

# Dimensional Descent

## Chapter 3281: Our

The Demoness looked down at the crystal in her hand. It was so large, it made her eyes narrow. But the slight tremble that came from it was what made her pupils constrict.

Her Dream Force pressed down, suppressing the changes.

High in the skies, the Constellation and Stars of Leonel's making began to fade, as did the Idol. It was impossible for it to continue to manifest itself like this, not when Leonel was sealed off from the world.

As great as his body was, what good was it when there was nothing left?

It was true that she could have ended this battle whenever she wanted. But she really hadn't wanted to tap into this strength too early.

Unfortunately, this grandson of hers... he improved too quickly. If she allowed him the chance to continue keeping it close and rapidly rising, he might leach off her trillions of years of training and catch her off guard before she realized it.

The first time he managed to control her Spear Force, she shrugged it off. But it was impossible for her to ignore the second time.

He had proven himself capable of pulling the wool over her eyes time and time again. Truthfully, the very moment he had managed to deduce her plans with the Pluto and Void Race, she should have done exactly this.

But... she had been a bit too stubborn, maybe a little too prideful... maybe a little too sentimental.

Now, though, it no longer mattered.

She hesitated for a moment, looking at the Ethereal Glabella in her palm. After a long while, she shook her head and squeezed.

CRACK.

BANG!

It shattered to pieces.

There was a slight tremble in her pupils, but she brushed the pieces away, letting them flutter to the ground.

"Do what you have to do. Now," she said coldly.

In that moment, an unexpected pairing appeared. Well, one of them was very much expected; it was the second of them that was truly odd.

Zephyrion, the Emperor of the Invalids, was one. He was a man who had once had a great amount of pride; he had also thought himself equal to the Demoness. But right at that moment, his head was lowered, as though in deference to her presence.

It seemed that whatever superiority he had thought he had had long since been wiped out.

But what was truly odd was that Invalids—even Variant Invalids—shouldn't be able to display such emotion. They only knew one thing: Destruction.

If a Race of beings wanted nothing more than the end of the world, then how could they fear for their lives? And yet, Zephyrion had his head buried so low that one would have thought he was a cowardly rat.

But once again... it was the second person that was such a surprise.

Talon. The reincarnated genius of the Barbarian Race.

Leonel had learned long ago that Talon was living a second life, having grasped it from his wife—a Ninth Dimensional powerhouse that stood on the same level as the strongest existences across, well... Existence.

Now, Talon stood next to the Invalid Emperor, and was somehow much calmer than he was. At the very least, he wasn't trembling as though he might piss himself any moment.

In fact, although he didn't look much different from the last time Leonel had seen him, there was a depth to his eyes that hadn't been there before.

"There already isn't much left to do," Talon said calmly. "While they've been distracted, the Mortal and Demi-God Worlds are no more."

The Demoness didn't reply directly, looking up at the Northern Star instead.

If that was the case... why didn't she sense much of a change?

"It seems... we've put too much stress on it through all these iterations..." she said lightly.

If there was one existence that knew of everything that was constantly happening, it was the Northern Star. It was beyond the realms of time and space.

"More," she eventually spoke again.

"Understood," Talon replied.

Then he vanished.

Zephyrion lagged behind, not realizing that Talon had already disappeared because his head hung too low and he didn't dare to reach out with his senses.

By the time he realized what was happening and was ready to leave, the Demoness called out.

"A moment."

Zephyrion froze.

"Yes?"

"My son and his wife," she spoke these words without elaboration.

"They've already been integrated. They are now one of us," Zephyrion replied carefully.

There was a ripple in the air as though the Demoness was agitated about something, but then she just nodded.

"Good. Go."

Zephyrion bowed his head and then vanished.

The Demoness stood there in silence, time frozen all around her. Looking down at the people she could hardly see as anything more than ants, she was eerily calm. Her emotions dispersed through her Dream Force as usual, her mind so large that it was possible to dodge even her own thoughts if she wanted to.

Whether time was frozen or moving, it hardly mattered to her. Wasn't it all the same?

"Since you're here, why don't you show yourself?"

Nilrem stepped out of the shadows, his gaze on the fluttering pieces of Ethereal Glabella still dispersing through the air.

"Are you here to try and convince me again?" she asked.

"I gave up on that a long time ago," Nilrem replied, still not looking at her.

"Was it after the tenth woman you fucked? Or the millionth?"

Nilrem's eye twitched.

"I... don't think the number is that high."

"It is. In fact, it's much higher than that."

"Ophelia—"

"Do not call me by my name. Dare to do that again and your death this time will not be swift. I will make you feel every ounce of pain that I have."

Nilrem's mouth opened to reply, gathering the courage to look at the Demoness for the first time.

