her heart like another one of her treasured plants. The world faded from her senses and all she could feel was the death looming before her right this moment.

Suffocating, oppressive, a deathly sort of blankness that encapsulated not torture or the fear of pain, but rather the vast nothingness of what death truly was...

An endless abyss, lacking in time and unknown to space.

She was dead. She felt it even before it came. Like there was nothing she could do with her own power at all to change things.

Anselma's gaze sharpened and her grip on her battle ax tightened. She stomped a foot and accelerated forward. The Domain of the Founder's Ax surged and the laws of the world twisted around both herself and Aina.

BANG!

Anselma was sent rocketing back, but Loryth had firmly landed in her palms.

The two skidded across the earth, the city that had once been their own splintering at the seams and being swallowed up by the vacant depths that Aina had become.

The world fell into a silent lull once more, the discharge of lightning snaking across the ground echoing as the only sign of life.

Loryth coughed up a mouthful of blood as they skidded to a stop, her eyes bulging with fear. The moment that acceptance of death disappeared, it was like all the dread, once forced back by the depths that was Aina's presence, came flooding forth all at

once.

She began to hyperventilate, her Force almost spiraling out of control. SLAP.

Anselma's palm struck against the Thronebearer's face.

"Pull yourself together or get the hell out of my sight."

The imposing air of an empress stretched across the skies, clashing against the black and red of Aina's aura with a fierce violet and red of her own.

The pride of this Imperatress rose into the skies with a dominating posture as she stood to her feet, tossing Loryth to the side.

Her gaze shifted, landing to the location Miel had died and then upward toward Aina's Manifestation.

An indifferent sneer spread across her face.

"To think that an incarnation of this Imperatress fell in love with such a pathetic excuse for a man. Weakness of the body can be fixed. Weakness of the heart will rot and fester, destroying the roots of even the strongest trees.

"You... will be no different."

Anselma's arm swept to the side, a strong scythe of energy emitting from the

Founder's Ax and shattering much of Aina's aura.

Her power began to climb as a Myxor and Eryvon drenched in cold sweat rose to her sides, appearing like shadowy warriors in obedience to their empress.

The clouds above rumbled. In the midst of the battle, it was almost soft, akin to the final groan of a wounded beast.

And soon came the pitter patter of rain, falling in a melodic rhythm.

Four auras rose up from them. A crimson Imperatress. A golden Dreadarch. An emerald Thronebearer. A silvery-blue Regentrix.

Aina stood like a lone tree in a vast desert, buffeted by the winds and the hail of sand. Her hair became drenched beneath the rain, her wings growing heavy.

But then they suddenly flared out.

Her wings, arched elegantly and layered in carefully sculpted gem-like red feathers trembled just a single time and the rain on it was flicked off.

For a moment, the rain around Aina seemed to freeze in place, unable to fall.

"Prepare yourself." Anselma said coldly.

She raised the Founder's Ax as Eryvon, Loryth, and Myxor all called out with their senses at once.

At that moment, from across worlds, the Founding Treasures of the Four Great Families heeded the call of their masters.

Whether it was Leonel or Little Nana, they felt their treasures once in their possessions vanish.

Crossing time and space, the Laevis Bow, the Crudus Armor, the Adurna Shield...

All made their presence known to face against a single woman without even a weapon in hand.

But then Aina reached toward the skies, her Weapon Forces rotating around her as dragons of ruby lightning descended to her palm.

She was the Berserk War Goddess.

She had no need for a weapon.

Anything, everything, and nothing at all would heed her call.

BOOM!

Lightning-wreathed fist and Founding Ax met in a clash akin to a herald's cry.

## Chapter 3268: The Creator

Anselma's arms shook as the veins across her arms bulged. An overwhelming power poured into her like a hydraulic press, the pressure increasing akin to an endless tide.

Just as she was about to be overwhelmed, vines shot up from the ground and Myxor Adurna appeared to Aina's side.

Crackle.

Lightning whipped against the vines, shattering them to pieces just as Myxor's shield crashed into her side.

This seemed expected by the four as they worked seamlessly together. Eryvon had even taken the Laevis Bow into the skies, already prepared to unleash a torrential storm of supporting arrows from above.

However...

BANG!

Myxor was sent flying back even faster than he came. At some unknown time, Aina's wing had formed a shield to her side, and with the slightest of flickers, the Adurna Head catapulted around, drawing a line through the rain that made their delicate droplets sting as much as a rain of needles.

Anselma managed to hold on due to the distraction, but she was still forced a step back, her arms vibrating beneath the strain.

Taking advantage of the gap, Eryvon unleashed his rain of arrows, each one ignoring time and appearing before Aina in a flash.

But the moment they entered her Domain, it was like the laws of the world broke. It was said that photons didn't experience time and had no concept of this fourth dimension, but...

That was only a matter of perspective.

The beams of light slowed considerably and the infinitely heavy arrow hidden within was caught in Aina's palm.

With a light squeeze, she shattered it to pieces as her lightning danced across the skies like an endless sea of whips weaving in and out of one another.

The arrows that slowed within Aina's domain shattered in a rain of light. There was a brief beauty to it in the expanse of explosions and darkness.

But brief it was before a savage wind broke it all apart, sending them spiraling into the distance.

Trees bloomed in the surroundings and a dense poison air filled the skies. Its power was unlike anything that had been seen before, but Aina remained indifferent to it all. In the far off distance, the Regentrix arm hung limply even though the Adurna Shield still held strong. His inner organs rattled about within him, and the others seemed to notice just how badly injured he was a step too late.

They were too used to the Regentrix being the strongest tank amongst them. Never could they have thought that the simple swipe of a wing would leave him in such a state.

But what they failed to consider was the fact much of the Regentrix's defenses came from his ability to counter and deflect, it was rooted in his Lineage Factor and his Idol.

What would he do if the laws of the world he relied on to sustain those things shattered to pieces before his eyes?

Myxor roared into the skies, the bones in his arms popping back into place as his Manifestation appeared at his back.

Finally realizing the seriousness of the situation, the four Heads no longer held back. One after another, avatars that could hold up the skies appeared, each one dwarfing Aina's own as though they had been carefully refined time and time again...

Because that was precisely the case.

This wasn't the first time these four had reincarnated, and it wasn't the second or third either. Time and time again, they put themselves through these rigors for one reason and one reason only.

To grow strong for when the time came.



However, much like Aina, they had reached their own bottlenecks. The only way past this was by layering their Manifestations through each life they experienced, awakening it again, and again, and again.

Until now, they stood akin to mountains, their feet rooting the earth more firmly than even a world could and their heads becoming the pillars that stirred the clouds, swayed the wind, and held up the skies.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

They drew their weapons and treasures at the same time, a colossal mass of oppressive might descending.

At that moment, even if there were members of the Brazingers still in the vicinity, they had long since died. Those that were smart had already retreated to a far off distance. In this clash of Gods... mere mortals had no right to hold up their head.

Aina faced off against this might, her expression unreadable. It was the Force that stirred around her that truly reflected her heart.

Ruby lightning sparked with a wild intensity, but a steady-handed darkness belied it

all, moving slowly, unhurriedly, handling the weight of a life of pain and torture. The tall ancient trees in the surroundings finally shuddered to a stop as Eryvon flexed his arm. The damage he had received from Aina's wing poured out from his body and his injuries vanished in the blink of an eye.

He struck out with his shield and a beam of silvery-blue light crossed the void and appeared before Aina.

At the same time, the tall ancient trees swayed a single time, illusory emerald vines taking shape as the sound of a beating heart filled the depths of space.

The emerald vines bypassed Aina's lightning, latching onto her body-or so it seemed. Instead, it poured into her soul, restricting and restraining her.

At the same time, Laevis charged up an attack from above and Anselma did the same. Both were waiting for the same thing...

For Myxor's attack to land and give them the opening they needed while Aina was both restrained and reeling.

But what they expected to happen didn't.

"You've all... forgotten what it means to be human..."

Aina spoke for the first time since her father's death. Her voice had a gruffness to it, a sultry depth that compelled the world into obedience.

Her compulsion in her tone bloomed forth with a power the likes of which had never before been seen.

Tying her soul down with vines?

She wasn't like these false humans who did everything in their power to separate their bodies and their souls-pitiful existences who were nothing like her husband, the true

Ancestor of Spirituals.

They were nothing but cheap, fake imitations.

There was no separation between her own body and soul at all.

CHI.

The vines snapped and Aina vanished.