But the very face he didn't want to see was there. Cold, distant, so far away that he couldn't touch her even though he was within arm's reach.

He exhaled slowly.

"This time, you will lose," he said lightly.

"Thank you for saying those words," the Demoness replied as she looked toward Nilrem. "Now I have all the motivation that I need."

Nilrem smiled—a genuine, true smile.

"I look forward to the afterlife with you, if there is one. Our grandson is not so easy to defeat."

The Demoness's pupils trembled when Nilrem said the word "our." Then, in a fit of rage, she slapped out with a palm.

**BANG!**

Nilrem was no more. Not even flesh, bone, or soul remained.

...

## Chapter 3282: Husband

The Demoness' hand trembled in the air, but then it suddenly stopped. It dropped to her side, falling into a lull.

The space her Dream Force took up seemed to expand, and her rippling emotions calmed.

She looked toward where Leonel's remains rippled in the air. Then, she took a step and vanished.

Honestly speaking, she wasn't sure what Nilrem was speaking of. What was dead would remain dead. If that wasn't the case... why would she have to try so hard to change it?

\*\*

Aina stood on the ground, the small hands of her children resting in her palms. She stared up at the skies.

In one moment, her husband had been there. And in the next, he wasn't.

She felt an emptiness in her heart, and tears threatened to fall from her eyes.

"Mommy?"

Two tugs came from her arms.

A smile curled her lips as she looked down, the sadness she had just felt vanishing into the wind as though it had never been there.

"Yes?"

Little Leo and Leah blinked. They thought they had felt their mother's sadness just now, but it didn't seem like anything was wrong anymore.

They might have been intelligent, but they were still children. Their minds lacked flexibility, so they quickly forgot, thinking that they had made it up.

In their short little lives, they had never experienced any sort of true hardship. Certainly, nothing that wasn't manufactured by their parents.

They didn't have the capacity to consider that something truly horrible may have happened.

For her children, Aina put on a strong face as though she couldn't feel the vast emptiness. Even the pain of the ring on her finger being burned away didn't so much as change the look on her face.

The space before them warped.

Out from it, a Barbarian walked out. A woman with a bosom so large that it felt like she should tip over appeared, holding a heavy club over her shoulder. Bandages stretched across her chest, loose pants hanging so low on her hips, even they seemed like they might fall at any moment.

Aina hardly reacted to the appearance of this woman, but she already knew who she was.

Talon's wife, the very Barbarian Race woman who had once stopped Leonel outside of the Incomplete World of the Sea Gods.

She looked toward Aina in silence. Despite her valiant demeanor, and her being quite well aware that these matters were all but over, she didn't show much arrogance. In fact, her expression was that of pity.

She, too, had once lost her husband. It took quite a lot to get him back, but the man she knew now...

She found herself absently looking into the distance.

Maybe her true husband was never coming back. She would just have to learn to love this new man.

As soon as she had this thought, she fiercely suppressed it. If the Demoness sensed it, she would truly be finished.

Taking a breath, she looked toward Aina again, opening her mouth to speak.

She didn't get the chance to.

"If you want to live, leave," Aina said lightly. She never let go of the hands of her two children.

It was quite rare for Aina to show any mercy at all. Between the two of them, she had always been the more bloodthirsty compared to her husband. All this talk of guilt and genocide never faded her. Leonel could kill all the men, women, and children in the world and she still loved him just the same.

It just never mattered to her.

But right now, she didn't want to interact with anyone but her children, and certainly not an enemy.

The Barbarian woman frowned. The pity she once felt had vanished, and the warrior blood in her pumped... only once, as it was the last time.

Her head flew into the skies, the very blood thrumming in her body being ripped out of her control. All she felt was her heart beat once, far too heavily, and then a spurt of blood surged for her throat.

When it reached that location, it sharpened, jetting out like a winding scythe.

Her head was separated from her shoulders before she even got the chance to speak a single word.

...

Talon froze. His head snapped back so fast that space crackled and almost snapped apart at the seams.

A pang echoed through his heart, his palm involuntarily raising to his chest.

He hadn't even known until this moment that the woman had so firmly wormed her way into his heart.

He knew how much she loved him, but the feeling had never burned so furiously in him. At best, he loved the feeling of her body. In this life, he accepted being her husband because she was the best option.

Sometimes he could see that reflection of pain in her eyes, but he couldn't change how he felt. So, he just never addressed it.

At that moment, though... it was like something had been ripped out of him.

"She... died?"

His shock almost made him hyperventilate.

Without the Pluto or Void Race, with the Sylvans neutered and the Ancient Beasts being slaughtered beneath his and the Invalids' blades right this moment, just how could there be someone left who could kill his wife?

Let alone so quickly?

"Those families? No, they were dealt with as well by..."

Talon's eyes danced with a malevolent light.

He stomped at the air, his rotund body carrying such strength that such a simple movement, even so high up, bounced the world beneath down several light years.

In an instant, he was gone, his fury towering to the skies.

...

Aina stood in silence for a moment and then kneeled down to her children.

She calmly brushed their hair with her hands, giving them each a kiss on the forehead. Then, she hugged them tightly.

The two little ones were overwhelmed by the love they were feeling. Little Leo squirmed a bit, but Leah pinched his cheek, forcing him into obedience.

A light smile coated her lips.

Then, she pulled them into the Segmented Cube, suppressing Anastasia's desire to manifest herself.

Rising to her feet, she exhaled.

A blood-red light coated her from head to toe.

## **Chapter 3283: Trust**

A pair of wings appeared, outstretched on the small of Aina's back. Her hair became a bloody red, her eyes morphing into a pair of sparkling rubies.

She stood there in silence as the air boomed.

When Talon appeared, he didn't say a single word, his fist striking down from the skies above with a fury that could render even stars impotent.

Aina simply reached out her palm.

**BOOM!**

There was only a brief silence before everything exploded around them. The battle, the war, it all seemed to pale. But deep inside, Aina knew that the battle her husband had just fought and lost was on a level entirely separate from this.



While they were still affecting reality, Leonel and the Demoness had long transcended beyond that.

Somehow, that thought only fueled her further.

The earth beneath her collapsed into a crater so deep that lava began to bubble upward. But she still remained in the air, her palm meeting Talon's fist with a calmness that belied the sadness and hurt in her heart.

She wouldn't allow her tears to fall. Not while her children still needed to rely on her.

She would be strong for them, for her lost parents, for her husband.

Her arm lightly shook.

Talon flipped through the skies, being pushed back and landing in the far-off distance with a heavy thump.

His pupils had constricted into pinholes. Never did he think that there truly was someone so strong remaining here.

However, soon, his shock became boiling blood, his surprise fusing into his fury and lighting sparks of lightning across his body.

The skies clapped with thunder and two hammers appeared in his hands. Like a God of soaring clouds and peeling lightning, he shot upward and slammed down.

Aina was about to move when she felt something odd.

"His abilities... are similar to mine."

Her mind was in an erratic state. Usually, she moved fluidly, and without thought. But there was something about Talon's abilities that were restricting her.

"He has... some form of Clairvoyance as well."

That was when Aina remembered. Wasn't this the ability of the Barbarian Race? They had the ability to feel out the future in a way that only those with Clairvoyance usually could.

The realization came to Aina in waves, her thoughts a little slower than usual without Leonel's Dream Force affinity connected to her any longer.

She needed her Clairvoyance now more than ever, but to think she would run into an enemy that was such a perfect counter to her just after she lost her husband...

Aina could feel her heart trembling as the hammers descended from the skies, her expression a little lost as though she wasn't quite sure what to do.

Still distracted, she almost couldn't react as the hammers bore down on her.

BOOM!

Her wings crossed about her body at the last moment.

A clash that sounded akin to metal banging against metal resonated, a harsh hum filled the skies as they vibrated against one another, Aina's knees bending and almost giving way.

However, the one to feel shock was Talon. Despite Aina clearly being caught off guard, she managed to mostly withstand his strength. Just how much power was her body holding? How was it even possible for someone's physical prowess to be so high?

The two separated, but Talon didn't give Aina a chance to breathe. One swing after another came, one reverberating clang after another came, Aina using a mixture of her wings and palms to reflect them.

The more the battle went on, and the fierce Talon suppressed Aina, the more shocked he felt. She was matching these weapons, forged with the core of worlds, with nothing more than her body.

Wasn't she a battle-axe expert? Did she not even care to bring it out any longer?

Despite Talon's thoughts, Aina was struggling a great deal as well. She couldn't find her footing. Fighting with so much thought involved was completely foreign to her.

She had known relying so heavily on her Clairvoyance would be a problem, that was why she had gone all out against the Four Great Families in an attempt to find a path to breakthrough. She had managed it, but in the end she still had this glaring weakness.

With the weight of her husband's death on her mind, it was even harder to focus than usual. Her thoughts flowed slowly and languidly, lagging in her mind and making her hesitate before every attack several times.

Talon, a seasoned fighter, took every advantage.

A hammer whipped against the side of Aina's head, and she felt her vision go entirely white. Blood flew from her lips, her body almost going limp as she shot out.

She hadn't even been able to react to the blow. The gap just kept climbing between them until she couldn't react at all.