A beam of light passed through where she had just stood, digging up a smooth, deep trench through the ground and vanishing in a winking light that tore through the far off distance.

A massive depth of black formed in the skies through the space it passed, but none of them could even focus on it.

Aina stood high above them all, holding a limp Loryth in her hand. With a motion that was almost delicate, she brushed Loryth's sweat-stained hair from her face and then pressed the Thronebearer's back against her own tree.

Ruby lightning flashed and Loryth was pinned to it through her shoulder, and then her other shoulder, through her knees, and finally, through her neck.

The Crudus Family Head convulsed.

"I didn't realize until today that the wood that that took my mother's life was actually your own creation....

"Black Wood... that day, my mother was humiliated and stripped, her head was shaved and her naked body was forcefully pressed onto the wood.

"The only thing separating her and it was a cushion between its effect and her head... it's a clever trick, it forced her body to rot as her head stayed intact. "But if I just make you experience what she experienced, would that be fair?"

A voice more beautiful than words could describe hung in the air. It filled one with a sense of calm... and yet a contradictory dread at the very same time.

## **Chapter 3269: No Longer**

Blood red lightning sparked, the nails they formed discharging through Loryth's body.

Aina could remember the effects of Black Wood like the back of her hand.

She was a Force Pill Crafter. Her knowledge of Force Herbs and various natural remedies, both toxic and not, were likely what very few could compare to.

But even in relation to her usual knowledge, she had come to understand Black Wood more intimately than anything else in her life.

It was a curse. It would slowly peel into your skin, eating away at you layer by layer. It would burn you slowly, making you sizzle and crack, from each layer of your skin, down to the fat beneath, and the muscle beneath that.

It would take you down one cell by one cell, eating into your very soul and radiating the pain step by step, until you were nothing more than a husk of bleeding flesh.

Then it would rip even that flesh apart.

But the truly sickening ability of Black Wood wasn't this. Instead... it was the scent of rotting flesh.

This scent served two purposes. Not only did it keep you awake, forcing lucidity, it also maintained one's life, constantly nourishing the soul and stopping it from dissipating.

Because it targeted the soul directly, even when one's nerves had been fried to ash and nothing remained but your bone and the flesh left on your head, you would still feel every hint of pain no less intimately.

The cushion between the head and the wood was precisely the reason for this.

While the rest of your body would rot, flaking away in a sickening burning sensation, your head would remain just fine.

Until the rotting began to slowly creep up your neck.

By the time everything was done, all that would remain was a flailing string of nerves, a brain, and a skeleton.

Then, as you experienced your life being weeded out, one would feel the wind sweeping back and forth in an eerie rhythm.

In that state, you wouldn't be able to see, nor touch, nor hear, nor smell...

That feeling of empty wind would be your everything.

And then, your body would fail after exactly 99 days.

Not one moment more.

Not one moment less.

This was the horror of Black Wood.

"The feeling of your body slowly rotting must be terrible. But just 99 days... isn't enough... I also don't think that the pain you experience is nearly enough..."

Crimson lightning flickered.

The Dreadarch unleashed a roar. "LORYTH!"

The arrow he had been charging up was loosed, piercing through the air in a veil of gold. It hardly looked like an arrow at all, it was more like a curtain falling from the skies, rippling with a wave of all-encompassing light that seemed descended from the stars.

**BOOM!**

Eryvon's fingers trembled as his Manifestation moved. Veins popped along his arm and he immediately felt that something was wrong.

But before he could react, his arm was ripped backward under a mysterious force.

He had lost control of himself, his blood moving to a rhythm he didn't dictate. And as a result...

He missed an arrow for the first time in his life.

His bone snapped and his forearm swung the wrong direction. However, his eyes were bulging with far more shock than pain.

Unfortunately, there was little chance to bask in this shock as another more substantial one took hold of his heart.

A hand grasped his throat and he froze in place.

Calmly, Aina took a step through the skies, dragging Eryvon with her.

PUCHI. PUCHI. PUCHI.

Lightning nailed him to another tree, his body convulsing wildly.

The horror on Myxor's face became palpable. Anselma still seemed to be holding herself together, but it was hard to tell if this was out of true confidence, or if it was nothing more than a false sense of unwarranted pride.

Aina slowly turned around, standing in the skies as the lone point of light. Her winds radiated with rays of red, surging out with a suffocating might every time they flapped just the slightest bit.

Anselma gripped the Founder's Ax so tightly the skin at her knuckles split, blood pooling down her hand and down its length.

She took a breath, her red hair dancing beneath the strong hurricane-force winds

Aina was producing.

She turned, looking toward Myxor to find that he was already looking toward her. The man looked beaten and haggard. Despite having the most defenses amongst them, he had suffered probably more than all but Loryth.

Now, he was looking toward her for support, for help, for... something.

The pillar of support he was looking for swung out her ax.

His head flew into the skies and she took a strong breath.

Pools of blood surged toward her and her foundation deepened. At first it was slow, but then it accelerated faster and faster until her very skin began to glow.

Beads of sweat began to pour from the Imperatress. And soon, she looked like a vaguely humanoid pool of blood, her body slowly expanding to fit the size of her Manifestation.

DUDOOM, DUDOOM.

The world trembled beneath her might and the Founder's Ax expanded to match her size.

She had lost a lot before she could even begin to lead the Four Great Families back to their former height.

All that work, all that effort, all her hopes and aspirations, seemed to be being flushed right before her eyes.

And now, she had to kill one of her own most important trump cards just for a small chance at surviving.

She was pissed.

Her aura flared as she stood to the height of a god, the whipping of her hair leveling buildings and leaving deep trenches in the land that extended further than even the eye could see.

Aina looked at her calmly, still the same size, and with the very same Manifestation to her back.

"Is this your strongest state?" Aina asked lightly. "Good. Today... I will allow my mother to rest her soul in earnest."

Aina took a step forward and the world beneath her split in two.

She was no longer holding back.

## **Chapter 3270: Aina Morales**

Aina appeared before the enlarged Anselma, slamming out a palm. Her momentum was akin to the skies—vast and unapproachable. It was impossible to tell where it started or finished, or the exact moment when dusk shifted into a dense night.

Anselma swung to meet her. She was imposing in her own right, a towering mass that went beyond just her size.

The clash shattered the world's concept of sound, a vacuum more vacuous than the depths of space in heart and layers formed, palm and axe blade echoing off one another in pulsing waves.

The two separated for only a brief moment before they clashed once more. A flurry of exchanges expanded the vacuum, forcing more and more Force into it.

The world whined against its limits, the tears of the World Spirit falling from above in a torrent of rain that washed the blood beneath and only stung against the Thronebearer's skin all the more.

And then it gave way.

All but the trees. They were instead enveloped by a powerful aura, diverting from Aina and rooting themselves in the depths of space.

There was a shocking wave of pressure that filled all sides, and in one moment, the world had been there, while in the next, it was vaporized to ash.

"Diverting your power like this will be your death!" Anselma roared, her Founder's Axe multiplying its blades in the air as she swung. Time rippled and reality warped.

Aina didn't respond.

In the depths of the void, it was only easier to do such things. There were no World Spirits, no Regulators, no constraints.

Just violence.

Aina drew a circle through the air with one palm, a wave of blood following it. Her Clairvoyance seemed to radiate out of her body, and the blood rippled. Force Arts spontaneously bloomed in a cascade of Natural Force.

**BANG!**

Palm and blade met once more, but this time, Anselma's arm snapped back so hard and fast that it nearly dislocated from its socket. All the power she had built up in that reality-bending strike was countered with a single blow.

Aina took a step forward. After the last words she had spoken, she hadn't even so much as parted her cherry lips again. She had said all that needed to be said. All that was left was death.

Her fist shuttled through the void, a ring of blood appearing around her arm. It sparked with lightning, and clouds formed above, more Natural Force Arts spontaneously taking shape.

Anselma hurried to defend, but she was too late to bring her Founder's Axe back. Without a choice, she could only surge out with her own defenses, her blood churning and fusing into the ruby armor that adorned her body.

CRACK.

Aina's fist went right through, pounding against flesh, crunching through blood, ripping out tendons and sinew.

All the air seemed to have left Anselma's body as she was sent flying backward. Her body almost shut down entirely, her own blood control countered by wisps of Aina's own entering her bloodstream.

Anselma quickly tried to assimilate it all, and when that failed, she pulled on her heart and sent out a violent pulse.

A surging geyser of blood erupted out of her chest, spewing into the surroundings and fusing into the rain that suddenly began to fall from above, originating from the clouds of crimson above Aina.

At first, Anselma thought that she was feeling the splashes of her own blood, but very quickly, it became obvious that this was not the case.

Her eyes widened in horror, but Aina had already appeared high above her.

Anselma roared, swinging out her Founder's Axe. Even with all the damage she had taken, she managed to keep it under her control.

However, what met it was a bolt of crimson lightning from above, a single flap of Aina's wings sending her flying far out of Anselma's reach, while the latter was buffeted by winds that felt akin to a thick, steel wall.

BANG!

The tears of the World Spirit, Anselma's blood, and Aina's own rounded the skies, as Aina almost delicately raised her palm for one final time.

The rhythm of the world fell to her beck and call as her eyes met that of Anselma's.

The Imperatress' eyes widened further, her heart—or what was left of it—skipping a beat as she felt so many things flash before her.

And then Aina struck.

Most of her life, the Imperatress thought herself to have sat at the top of the world. She stood at the pinnacle, matched only by those most ancient of Ancestors.



She thought it was her palm that could call rain and command the skies... until she saw a young woman without even a world to call on for herself.

The tears of the World Spirit remained not because of the World Spirit. That existence had long since been wiped out, unable to withstand the blow of their battle.

It remained... only because Aina commanded it to be so.

What could only be described as the blood palm of a World descended from the skies, enveloping Anselma. She didn't even have the right to resist, her body collapsing practically from the inside out.

And yet, just when she thought she was dead, and her life was hanging on by nothing more than the faintest of strings, she felt something pull her out.

But it was no savior.

It was a calm woman, beautiful beyond compare, and even more unmoved by the world than that.

Aina pulled Anselma up by her hair, volatile energies that could shatter stars swirling around them as though nothing more than fireflies in the night.

And then, she slowly crossed the skies, approaching the Black Wood Tree.

Anselma's body shook, her pupils trembling.

"No..."

She struggled, but her tendons were ripped out from her body, her blood had all been drained, and her bones didn't have a single intact piece left. Even her face had deformed into a flat, grotesque mess.

"You are... You are a Brazinger... You can't do this... to your Ancestor..."

Aina didn't respond, slowly pinning her to the tree. Only when Anselma's agonizing screams were sealed into her body did Aina speak again.

"My name is Aina Morales. I haven't been a Brazinger in a very long time."

## **Chapter 3271: Her Babies**

Aina's movements were almost careful as she pulled Anselma's body onto the floating piece of Black Wood.

The ancient trees hung in the depths of the abyss, looking anything but like the torture devices they truly were.

There were struggles, curses, a hail of insults, but one would have thought that Aina didn't hear them at all, especially not after she finished hanging Anselma and actually began to hum.

A beautiful sort of tune spilled into the surroundings, but to Anselma and Loryth's horror, this tune that could bring down the pleased chirps of birds and the humming wings of butterflies, was actually increasing their pain by several orders of magnitude. And yet, not one of them was able to make a single sound. They could only watch as Aina sat cross-legged before them, blood rotating around her as though following the resonance of her hymns. And then, two pills began to take form.

She took her time on these pills, her song not stopping even for several days.

She recalled the few memories she had with her mother, and then the few she had with her father. Both were actually quite clear to her given her Clairvoyance, but this was the first time she seemed to realize that her memories with her father weren't so bad after all.

Right then, what she recalled the most were the times they ate together. They never said a word, but when she thought about it, the way their elbows used to clash as though they were in the middle of battle and not dinner had always been amusing. Her mother was a fairytale in her mind, and her father was very much real. She loved both of them equally for different reasons, and maybe it took losing them both before she could even begin to understand that.

In the end, the Brazingers also hurt both of them.

They ripped the innocent life of her mother away from her.

They suppressed her father, drilling him down with burdens that turned him into a man he couldn't even look at in the mirror.

And today... she had avenged them both.

Her pill, or rather two pills, finally took form. Aina's hum reached a peak, and for a moment, around one, one could see a beautiful woman with long black hair coming out of the hair of a little girl as she hummed her own tune.

Around the other, one could see a middle-aged man sneakily stealing food from a young teen's plate as she fought to eat faster.

There was a ripple through the depths of space as Aina stood to her feet. With a calm wave of her hands, the pills soared through the skies, becoming part of the separation between the Black Wood and the back of the two Brazingers' heads.

\*Like I said... 99 days isn't enough. Maybe you'll get lucky and the world will end soon... but I doubt it. More likely than not, my husband, the reason I am no longer a Brazinger, will be the reason you suffer this torment into the endless spiral of time. Poetic... don't you think?"

After she said these words, the two women tried yelling, tried screaming, but nothing was heard.

The ancient trees drifted off into the void and Aina turned away, staring off into the skies.

With a wave of her hand, the Four Heirlooms of the Great Families appeared around her, her gaze calm. Then, she suddenly smiled.

She missed her babies.

Leonel squatted down on a mountain peak, his palm stretched out in a clawing motion. The enormous head of a Sylvan Ancestor, its golden mask cracked and fissured, hung from his fingers, its body dangling below, limp and broken.

"I tried to tell you this would be the end result. People just sent you here to die. But I'm actually quite happy that you presented yourself like this on a silver platter. We really do have important things to discuss."

The tides of war still boomed and crackled around them. Entire worlds and stars seemed to be wiped out in breaths of time, and yet Leonel was still there, his two children by his side.

"I really need to know what you all were thinking ranking my wife second on the beauty list."

"What?" Little Leo's eyes bulged as though he had just heard the most ridiculous thing.

"You see? Even my son can't believe his little ears."

"My ears are not little!"

Leonel reached back with his free hand and ruffled his hair, obscuring his vision. The little guy had to fight for his life not to fall off his father's back.

The Sylvan Ancestor coughed up a mouthful of blood. But maybe because it was too spent, too broken to respond, or maybe because it was already at death's door... it had

no reply.

"Hm?"

Leonel suddenly looked up, his eyes narrowing. There was a sudden great wave of animosity just now, one suffocating for all the wrong reasons.

He felt it long before he saw it, and once he did, he deduced exactly what was going on.

'Uh... well, they were bound to come for revenge at some point!'

There was probably only one group that would get so infuriated at him mentioning that list.

**BOOM!**

Eight pairs of golden wings appeared high in the skies. They seemed to vanish behind the clouds, looking more illusory than real, or like they were still so far away from the world that it was only their sheer size that allowed them to be seen in the first place. The world's Forces seemed stripped and pulled, as though all of it was being sucked toward this construct high above them.

Leonel shook his head.

"I'm surrounded by idiots- He quickly looked at his children. "When your mother is back, you didn't hear that from me."

Leah only giggled, while Leo seemed to already be plotting his revenge.

Leonel sighed. Was this the fate of a father?

Despite his antics, his reactions weren't slow in the slightest.

A pulse of vibrant violet came from his life.

"Where do you get off trying to control the Domain of a King?"

Chi.

Something snapped.

## Chapter 3272: A Pawn

Leonel's Royal Crest pulsed with a radiant light, a beam of violet piercing right through the skies and shearing apart everything in its path.

A violent upswell filled the clouds and painted their curving outlines, echoes of radiance splintering the wings that blanketed everything to pieces.

With a relaxing of his hand, Leonel allowed the Sylvan Ancestor to fall from his hands, its large body tumbling across the rocks in a pathetic sprawl as he stood to his feet.

His children seemed to understand the assignment, each one using their little hands to grip onto one of his shoulders as he stepped into the skies.

He waved a hand, a bow appearing in his palm as though he had plucked it right out of his Royal Crest.

There was a confident smile on Leonel's face as he seemed to see the world in a light others couldn't. There was an anticipation bubbling up in his heart.

He had done everything right. All that was left was to claim victory just like he had every time before.

In every iteration, the Demoness tucked her tail and hid. This time, he knew she would appear. This time, he knew that things would reach their final conclusion.

As for the Minerva?

They were entirely uninteresting to him.

His fingers left blurs in the air as he erupted with a barrage. Streaking lights so numerous and suffocating they overshadowed even the sun in the skies pilfered and plundered.

"There you are."

Leonel grinned.

He pulled his bow back, its form vanishing into his Royal Crest. With another wave of his hand, his spear took shape. The skies trembled.

"HEY!" Leonel roared out.

James, Milan, and the others, despite the distance separating them, all seemed to grasp Leonel's words as though they had been spoken right into their ears.

They didn't reply with much other than a flare of their auras. Pillars of light cut through the air, and Leonel knew they understood his meaning.

Very soon, this would no longer be a joke.