In the far-off distance, Leonel's brothers were still fighting their bloody battles. Even when they thought things had ended with the deaths of the Pluto and Void Race, the Invalids came in with numbers more shocking than they could fathom.

Seeing Aina suddenly suffer such a blow, many of them wanted to rush over, but they simply couldn't.

The Sea Gods, the Fawkes, even the Oryx were all tied down. Never once had the war stopped. When Leonel had said they would all be on their own, he had meant it.

He just had hoped that these words wouldn't have to apply to his wife as well.

Unfortunately, he had failed. And the end result was that a scene that had played out many times throughout history was playing through again.

Aina's head rung. She could already feel Talon rushing forward. An expert like him wouldn't possibly give up such a good chance.

"... I miss him already..." she thought softly.

She didn't believe it. Her husband... he could never lose... no matter who the opponent was. He could beat her 10 out of 10 times even if she was stronger, he had said so himself. He would never lie to her. She trusted him more than anyone else in the world.

"I trust him..."

A small light of clarity flickered in the depths of Aina's eyes as she felt something shift within her.

## **Chapter 3284: Too Weak**

The world was in an odd limbo, silent and endless. If there was ever true nothingness, this was what it would be. Deeper than the void, blacker than an abyss.

Lifeless.

It was the essence of a complete lack of potential, a world that had nothing to give and nothing to be taken.

Through it, consciousnesses swam. These were the minds too powerful to be snuffed out in an instant, but too distant to ever taste life again.

This stream existed beyond the Northern Star, a place where the weapons of the Four Great Families had once been hidden. And yet, it was even beyond those deathly destruction flames that Leonel had once tapped into.

Here these minds drifted. Forgotten and buried, never to return.

Soon, in this place without time, they would vanish without a sound, not even a puff of smoke or a whisper of wind would beckon them to the forever of nothingness.

And it was here that a voice unexpectedly spoke.

"You seem to be doing just fine."

"Fuck you."

The second voice was Leonel's. He was absolutely pissed off.

Did he have a plan? Yes.

Did that matter to him?

Not in the slightest.

He had wanted with his everything to win without having to do this. There was nothing he hated more than putting his wife and children in this situation. But in the end, he still wasn't strong enough.

"No need to be so angry. That grandmother of yours," a whistle came, "she is not only smoking hot, but, goddamn, is she powerful. I've tried already, believe me."

"Can you not speak about people I'm related to that way? It's disgusting. Also, I'm pretty sure you tried something like that on my mother too, don't you have an ounce of shame?"

"She's related to you, not me. How is it my fault you descend from bombshells?"

"Your daughter-in-law, you mean?!" Leonel's voice clapped like thunder.

The other voice didn't reply for a very long while.

"Listen, Leonel. I'm sure you already know my answer to that question. In my last moments, is it necessary for us to argue like this? Cut me a little bit of slack. I've been fighting... for so long... so very long..."

It was a tone that Leonel rarely, if ever, heard from this master of his. It was true fatigue, but it was also a deep sadness, an unwillingness as deep as Leonel's own.

As much as Leonel didn't want to put his wife and children in this situation, Nilrem didn't like to watch his family crumble in front of him... even when he could never truly see them as his family.

"I've tried every way I can. I've tried to be the man your grandmother remembers, but it was never enough. It's so ironic, so sad. But I accepted a long time ago that not only could I never be that man, but even if I did somehow become him by some shocking sheer twist of fate and serendipity, I doubt that your grandmother would be in the headspace to even acknowledge it as true.

"This is the truth of it all; she's long since defeated herself, she just hasn't accepted it yet."

These words were enough for Leonel to put the final pieces of the puzzle together. He came to understand, and what anger he did have, dissipated.

Indeed... this man wasn't his grandfather, not really. That man had long died.

"I know that you understand already, but allow these words from a dying old man. I've wanted to speak this to someone for so long..."

Leonel couldn't see Nilrem, but he could feel the tears in his eyes. He didn't know how he had never noticed that this man had long been broken beyond repair.

In his life, the only person Leonel had ever truly respected was his father. He didn't think that in these last moments... he would gain the same sort of respect for his grandfather as well.

All that pain that he had so perfectly hidden even from Leonel himself... just how much heavier had the mountain on his back been?

"... in ancient times, your grandmother and I were among the first humans, the first existences to grasp Force. We were talented, so supremely so that we led humans out of the shadows and into the world. But neither of us realized just what we were doing until it was too late.

"We thought we would live forever, that we would be by one another's side into infinity, but nothing lasts forever, Leonel. Nothing ever does.

"We improved too fast, suppressed other races too much, took too much. I'm sure that you've heard much of this story already on the Idol Battlefield, so I won't waste your time again with the details.