From this moment on, their lives, and those under them, would be up to them to preserve.

SHUUU!

"Mommy!" Leah and Leo called out, their eyes lighting up as yet another pillar took shape, a beam of red descending from the skies. It took what remained of the shattered image of wings and turned them to a bloody, crimson mess.

An angel of a woman descended from on high, a delicate ruby light slowly receding from her hair and wings.

Soon, she landed in front of her husband.

Leonel smiled. "Took you long enough. Do you know how much of a headache it is babysitting these munchkins?"

Leah blinked and patted her dad's head. "Don't worry, we took care of him, Mommy."

Aina's smile bloomed, and she took her little girl into her arms, and then her son. She bundled them up tightly, hugging them so hard they thought they might never breathe again.

Leonel's laughter filled the skies as he took a step forward. He seemed to phase through his wife and soared high into the skies just as roars filled it.

"GIVE US OUR DAUGHTER BACK!"

It was absolute chaos. It felt like everything was happening all at once, but the voice had barely echoed when it came to an abrupt halt. Leonel hadn't even been the one to make a move, but a pair of parents Leonel barely recognized as Xara and Lykos—Minerva's parents—found themselves frozen in the air.

A line of blood appeared down each of their foreheads as Leonel strolled by them, a confident light sparking in his eyes. It seemed that his wife's strength had improved far more than he assumed. Likewise... he could also guess why that was.

Since that was the case, it seemed that he was going to have to vent on her behalf a bit.

He didn't care about the Minerva much, but the one thing he would always have the time for was pettiness.

As the skies cleared, the formation of the Minerva torn to shreds, a man with eight golden wings appeared high above it all, his pupils trembling slightly in an attempt to reaffirm their calm.

Leonel could remember the last time he met this man. This Head of the Minerva had the entire world in the palm of his hand. Though cornered by the schemes of a young man far younger and weaker than himself, he still wanted to pretend as though everything was under his control.

A sneer spread across Leonel's face.

He really hated that arrogant indifference.

Raising his spear, tendrils of Spear Force coalesced in the air.

"How many moves do you think you can last? One?" Leonel asked, taking another step forward. "Half of one?"

He took another.

Elysium's gaze sharpened, a golden sword appearing in his palm.

"First it was the Sylvans, and then they sent you. You know, I don't quite understand it. Did you think I was wasting time here so that you could slowly whittle away my forces?"

Leonel took another step, his spear waving through the air.

Elysium raised his blade to block, but his sword was cut in two down its length, his hand becoming a bloody stump of pouring blood.

The Minerva Head's eyes bulged, and his jaw clenched in a writhing mass of veins.

"I was actually just waiting for my wife to return."

Leonel's spear flickered again, and Elysium's entire arm soared into the air, the Spear Force of his weapon shattering to pieces beneath the might of his Spear Force.

"You were a pawn back then, and you're still one now. The question is, who are you a vanguard to?"

Leonel appeared before Elysium, his spear tip thrust through the man's chest. With a flex of his forearm, he lifted him up and shifted him to the side as though it was less effort than tilting his head to look past him.

"Ah, what a surprise. I thought it was going to be the Invalids again, but they're still not here, are they? So it's the Void Race and the Pluto Race, two enemies come to form an alliance just to deal with little 'ol me?"

## Chapter 3273: Enough

Elysium hacked up a mouthful of blood. He reached up, trying to grab Leonel's spear, his bloodied fingers grasping at the air, only to fail in the end. He must have been seeing double and triple, the feeling in his chest spreading out uncontrollably until he couldn't tell the origin of the pain at all.

Leonel's wrist flickered, and the man was sent flying.

The Pluto.

They were the Race that had ruled over Existence for as long as anyone could remember. Their bodies weren't as peculiar as the Void Race, nor was their intelligence as prolific as the Sylvans, nor did they have the origins of the God Beasts of Creation like the Minerva.

But they stood at that peak for countless years nonetheless.

In a way, maybe it should have been flattering that they were all here. But Leonel found it amusing instead.

Why were all of these people here in the first place? Why did they all collectively decide that the smartest thing to do when the world was on the line was to target the one Race they had supposedly never respected in the first place?

There was only one reason. Or maybe it would be more accurate to say just one person was responsible.

But to Leonel...

The outcome didn't matter.

BOOM! BOOM!

Leonel almost couldn't react to the hand. It appeared before anything else—a claw that looked as though it descended from the might of a dragon, a steely blue that looked almost human if not for the curved blade of silver at the end of every finger.

The shuddering might carried within it reminded one of rushing waters and collapsing mountains.



Leonel grinned.

He retracted his spear, his free hand forming a claw that rushed forward. Veins popped across his forearm, the skies changing color beneath his own might as well.

Natural Force Arts bloomed like sparks dancing off a flint, miniature shooting stars and celestial maps wrapping around Leonel's body as the world fell into the tune of his attack.

BOOM!

Two claws met in the air, one substantially larger than the other.

Sparks flew, this time not carrying the impetus of life but instead a deep-seated will for destruction.

CRUNCH.

Leonel squeezed down, and the powerful hand of the Pluto snapped, his fingers breaking in awkward directions.

"Don't run now."

This time, Leonel's voice sounded like it came from its own abyssal hell.

Despite the smile on his face, there was a deep impatience that stirred in his chest every time one of these new enemies appeared.

Did they really think that... the Human Race was here for them to knead as they pleased?

In this case, this Pluto was almost certainly enraged. Leonel could read his soul like an open book.

A dead child.

In fact, Leonel knew exactly which child: Ger'Ain.

But did he think that this would make a difference?

"There is only going to be one Race under the Northern Star after today," Leonel said coldly. His claw strengthened, and he ripped the arm forward.

An enormous Pluto man with wisps of grey falling down the length of his chin appeared.

As'Nox.

A bloody grin spread across the Pluto's face. Rather than showing fear, he raised his other claw, swiping it down toward Leonel's head.

Leonel hardly paused, his spear flickering with life.

CHI. CHI. CHI.

His blade left crisscrossing, swirling patterns across the Pluto's forearm. Blood refused to fall, but as though Leonel didn't notice, he took a step forward, his blade accelerating until the crisscrossing patterns had run all the way up As'Nox's limb.

"The Pluto... do not bleed... to the likes of you."

"Your son sure did," Leonel replied coldly.

PUCHI!

Leonel's spear ran through his chest, and As'Nox froze.

"Die," Leonel's cool voice echoed.

BANG!

The Pluto's heart exploded, and all at once, his arm shattered into a rain of blood.

Leonel kicked at his chest, sending the grieving father falling from the skies in a heap. However, before he fell very far, he was caught out of the air.

The Pluto that appeared seemed to have come from nowhere, and it felt like no matter where he stood, it was only natural for him to be there.

He stood far shorter than any other Pluto Leonel had ever seen, and the Void Race member that appeared not long afterward seemed to follow the same logic.

The two men were only eight feet or so tall—tall for a human, but practically miniature for their Races given their strength.

"It's a shame. A father should really listen to his son," Leonel said calmly, his eyes landing on the Pluto.

"... You overestimate yourself and your worth," Xor'Thar spoke slowly.

"I don't remember being the one to ask my mortal enemy for aid to face off against someone who's overestimating themselves."

"If you believe that's what's happening here, you not only overestimate yourself, but you're also ignorant and not nearly as intelligent as you think."

Leonel tilted his head and looked past the two men.

"You two are too weak. Who else did you bring?"

Xor'Thar's gaze narrowed.

"I won't repeat myself again," Leonel said slowly. "You have three seconds to get out of my sight, or I'll mail your head to El'Rion in a black box."

The last of Leonel's words came out in the thunder of the Pluto's language, but this time, it couldn't harm his throat. Instead, it was Xor'Thar who found his ears ringing.

"One."

Leonel moved.

This time, he didn't bother to count. His patience had reached its limits.

They believed that his forbearance was a product of his hesitancy.

They were sorely mistaken.

Xor'Thar's pupils constricted as he threw out a punch, pushing Ger'Ain's father to his back.

Leonel's spear ripped through his fist, flaying his forearm in two.

With a flicker, half of his arm was severed, and with another, the other half was spliced into ribbons.

Xor'Thar's other arm was still in a throwing motion, and he couldn't bring it back fast enough. He could only watch as the blade approached his neck, Leonel's promise echoing in his ears.

"Enough."

Leonel's spear froze in place, a mysterious strength binding it.

## **Chapter 3274: Chessboard**

Leonel's wrist trembled.

He had to admit, this was the greatest strength he had come across since his battle with his grandfather.

It was cute.

Chi.

BANG!

A hole was blasted through Xor'Thar's chest.

The Pluto was sent flying backward with such speed he vanished over the horizon in less than a blink.

Leonel's hair danced in the wind, his King's robes flapping as though they had a mind of their own.

"If you came here today and fail to treat me as an equal, you, and everyone you've brought with you, will die.

"If you came here today to treat me as an equal... you and everyone you've brought with you will die.

"Only if you came here ready to place your life on the line, and scratch and claw for every advantage you gain, might you have a chance at touching the hems of my robes."

Leonel's voice boomed across the battlefield.

It had only just fallen when an old Pluto appeared before him. The expression of the man was calm, but there was a deathly sort of furious momentum to his presence.

It only took a glance for Leonel to feel that this was the strongest Pluto he had ever personally faced: the Ancestor of the Plutos, Theos'Ryn.

This man was so old that he was among the very same group of Plutos that gave the Human Race a chance to escape.

Unfortunately for him, Leonel didn't have even the slightest bit of gratitude in his heart. When he looked at the Pluto now, all he saw was a sea of ungrateful has-beens that had a fondness for overestimating themselves.

The skies fell into silence as a sea of Plutos began to appear one after another.

A shadow descended from above. A leg of stars, an arm of celestial bodies. They were all larger than life, their scythes carrying the souls of entire worlds.

There were many stories across history and legends that told of Gods descending onto the world, a single lone man standing before them, carrying the weight of hopes and dreams on his shoulders.

Leonel had gotten used to that weight long ago. Even staring at this scene now, facing off against the Gods that he had only been able to look up to in the past, his expression was as calm as could be.

"No..." he said softly. "... I'm trying to recall... but I really can't remember a time I ever looked up to any of you..."

The words were soft and out of place. But with the strength of those present, it was impossible that they didn't hear them, these genuine words that came from the depths of his heart.

"If you are the only one with this level of strength, then it won't make a difference," Theos'Ryn said coldly.

Leonel blinked. "I don't think I ever said that I was? Well, if my wife asks, I can and would beat her ten out of ten times no matter how strong she is. But as far as you're concerned, there's at least one other that could punch a hole through your chest."

"Two is not enough," Theos'Ryn replied just as coldly, the gravelly texture of his voice practically grating across the clouds.

"Why don't we just skip to the final part?" Leonel suddenly asked.

Theos'Ryn's eyes narrowed. But before he could react, Leonel swiped out with his spear, a line appearing in the depths of space to reveal an eye larger than the world itself.

Ancestor of the Void Race, Thal'Vren.

Space trembled and pulled itself apart. Leonel didn't do much after his swipe, and yet Thal'Vren's presence seemed to make the space itself scared to repair itself.

However, Leonel was still shaking his head.

"I feel like I'm surrounded by idiots all of the time. First, the so-called God Beast of Destruction didn't realize that he was a pawn, and now two of the strongest Races in existence are still in the dark.

"You never ask the obvious questions. Why is it that of all the Races, only your Void and Pluto Races use your odd nomenclature? Do you remember when it started? Why it started? Or did you just start naming your sons El'Rion instead of Elrion for fun?"

It was only when it was facing its death that the Celestial Terror realized that it had been nothing but a victim of the Demoneess' schemes. And now, it felt like history was replaying itself all over again.

"Do you know what a double-break represents? When I say the name... Van"Wellia—"

An echo of blood filled the air. The skies turned crimson, the ground sloshing about with currents of red. The dense scent of death filled the air, a suffocating aura choking them down to their very souls.

Van"Wellia. She was the artist who painted the Last Bloody War, a depiction of the Envoys of Destruction and Creation.

However, her name itself was anything but the death and destruction that was playing out now. Van"Wellia's name, when spoken, was beautiful beyond compare, painting a gorgeous flower known as the Dream Lotus...

It was this beauty that somehow gave way to the savagery that hung in the air... it was the most beautiful of souls that finished the Last Bloody War.

Beauty becoming ugly. Creation becoming Destruction. A Dream Lotus carrying nothing but nightmares.

"Is your name really Theos'Ryn?" Leonel looked toward the Pluto Ancestor. "Or is it Theos"Ryn?"

The Pluto froze, and Leonel reached forward.

"Little Lion, is there a need for this?"

A voice filled with a sultry air danced through the skies, but it was almost as though Leonel hadn't heard it at all as he tapped the Ancient Pluto's body.

Theos'Ryn couldn't even react to Leonel's touch.

"You see that you're a pawn now, right?" Leonel said lightly. "Unfortunately for you, you're too much of a fool to realize it in time. So, instead, how about you just die for your sins instead?"

Theos'Ryn began to crumble before the eyes of everyone present. It wasn't just him; one powerful Pluto after another fell to ash.

No one knew how to react. No one knew how to understand what was happening.

Leonel could summarize it quite well, though.

He had finally stepped off the Demoness' chessboard.

...

## Chapter 3275: I Will Be

The world watched as some of the strongest existences of all time crumbled to pieces. In truth, even Leonel's own brothers couldn't believe it. His wife, the person who believed in him the most in the entire world, couldn't help but blink a few times as well.

She had been gearing up for a great battle. This was meant to be their last hurdle—so long as they made it through, they would finally grasp the peace and happiness they had been chasing after for so long.

And then... Leonel went and did this.

He just reached out and touched the strongest Pluto, a man who was very well acknowledged as easily amongst the three strongest warriors in all of Existence... and he died.

Leonel retracted his hand as a woman appeared before him. She was just three meters away, a distance that was hardly far for a mortal, let alone Gods that could bury stars with a flip of their hands.

As black as her heart was, she was a woman with beauty that touched the skies and calmed the winds. Her most striking feature was just how red her lips were—it was all too easy to forget that she even had the rest of a face to look at.

But oddly enough... at least right now... there didn't seem to be any Dream Asura aspects to her at all. She looked like a normal human woman in every aspect. Maybe it was a trick of the eyes, but even her eyes weren't violet; rather, they were the most normal warm brown.

If one wanted to depict a human woman—maybe the pinnacle human woman—this would be the sort of example they might choose.

Usually, she was calm, unbothered, always smiling without hints of dissatisfaction. But right now, despite the fact the same smile was on her face, Leonel could tell the difference.

She wasn't happy.

Not in the slightest.

Leonel looked at this woman who had made his life a living hell. Every other time he had come across her, he had lost control of his emotions. He felt rage that sunk to the depths of his soul, like the worming, slimy hands of a devil slithering over his heart.

But right this moment, forcing her to appear for the very first time regardless of iteration, he felt nothing at all.

The Demoness slowly shook her head. "If you simply ignored it just one more time... none of this would be necessary... Aren't you supposed to be kind?"

One Pluto and Void Race member after another began to collapse and fall. It seemed as though Leonel had knocked down a series of dominoes.

Leonel looked into the distance, his gaze calm. For some reason, although there was no one there at all, it seemed that he was indeed looking right at a person... almost like he wanted them to know that he wasn't hiding from this moment.

"The first time I committed an act of genocide, I did so out of fury. This time, I do it out of necessity. My conscience is clear."

"..."

The Demoness didn't reply immediately, her eyes brimming with an odd emotion.

"You've given up on your father."

"I have."

"Then you and I... will never see eye to eye."

"We never would have."

SHIIING.

The howl of Leonel's spear filled the skies.

...

In that far-off distant world, El'Rion stood in silence. He didn't choose to charge with his family, but standing here, feeling his life slip away from him, it was hard not to feel rage toward that man.

When he felt Leonel's gaze, he couldn't help but recall memories... those words of rage and anger Leonel had spoken back then, words he dismissed as ridiculous.



... Do you think I need this power? Do you think it matters if I don't have a fraction of your strength? ... I swear that I will do these things and I will do so as a human ...

The words echoed in El'Rion's ears again and again.

His powerful body began to break apart, vanishing into the sands of time. He crumbled and collapsed, a guttural chuckle coming from his lips.

He honestly couldn't remember the last time he laughed, but it was hard not to right now.

A Human wiping out the two most powerful Races in Existence with a word and a touch. It was comical, was it not?

The worst part was that he had said enough to explain how it happened, and yet he still couldn't understand. Was the gap between himself and Leonel truly so large?

What happened to giving him time to catch up? When had he even had the time to surpass him, the greatest genius of the Pluto, by such a large margin?

"Oh..."

El'Rion's voice rumbled one last time.

And then he laughed again.