"The short of it is a story that you've probably never heard, because the sacrifice I had to make back then required erasing myself from the annals of history, from the bounds of time and the reality of space.

"This Northern Star that everyone in the world thinks of as a harbinger of doom... it's actually what remains of me. It's all that stands between life and true nothingness."

Leonel remained silent. Maybe if he had had a body his reaction would have been fierce, but hearing it now, it was the only thing that ever made any sense.

The Northern Star... his last and strongest iteration had personally checked what was behind it, going as far as he could into the ether... only to find that there was nothing at all.

And that was the very point.

There was Nothing.

True Nothingness.

"I thought that that would be the end of it. I sacrificed my life for the woman I loved and the children we had together, to give them hope to live out the rest of their lives, hope that maybe there was an afterlife we could be together in.

"But... your grandmother was unable to accept it.

"All of these iterations, all of the versions of me she's forcefully brought back, all of my failed relationships, run-ins with Empresses that wanted my head or a Matriarch of a wife who treated me without the slightest ounce of respect... your real grandfather...

"These were all of her attempts to bring back the man she remembers, whom she truly loves.

"Ironically enough, your grandfather was probably the closest—the man who best embodied what I once was.

"Unfortunately, he had a fatal flaw..."

Nilrem chuckled.

"He was too weak."

## **Chapter 3285: To Be Loved**

Nilrem's laughter was sad and broken.

Life liked to play jokes. The Demoness had only truly fallen in love twice in her life, though that wasn't for lack of trying.

Every time she forced her husband of the past to reincarnate in some way or form, she tried to be with him. But that ended tragically almost every time.

Nilrem's stories of being chased by Empresses, or how emasculated he had been in the Luxnix Clan, these weren't foolish facades or made-up tales.

They were his truth; they were the tapestry woven between him and the Demoness.

Him and Ophelia.

The second time she fell in love—the second time she lost herself in a man, an iteration of Nilrem—was Velasco's father, Leonel's grandfather: I.

She really had loved him. She had given him her life and everything, birthing two children for him.

Throughout all the iterations, this was the one thing that Ophelia had never done for any other man. It was the one thing that she had barred herself from until she found the husband she was looking for.

It could be said that this time, she thought she had.

But as life went on, and she observed Leonel's grandfather more, the potential she thought she had no longer being twisted through rose-tinted glasses, she realized that he couldn't be the man she fell for.

That man had been able to sacrifice himself to save the entire world. He had been able to shoulder the burden of an entire race. He had been able to protect her—she who was the strongest Dream Force user in all of existence...

The First Dream Force user.

That man, despite her own strength, had been able to stand before her and carry mountains and rewrite constellations, overwriting laws and forging new ones with his own hands.

How could that man and this one possibly be the same?

Ophelia tried everything to change his talent, to help him grow stronger, to throw challenges at him that would force him to improve.

But in the end, she pushed it too far. He lost his life in the hands of one of her schemes, and it completely broke her.

No... maybe she had already been broken before.

Far too broken beyond repair.

The words his father told him about his grandfather rang in Leonel's ears. He told them not to blame her... that it was all his fault...

It seemed that he realized what Ophelia was doing even when she tried to hide it. He might not have been the talent that she wanted him to be—needed him to be—but he was intelligent enough in his own right.

Over the years, he gained an understanding of his wife and what she was looking for. And he knew that he could never measure up.

Leonel could feel the very remains of his soul tearing up, a pain ripping through what might have once been his chest.

He had deduced it, he had. But hearing it out loud hurt so much worse than he expected, hearing it said in such bold words.

His talent, the one thing he couldn't control, wasn't enough in the end.

Leonel thought about how lucky he was to be born the way he was, how lucky he was to have his intelligence, to have this talent of his.

He had always been the man who felt that all lives were equal regardless of the strength they were granted at birth.

And then his emotions twisted, melding darkness, helpless fury, a broken guilt...

The only reason he had this talent was because of who his grandmother was. And yet, it was because of who his grandmother was that his life was so broken, that he had lost almost everything that meant anything to him.

And then he laughed too, a laugh no less broken than Nilrem's own.

"Don't chuckle at me like that, kid. I've been through far more than you. This is my turn to be the edgy mess; you just sit there and see a bright future like you're meant to. I'm depending on you to bring my wife back to me."

"Would that be in between your mistresses, or?"

Leonel made the joke through his tears, knowing it was exactly this sort of thing that his master... that his grandfather wanted to hear.

He still wanted to feel rage, feel anger that Nilrem hadn't saved his father. But he knew that fury was worthless...



Nilrem was just as helpless as he was.

"Those women were there to numb the pain. This handsome face can't go on without use, you know."

"There's nothing handsome about a ghost, bastard."