The Pluto gained their power due to a favor, and they lost it all the same way. Maybe that was what they deserved.

Who would have thought that from the very beginning, they were just set up to be pawns?

The last of El'Rion's head vanished into a dusty ash, sprinkling out into the world until there was nothing at all left of him.

The Void and Pluto Race were no more.

...

Leonel's spear continued to howl, so eager for battle it trembled in his palm itself.

"Why aren't you doing what you do best yet?" Leonel asked lightly. "My uncle, my master. When are you planning on using them? The Invalids, go ahead and have them charge. The Ancient Humans, I'm sure you have your own plans for them, do you not? Show me what your chessboard has left on it."

"Because if there's nothing else... I'll be taking your head right here and now."

Leonel raised his spear, aiming it at the Demoness' head. His blade was eerily still right then, so still one would have thought that time came to a complete and utter stop.

And beneath their powerful Dream Force... that might as well have been exactly what happened.

"I thought... that you had come to understand..." the Demoness said lightly.

"In this world, there are no Gods. If there were, life would be completely meaningless."

The pupils of the Demoness shook, and she looked up to meet Leonel's gaze.

"Wrong. You just aren't strong enough. I will be."

The aura of the Demoness changed.

For the first time, her smile vanished.

## **Chapter 3276: Far Larger**

The words were enough for Leonel to understand the sort of person the Demoness was.

Maybe in another life, he would have ended up the exact same way. He didn't know what exactly her story was, or who she was so obsessed with bringing back, but what he did know was that it was a foolish pursuit.

If there was someone powerful enough to wave a hand and bring back life... then was it truly ever worth much of anything to begin with?

This was something that Leonel had accepted that the Demoness was entirely unable to.

And now, this woman, who once had the entire world in the palm of her hands, had begun to show some fluster for the very first time. That was because a key cog in her plan had been entirely crippled by Leonel.

Suggestion through Dream Force... it was something that the world feared greatly. Dream Force Masters were some of the most fearsome existences throughout Worlds, and until now, there were none more powerful than the Demoness.

The accents in the names of those with " in their monikers had always been meant to convey pulses of Dream Force. Oddly enough, all Void Race and Pluto Race members

had had these accents as well, but they were always muted, not carrying the same pulse of Dream Force.

They were easy to forget as a result, just a quirk of their languages. It was only natural that different cultures and dialects had their own way of doing things.

Even Leonel never second-guessed it. It was something hidden in plain sight that no one would give a second thought to.

Until Leonel did.

Those muted accents were there for a purpose. They were a suggestion cast over the entire Race. Both of them.

The power of them, and the scale, was on a level that was hard to even fathom. But what was even more important was what they represented...

The Void Race. The masters of space.

The Pluto Race. The masters of time.

Just what did it mean to have absolute control over both Races simultaneously?

Leonel just decided... that he would rather not find out.

In the entirety of Existence, if there was one person that could stand toe to toe with the Demoness in terms of Dream Force, it was Leonel. If Dream Force was separated into Dimensions of control, the two of them were the only ones standing on their plane.

And because of that, the Demoness couldn't protect her plans from Leonel at all. The moment Leonel took action, he was able to exploit the vulnerability the Demoness left behind on purpose to kill every single member of the Void and Pluto Race.

The Demoness never thought that the backdoor she left behind to control the two Races would be used in this way. But her words also explained that well enough.

She ultimately thought that in the end... Leonel would be on her side.

How many iterations had the two of them been through together? Was it really possible that Leonel could never find her?

Impossible.

In the end, it seemed as though Leonel made the same choice every time: to allow the Demoness' plans to continue unhindered.

What she never expected was for Leonel to make the complete opposite decision he had in the past.

Leonel had changed.

His rage-induced mistake in the Dimensional Verse had once weighed heavily on his heart. He was a man who treated all lives equally... for him to erupt with such anger that he wiped out entire Races just for the sake of venting his own frustrations was entirely unlike him.

That guilt had followed him for a very long time, and it was never quite resolved. It was the same reason even if he had been aware of this backdoor before, no matter the iteration, he never pulled the trigger.

But what shocked the Demoness even more was that Leonel had truly given up on his father. She had personally witnessed all of the things Leonel had done to try and bring Velasco back, the level of destruction he had wrought.

For him to change his mind like this all of a sudden was what floored her the absolute most.

She never realized, that all this time... she was actually on Leonel's chessboard.

When Leonel was training with Nilrem, being forced to recall all of the methods of power he had created in previous iterations, he was also recalling every failure, every attempt, every bit of suffering he had caused, only for it all to end in the same exact way.

That moment when he finally gave up and allowed the Northern Star to take his life was symbolic in more ways than one...

He had already given up then.

He just needed to live one more life to be reminded of it all.

Maybe he could bring Velasco back. But he would never be able to bring his father back.

That... he had accepted.

Now, it was time to end this.

The Demoness stared into Leonel's eyes for a long while before she flipped over a palm.

An elegant spear appeared, radiating a delicate purple light. But when Leonel saw the stinger on the end of it, his eyes widened, his pupils trembling heavily.

Sparks of lightning flew across his mind, connections he never thought he would make in his life overwhelming him to the point he nearly took a step back.

"You..."

It was the second spear that Leonel had ever gained from the Spear Domain Ring, the very one that made him realize that not all the spearmen depicted in the ring were men.

"I have always been by your side, Little Lion. A parent's burden isn't something that you can imagine. Whether you believe it or not, I love you. I love your father. I love your uncle..." she looked up from the spear. "... I love your grandfather."

She pointed her spear forward, her dress fluttering in the wind.

"The gap between us isn't something that you can bridge. This chessboard, as you call it, is far larger than you can fathom."

The Demoness' spear tip trembled and a hole was ripped right through Leonel's throat.

## **Chapter 3277: Tip of the Iceberg**

The pain ripped through Leonel's body, sharp and fast. Without his Dream Force prowess, he wouldn't have even registered it. He had simply never seen a spear so fast.

But more shockingly than that, it embodied every aspect that it had once taught him. A continuous stream of speedy thrusts, filling the skies, covering all paths of retreat, perfect in its simplicity, endlessly complex in its variations.

In an instant, Leonel was riddled with holes, an overwhelming sense of inferiority burying itself into the very depths of his soul.

And yet, he hadn't ever attempted to move even a single time.

A pulse of light came from Leonel's brows, the band of violet-gold running across it radiating out into the world.

Everything dispelled, and he found himself standing in the same place, the Demoness standing across from him with the same placid expression.

"Do you feel the gap now?" she said lightly.

Leonel looked down at his spear and didn't reply immediately.

"I have been refining my spear for so many trillions of years I have lost count. When I grew bored of the thrust..."

The Demoness' palm flipped over and a new spear appeared. It looked almost like a glaive, having just a single edge to it. But it was thin, light as a feather, and flutteringly fragile.

Then, the Demoness swiped out casually. It was a simple sweep, moving from left to right.

Leonel's body shuddered, being sliced completely in half. Pain tore through his soul once more, but he hardly registered it when he found himself split into ribbons.

Cold sweat poured down his brows. He could tell that these were just illusions, but he could also feel that if the Demoness truly chose to strike, the end result just might be the very same.

A fear was being ingrained into his psyche, pressed and seared into his heart. His Ethereal Glabella itself was being molded and shaped to it. It was a sort of manipulation that was out in the open, and yet nothing at all could be done about it.

He coughed as he snapped out of the illusion once again, his breathing heavy. Beads of sweat fell down his body, his grip on his own spear tightening.

"Eventually... I grew bored of the sweep."

The spear in the Demoness' hand changed once again, shifting and changing into a heavier blade, one that carried such a heft to it that light bent toward it. A deep darkness exuded toward it as a result, an event horizon just barely forming in its midst.

The blade descended from above.

Leonel could do nothing as he was cut in half. It practically felt as though his body had presented itself to be spliced and diced. Once again, he was instantly cut into ribbons, every slight bit of pain was as real as the projections in his mind.

There was no escaping it. He was made to feel every split in his cells, every shear of his flesh, every break in his bones.

"... So I mastered the slash."

The spear in the Demoness' hand kept changing. Every time it did, a new spear strike would be the focus. And every time, the end result would be the same.

By the time the tenth spear vanished from her hand and the original stinger spear appeared, Leonel had fallen to his knees, his breathing heavy and labored.

It felt like he had just experienced a countless series of deaths, and yet every strike made him very much feel alive, another attack on his mind and psyche that he was forced to experience every waking moment of.

"With any one of these spears, any one of these attacks, I could end this battle. If I ever cared to use them all in a seamless combat style... well, I would never need to do such a thing because there hasn't been anyone in a very long time that could parry even one of my attacks."

Leonel didn't reply, his mind replaying every strike. And yet, no matter how he went through them, he couldn't find the flaw, he couldn't find the gap. It wasn't a matter of his body being unable to keep up like it usually was. In this case, even his mind couldn't track what was happening.

He had never experienced such a thing in his entire life. No matter how powerful his opponent, his bottleneck had always been his body. For the first time, he was meeting something his Dream Force simply couldn't see through.

Leonel coughed, raising a hand to his mouth subconsciously. His pupils constricted when he saw the blood that coated his palm.

Dream Force transcending reality...

At that moment, he understood something, but it hardly changed his situation. Maybe he had overestimated himself in thinking that his Dream Force had reached the same stage as the Demoness.

This was a level more unfathomable than even influencing space and time directly. To turn illusion to reality, and for reality to become illusion.

The lines blurred, and suddenly his mind couldn't tell the difference, couldn't feel the difference, even with his Dream Force Affinity.

This was beyond a Dharma, beyond an Idol, beyond Existence itself.

For a moment, he couldn't help but wonder if she was correct. Was she a God? Were there truly Gods in this world? Not in the sense of an Idol or mere power under their control, but in terms of omnipotence, omnipresence... omniscience.

"Heh..."

A flicker of a flame appeared in Leonel's palm, burning the blood away.

He slowly stood, looking back onto the chaotic battlefield. It was entirely frozen in place, locked in a frame of time beneath where the two of them stood.

The battle between grandmother and grandson was on a level the world couldn't be privy to, and yet, Leonel was sure that the Demoness had already unleashed all of her plans onto his brothers and family.

"You think too little of me." The Demoness said lightly.

"I don't think I've ever been inferior to someone in Dream Force in my life," Leonel spoke as though he was talking to himself. "But, I think it's a little interesting... I've never had anyone to learn from."

Leonel's spear trembled.

"I've never been very good at this spear thing."

Leonel tossed his spear to the side as though he hadn't built his Idol on it at all.

He grabbed at the air, and a bow that shook the world appeared.

If he was going to take the Demoness down, he was going to have to do it at his absolute strongest.

"It seems you still don't understand."

The Demoness' hair began to wave gently in the air.

"What I've shown you... is the mere tip of the iceberg."

A Dream Force, the likes of which could build and topple the world all at once, manifested and Leonel nearly felt his mind collapse on contact.

## **Chapter 3278: Control**

Leonel's mind blurred, his body losing control of itself for a brief instant. It was once again something that he had never experienced before, but this time, he was ready.

Dream Counter activated.

He had changed the parameters of his Ability Index skill the moment he experienced his first "death".

His hands fired without his mind's input. The disruption to his Dream Force didn't matter in the slightest, as he unleashed a rain of arrows.



There was a blankness to his mind right this instant. He had never been so focused in his entire life.

This was it.

Everything would come down to this.

And he had not the slightest intention of losing.

Leonel's vision cleared to find the stinger spear at his throat. His gaze didn't so much as fluctuate.

The spear vanished, and all of a sudden the Demoness had retreated. As though the image before Leonel had been nothing more than a fake, she appeared dozens of meters away, her spear dancing as she parried one arrow after another.

Time warped and shifted around them in ways that didn't make sense to the naked eye. However, to them, the two strongest Dream Force users in the world, this was their stroll in the park, this was their daily meditation.

For the first time, they were facing off against someone that saw the world in the same way they did, and the result was a battle that caused the bounds of reality to tremble, even the likes of the Northern Star shrinking back in the distance to make more space for them to unleash their might.

Leonel exhaled a breath with every arrow. He should have been hyperventilating at the speed he was releasing them, and yet he seemed calm and collected.

The bow was his weapon. When he used it, he never felt more comfortable; he never felt more in control.

Something warped to Leonel's side.

His pupils constricted, a spike of pain tearing into his ribs. A spear slid between his bones, jetting right toward his heart.

A Natural Force Art bloomed on Leonel's body, etching itself into reality.

His body shifted and moved. As though erased from one reality and drawn into another, he appeared out of the range of the blade.

His King Force bloomed, his arrow appearing drawn at the Demoness in point-blank range. It couldn't have been more than a half meter between the two.

He didn't even get the chance to release it, his arm flying into the air.

Losing control of his bow, Leonel took a strong step back, his aura surging.

There was a calmness to him even with just a single arm at his disposal. His King Force bloomed and his missing arm regrew as though it had never been severed; the Vital Star Force aspects pooling a vibrant Life Force into him.

He struck out with a palm at the same time, blasting his severed arm to pieces. Natural Force Arts bloomed out from it, an array of complex magic circles enveloping one another as Leonel's bow swapped for a quill.

He swiped at the air, crossing through the spray of his own blood.

Clones of bows and arrows crossed the air, spanning hundreds of miles, thousands of them all drawing at once and firing in a rain that descended from the skies.

The Demoness calmly weaved through them, releasing a single palm from her stinger spear and tapping at the air.

The arrows all froze in the skies. The Natural Force Art that had bloomed from Leonel's arm was being reversed by the touch of an Empress.

Every move Leonel made seemed to be perfectly countered, and she did so with the calmest of countenances. And every time she took action, it seemed like an ancient rust was being knocked off of her. Every flutter of rusted rose gold was akin to another tick up in her strength.

Leonel could feel it. He was watching the awakening of a slumbering dragon.

He had never felt so oppressed in his life. In that instant, it was like the looming image of a Goddess was hovering over him.

"I'm no Goddess." she said lightly. "The choice of the word God was made by you."

The Demoness' dress fluttered. A simple strike soared through Leonel's defenses, and this time, he wasn't fast enough to knock another arrow, his reaction lagging behind just the slightest bit.

At that moment, even the likes of Dream Counter were suppressed. She grasped its secrets, and she reacted accordingly, her Dream Force shifting to make her attacks more ethereal, harder to read, and impossible to grasp even for Leonel himself.

"I am a Demoness."

PUCHI!

The spear jetted through Leonel's heart, piercing right through it and out of the other side.

BOOM!

A violent pulse of power, a Force-shaped cone, radiated out from Leonel's back. As though to paint the picture of just how much strength was coursing through his chest right that moment, it shot out, blinding the world.

In the far off distance, stars died, worlds collapsed, Regulators cowered and World Spirits shrank.

And yet, the Demoness' eyes narrowed when she saw this.

"Claim as much control over the world as you want." Leonel said calmly, feeling the power coursing through him. "But my body is under my control alone."

He knew why the Demoness was shocked. As great as the cone of Force was, she had too much control over her spear and attack for such a shocking amount of energy to leak so easily.

Such flashy displays were only for the weak. She had long left that behind.

The only explanation was that she had somehow lost control of her blade. But she couldn't quite understand how that was possible. Even after Leonel stated it so plainly, she didn't believe it.

She lost control over her blade in Leonel's body? If she could lose control of her weapon due to something so trivial, how would she paint the future she wanted?

Rage flickered through the Demoness' eyes, and her hair rose from her shoulders, flickers of violet appearing deep within it.

...

## **Chapter 3279: Not Just**

The Demoness pulled back on her spear, ripping a hole out of Leonel's heart. But there was a pool of Spear and Bow Force that jetted out, the Weapon Forces that forged the very core of his being, sparkling out into the world.

They latched onto the Demoness' Spear Force, suppressing and battling against it.

The Demoness' gaze flickered, confusion coloring her features. She had just been about to grow the slightest bit serious, but this change caught her off guard.

She found her Spear Force suddenly difficult to control, and before she could make heads or tails of what was going on, Leonel was already upon her.

The quill in his hands changed again, and out appeared a spear.

Once again, the Demoness was taken aback. It didn't make sense for Leonel to go back to the spear. Didn't he realize the gap between them already?

PUCHI!

A hole ripped through her shoulder.

Leonel's spear danced, butterflies and hummingbirds fluttering around him. His gaze had become frighteningly cold, and the Demoness realized at that moment that her grandson had long reached an absolute state of focus. While her emotions were continuously changing, his had been steady from the very beginning.

She raised her spear up to block, but Leonel slid by it, slicing into her gut.

His spear twirled in his hands, slashing wound after wound into her body.

She leaned back in an attempt to dodge, still reeling from what was happening, but Leonel's blade was absolutely relentless, and in that moment, she saw shadows of herself in him.