Leonel could finally feel Nilrem's smile.

"... You're the apple of her eye... Little Lion. She wants to see you come back, she wants to see you do the impossible, she wants to see her grandson do what only her husband could do in the past.

"Don't disappoint her. And be sure to kick her ass."

Leonel didn't respond for a long while, so Nilrem had no choice but to speak again.

"Don't disappear on me, little bastard. I swear to God, if you made me talk big to my wife just for them to be empty words, I will pull you out of the afterlife just to give you the spanking I never could."

Nilrem grew more heated as he spoke, somewhat worried that Leonel had truly dissipated, but then a calm voice came.

"There's no need to worry, gramps," Leonel finally said.

It was obvious what Ophelia wanted to do now. She felt that the only two in the world strong enough to survive the end of everything were her and her husband.

If she destroyed the world... her husband could finally let his burden down; he could finally stop being the Northern Star... he could finally come back to her.

"In this world, the only way to live forever is to be remembered by those that you love. Luckily for me... I have just one woman who loves me very much."

Leonel's consciousness trembled.

## **Chapter 3286: Who?**

To Aina, the world had never felt clearer.

In one moment, her head was ringing, the world was spinning, her body felt like a wobbling mess, one action leading to three others she didn't ask for.

And in the next, she was as solid as a rock.

No...

More accurately, she had found her rock.

The eyes of a man she could never forget, the smile, the heart, the soul.

Her mind trembled.

"[Instant Recovery]..." she whispered.

A blinding light pierced the skies.

Aina's mind seemed absent for a moment, as though she hadn't noticed the hammer coming at her. But then her wings flapped.

Talon felt like he was watching the most peculiar of things. Aina's wings seemed to multiply, and in an instant, both of his hammers were struck at their weak points several times over.

At the same time, Aina had flapped her wings so hard that a massive crater appeared beneath her, blasting out a sphere of space and giving her room to rebound.

Talon's momentum came to a grinding halt in the skies.

What happened?

He was stunned, but Aina had already moved again, her small fist flashing through the air with the power of stars.

Talon's pupils constricted. Before the blow even landed, he changed his entire approach. Arrogant and oppressive as he was, he took the battle seriously.

Usually, he would at least suffer first, but as a veteran of battle, an elite warrior who felt he was beneath no one, his speed in recognizing his situation and reacting appropriately was second to none.

He crossed his hammers before his chest, clouds thundering above.

**BANG!**

He was sent flying, but his expression was calm. The lightning he called for fell right that instant, sliding into his hammers. They enlarged, with Force Arts of lightning and Destruction manifesting in them.

The Destruction pooled and pooled until the heads of the hammers increased yet another size. Then, in a shocking display, it overturned to creation, light blooming.

BOOM! BOOM!

Talon stamped out with his hammers twice.

Complex magic circles began to appear in Aina's path, each one carrying the Auspicious Air of a Natural Force Art.

In the end, it had to be remembered that the most shocking thing about Talon wasn't his power, it was his Force Crafting. Since Aina had decided to bring this out, she would suffer for it.

Aina's second fist slammed into the first. To her own surprise, her momentum was greatly reduced.

Talon's eyes flashed when he noticed this and immediately took advantage. He slammed his two hammers together, a roar leaving his peals as the second Natural Force Art expanded violently. Lightning flashed and danced like splitting sparks, and then...

A flood dragon took shape.

A roar, layered over Talon's, shook the skies.

Aina had only just burst through the first Natural Force Art, only to be greeted by a true monstrosity. But what Talon hadn't expected occurred at that moment.

As fast as he was to adapt to taking Aina seriously... Aina was a touch faster.

Never did Talon consider that someone would have to actively make such a choice for him. The only one he could even remotely accept such a thing from was the Demoness. But right now, he had no choice but to accept it.

The dullness in Aina's eye vanished.

She was waiting for her husband to appear, but if she died before he got here... wouldn't that be unacceptable?

She forgot about everything else and focused on the opponent in front of her.

The instant she did, it was like the skies had overturned for her alone.

Roses of blood appeared around her, Force Arts pooling from the surroundings, spontaneously spawning, no different from Aina's thoughts in Clairvoyance. But this time, she felt like she was on another level entirely...

Because she had tapped into the abilities of a Wise Star Order.

A Force Pill formed in an instant, so quickly that the maw of the flood dragon had only just opened when it appeared before her palm.

Aina lightly slapped out, and the Force Pill flew into the mouth of the dragon.

BANG!

It only faintly touched the lightning when shattered. It seemed like things were over, until the flood dragon convulsed, collapsing from the skies as though ill.

Talon didn't notice until it was too late. The instant his vision cleared, his dragon falling out of the skies, he was greeted with Aina's fist.

BANG!

His nose collapsed into his skull.

A sharpness radiated from his eyes as though he didn't feel the pain, and he swung his arm at Aina's head.

His pupils couldn't help but tremble when he realized Aina's wing was already there.

Just what happened? How was she reading him so easily? The gap in power between them was obvious, but she was his perfect counter?!

No, she must be receiving help from somewhere else. He had been defeating her too thoroughly before. Just how was this happening? Was it that pillar of light?

PENG!

His hammer rebounded off Aina's wing heavily.

"WHAT?!"

This time Talon couldn't even hold back his reactions. His hammer bounced back, almost flying out of his hand as though he had hit some sort of solid rubber structure.

This wasn't the density of Aina's wing last time he touched it. What the hell happened?

He barely had the time to smell the medicinal effects in the air and come to a realization.

She hadn't formed one pill in that split instant. She formed two, and the second was for herself... for no other reason than to change the structure of her body for this moment right here?

Just what sort of demon was he facing?

The spring back of his hammer left Talon's chest wide open. He could already see Aina blasting right through him, such an opening in a battle of experts, when the other was entirely unprepared, only meant death.

And yet, he died in a manner he could have never expected.

"Who the hell touched my wife?"

An arrow fell from the skies, piercing right through his chest in the very opening Aina created.

## **Chapter 3287: Together**

Death didn't seem to have changed the compatibility of Leonel and Aina's combat styles. If Aina was the one to strike, she would have surely heavily injured Talon, but the battle would have been unlikely to be obvious. To make the rebounding effect so pronounced, she had to divert a lot of her Blood Force, so the physical strength Talon had been expected had likewise been limited.

But much the same, like she had said...

She trusted him.

Leonel appeared high in the skies, pissed. There wasn't even a bow in his hand; it was impossible to tell where the arrow had come from. It was too fast, too sharp, too quick.

And too powerful.

At first, there was nothing but a small hole at the start; so controlled, it was imperceptible.

And then his torso was gone.

**BANG!**

A pair of legs and a hip hung in the skies for a moment before falling.

Leonel was truly enraged, but he suddenly had nowhere else to vent. It wasn't until a person appeared before him that his expression softened.

Aina threw herself into his arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Guilt flickered through Leonel's expression. He had truly not wanted to fall; if at all possible, he didn't want to use this card.

He knew what would happen after he died because he had witnessed it before... with Aina's death.

Why was it that the Demoness had gone through so much trouble, all the effort in the world just to bring her husband back, and yet Leonel could bring Aina back so easily?

It was the same reason Leonel could bring Aina back so easily, and yet was helpless to do the same for his mother and father.

Aina hadn't truly died; she was in limbo because she was a God Child. Because of that, Leonel had been able to bring his wife back from the brink of a true death.

But there was another elephant in the room.

It was the same thing for Ninth Dimensional Existences. The reason they could come back to life after they died was because they never truly dispersed and left the world.

Of course, being killed by the likes of the Demoness or anyone who understands how to truly impose their will on the world would make that Ninth Dimensional title worthless.

But it was enough for Leonel to know that he could use this to his advantage.

So long as Aina was to break through, she should be able to sense his lingering aura. And if she could, with her Clairvoyance, she could reattach their souls herself. Once that happened, it was a simple matter of her triggering one of her abilities.

Their Soul Bond now was on a level that was truly unfathomable. They had already been united thanks to Aina's Clairvoyance, but Talon was the last piece she needed to understand something fundamental.

The Barbarian Race's method of fate reading and scrying was completely different from what she was used to. But she realized, precisely because of that, that she was trying to actively use something that should be passive.

Truly passive.

However, how could someone turn their brain off? Doing so was impossible. Even for someone who had had Clairvoyance almost all her life, Aina still had thoughts from time to time.

Talon and the Barbarian Race were the same way. It was what separated them. Talon was actively thinking, actively deducing. While it seemed he had Clairvoyance, he was analytical at heart, and a Force Crafter by trade for a reason.

But the contrast made Aina realize that that wasn't her path.

So how could she take a step forward?

How could she truly turn her brain off?

Trust.

The answer was right in front of her. To hand her body, her mind, her soul over to the man she had already given her everything to.

She hugged Leonel so tightly, basking in the feeling of his arm around her waist and the hand caressing the back of her head. His presence alone soothed her soul, but his touch took what remained of her ache away.

"You look kind of sexy with red hair," Leonel suddenly said. "You're going to let me try it out for a test drive some time, right?"

Aina sniffled. "Are you trying to say that I'm not perfect the way I am?"

"Isn't this the way you are?"