A flash of understanding lit her eyes.

While she was knocking rust off, there was someone else that was improving right before her.

Leonel had never had systematic training in his entire life. From the very start, his father had left him to fend for himself. Even when he gained a "master," all Nilrem really did was teach him life lessons, then point him toward techniques that he had created himself in past lives.

What he did best was improve on his own. And the worst things his enemies could do was give him a template to follow.

Not only had the Demoness given him a template, she did it all through a Dream Force illusion. And then she had the audacity to run her Spear Force through his Weapon Force Innate Node.

All of her progress, all of her understanding...

Was his own now.

He wasn't just Leonel the King.

He wasn't just Leonel the Father.

He wasn't just Leonel the Husband.

He wasn't just Leonel the Son.

He was also Leonel the Wise Star Order.

In this world, there was nothing he couldn't document, nothing he couldn't see through, nothing he couldn't grasp when given enough time.

His spear ran through the Demoness' chest, and she looked down in abject shock.

Slowly, her expression almost seemed to fade away. Her emotions were leaking out into the world, melding into her Dream Force, and then diluting to such a large extent that there was almost nothing left of her.

"Okay..." she said lightly.

The spear in her hands changed.

The Demoness that Leonel had just ripped a hole through slowly faded.

She appeared in the distance, reality re-written as though she had never suffered the slightest bit of injury. She stood there in silence as her new spear manifested, her thoughts seemingly in a distant place.

Despite the dilution of her emotions, Leonel could feel all sorts of them coming from her, but they ultimately boiled down to a simple phrase...

She was at a crossroads.

Standing there, she wasn't really sure what road to take.

But oddly enough, it wasn't that she was hesitant. She had long set off on a particular path, her aim remaining the exact same. And she had no intention of changing.

Rather, she was considering another matter...

How much of her strength did she want to show right now?

Leonel could feel his Dream Force improving by leaps and bounds every moment he spent in this battle, and because of that, he could feel the deep and unfathomable well remaining within the Demoness.

But this question she was pondering made his eyes narrow.

What was she conserving her strength for?

Leonel looked off into the distance, his gaze landing on the Northern Star that loomed overhead so closely that they could practically reach out and touch it.

"I see..."

In this ultimate battle, both grandson and grandmother seemed distracted, their thoughts elsewhere.

And yet...

**BANG! BANG! BANG!**

They continued to stand there, but illusions danced through the air, their every clash just as real as the last.

They both danced across the line of illusion and reality, the strikes of their spears carrying more power, more control, more mystery with every blow.

A battle of Dream Force raged through the skies as they lost themselves in their own minds.

And then they suddenly moved at once.

As though the iterations of their battles all played out at the same time, their weapons seemed to multiply in the air, a myriad of changes taking place until their blades clashed.

**BOOM!**

There was only the slightest pause before Leonel coughed, taking a heavy step back.

The new spear of the Demoness had solidified. It was as simple as could be, a wooden spear with a flat, double-edged blade. It carried not the slightest hint of power to it, and yet Leonel could feel the concentration of Auspicious Air.

It was as though the spear itself was the embodiment of enlightenment.

Maybe this was payback. He had managed to defeat his grandfather after his inferior weapon gave way. And now...

Leonel looked at his spear manifested from his Dream Force and Idol. Cracks riddled its surface, and it seemed like any moment now, it would completely collapse.

"So such a path of Force Crafting is possible too. Fascinating."

Leonel flipped his spear in his palms, Ten Stars appearing to his back. They formed a link and a Constellation took shape.

"I'll be taking that too, then."

A Natural Force Art took shape, the Morales Constellation shimmering bright and powerful.

Auspicious Air poured down from the skies.

...

## **Chapter 3280: Open Palm**

Leonel pulled on the world itself, his thoughts almost becoming solid. Auspicious Air fell in waves.

He had never forgotten. How could he? He had created this technique with his own hands.

[Dimensional Cleanse] had had a built-in array of Natural Force Arts designed for no other reason than to gather Auspicious Air. It was so natural to him that he hardly ever used the ability.

Leonel had never really fought an opponent he needed Auspicious Air against in the first place. In his estimation, his mind had already been elevated to the point he didn't need the help of the world around him to think sharper and faster.

What he never considered was the possibility of using Auspicious Air for something else entirely.

When he saw the Demoness use it in such a way, it flowed naturally as though it was nothing more than an extension of himself. But not only did he grasp the methods of the Demoness...

He took a step beyond.

His King Force took shape, fusing into the Auspicious Air. At that moment, his Spear Force elevated to another level, the weapon in his hand simplifying on one hand, and blooming to another level on the other.

The skies shook and blades crossed through the air.

They danced with the rays of the Northern Star as their backdrop.

In that moment, they looked like nothing more than a pair of mortals. If it wasn't for the fact they were crossing the skies and impossible distances in what felt like less than a blink, one would have truly been fooled.

Their power was so controlled, their attacks so straightforward that they almost looked down to earth.

Thrusts met thrusts, slashes parrying slices, piercing strikes meeting steady spear bodies.

Every attack they sent, they both seemed to be improving by leaps and bounds. It seemed as much a competition of their genius as it was their strength.

They grasped techniques from one another, differing methods, different perspectives on how to view the world.

And then their strikes began to grow more overbearing, more complex.

They layered in shifts in time and space, warping reality and twisting the world to mold to their will.

Down below, the world seemed still frozen in time, unable to read or react to the battle they were witnessing.

Blood spurted.

Leonel's neck was almost severed in two, but a light of violet fused it together back into one.

He knew that he was at a disadvantage, his improvement lagging just the slightest bit behind the Demoness. The difference was small, but what truly made him apprehensive was the fact that the Demoness was controlling it at such a minor rate on purpose.

While he was quickly trying to improve, she was not only improving, but also recovering strength she also had. With such a gap, the difference would be obvious.

Even now, she was trying to win while minimizing the strength she had to use.



In its own way, this was suffocating for a completely different reason. She was still playing mind games, still trying to fill him with self-doubt and an oppression that went beyond just the blade in her hand.

She was the true Ancestor of the Dream Asuras.

However, Leonel didn't waver in the slightest. She wasn't the only one that had birthed a Race.

Blood exploded out from Leonel's back as a spear jetted through his chest. This time, the Demoness bypassed his heart on purpose, piercing around it and avoiding the loss of control of her Spear Force.

Or so she thought.

An unrelenting blast shot out a moment later, leveling more worlds and stars.

The eyes of the Demoness narrowed, but Leonel had already taken control of his spurts of blood.

Earlier, he had turned his arm into a Natural Force Art. This wasn't by coincidence, nor was it something he had done on a whim.

His wife had taken the true path of Humans, but he was a Spiritual King. The first Spiritual.

His soul was separate from his body, which meant one very important thing...

This flesh sack of his that his soul chose to call home was nothing more than a vessel forged by his hands.

He could make it anything he wanted it to be.

He wasn't a Blood Force user like his wife. But the difference hardly mattered.

In that moment, the substance of Leonel's body changed and the Force Arts bloomed around the Demoness' weapon. Despite her confidence, she lost control of her spear once again and Leonel responded in kind, piercing right through her chest.

**BANG!**

There was a suffocating presence that bloomed, rebounding against his blade, but he pushed right through, Auspicious Air, his Spear Force, and his King Force blooming into a single mighty tempest.

A hole shot right through the Demoness' chest.

BOOM!

The two separated, their torsos coupled with ghastly, gaping holes.

In an instant they were healed, Leonel's King Force blooming and the Demoness rewriting reality.

The space beneath their feet rippled as they stomped down.

"Enough." The Demoness said lightly.

In that moment, the slight violet ripples in her hair became solid. Her aura changed, her body growing in size. She had already been slightly taller than Leonel, but now she stood at almost a half meter taller.

Lavender horns grew from her forehead, curling back and onto her head like a pair of twisting braids. And already a beautiful woman, she seemed to elevate to another level, her warm brown eyes sparkling with an amethyst-like sheen.

Her subtle increases in power stopped as she took a large leap forward in an instant of time.

She appeared before Leonel in an instant, the latter having only just stomped at the air. He was too slow to react, and from a third party's perspective, it almost looked as though he had thrown himself onto her spear.

However, the Demoness didn't thrust the blade through his body. Her spear moved so fast that it looked almost as though she had just tapped him several times, barely leaving wounds that were only as deep as paper cuts on his body.

And then Leonel shattered to pieces, his Ethereal Glabella the only thing remaining.

Yet, that simply fell into the Demoness' open palm.