"Don't try and change the subject. You're still in the dog house for daring to die. You talked so big and what was the end result?"

Leonel's lip twitched. He had all the minds and thinking speed in the world, and yet had no rebuttal.

"Don't... don't do that again..." Aina began to sob again. "... Or I will destroy this world and everything that's left in it."

Leonel held onto his wife in silence. The two stood there in the skies as though there wasn't a battle raging all around them, as though this was the last time.

"... Then let's do this together," Leonel finally said softly.

Aina sniffled again. "It's about time..."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You know exactly what it means. Don't make me cut it off."

"Such vulgar language for a married woman with two children. What would the world think if they could hear you."

"The world can shove it."

Leonel's boisterous laughter filled the skies.

Of course he knew exactly what his wife meant.

All his life, he had taken on the burden alone, forcing him to wait by the sidelines. Even this time when she had put herself through so much just to have a sliver of a chance to stand by his side, he had ignored her efforts and fought alone.

This time, they would fight together.

"You know, this isn't technically the first time we've fought together. Why are you getting so worked up?" Leonel asked innocently.

Leonel got a pinch that he felt from his waist down to his soul in return.

He winced.

"I give! I give!"

His laughter filled the skies once again.

"Let's go end this."

There was a flash in his eyes.

"This time, we crush her."

He took his wife's hand.

The action had barely been completed when reality froze and Aina's eyes grew dull.

A woman with a fiery violet aura appeared, her hair dancing like streams of amethyst waters.

The Demoness Ophelia.



## Chapter 3288: My Queen.

Leonel lightly held onto the dull Aina's hand, his expression unchanged. He held no weapons in his hands at all. Standing there, still completely in the nude, one would have thought that he was in an embarrassing situation he had just been walked in on.

But the calmness in his eyes painted a completely different picture.

The momentum of the Demoness now was far more like her real strength, her power pouring out in all directions.

She towered over Leonel, her presence even larger. It felt like he was facing off against a Star, a luminescent being that made the Void Race look like nothing more than empty bags of air.

This was a woman that truly embodied the vastness of the universe, the endlessness of the abyss, the depth of nothingness.

The Demoness' gaze never shifted to Aina a single time. It might as well have been that this granddaughter-in-law of his didn't exist. There was a calmness to her, but...

Leonel's mind expanded.

In that moment, his Dream Force spread out, blanketing the same region as the Demoness' own.

He picked them out one after another—stray, dispersed, and diluted to such an extent that she couldn't even arrange them all properly.

Maybe... he too would be like this if he didn't have the Control Ability Index.

All of his thoughts, all of his memories, were arranged in the prism that was his Dreamscape. He accessed them all with ease, feeling them as much and as purely as he could.

But he still remembered almost slipping down a road.

Back when Aina left him, he weighed their memories on a scale, placing one memory after another as though to see if he could measure her worth in his life.

Luckily, in the end, whatever ridiculous calculation scheme or method he came up with ended up just barely allowing her another chance. But sometimes... he thought about the man he would have become had he not given her that chance.

Would he be like this? Empty to everything? Endlessly calculating? Chasing after something so fervently, and yet not being in the state of mind to even remotely enjoy it should he ever successfully grasp it?

This was the greatest tragedy of the Demoness, the one thing she didn't seem smart enough to realize.

Even if she found the man that was her husband in every aspect, in every way...

Was she still the woman he would remember? Would she still be the woman he chased after, pined after, gave up everything for?

The Demoness' pupils trembled, the whispers of Leonel's thoughts crashing into her in waves.

Maybe Nilrem loved the Demoness far too much to put things to her in this way. But this current version of the Demoness... was truly just that.

When she embraced this title, she had long left behind what it meant to be Ophelia.

That version of herself had died with her husband.

"My wife made me a better man. It's unfortunate you didn't notice or understand until it was too late."

The violent trembling of the Demoness' pupils only grew more feverish, until it vanished.

Her Dream Force expanded just as violently, exploding out in all directions as she chased something.

And then she found it.

Peace... there it was... she could finally feel peace.

A hint of sadness flashed through Leonel's eyes, something he never thought he would feel for this woman he had hated almost all his life; she had given up long ago; she just didn't know it.

Leonel let go of his wife's hand, grasping her waist lightly and kissing the side of her forehead.

"Together," he said softly.

She didn't reply, her eyes still dull, her body unmoving.

Leonel released her. Raising his hand, a spear swirled into being, a tempest of King Force rising through the air as a violet-gold band appeared across his forehead.

He wanted to do this with his spear. It just felt... right.

He raised his blade, feeling the hand of his father land on his, and then his grandfather before him... and then, in a far-off distant land, he felt his grandmother's.

The grandmother his grandfather would remember.

Ophelia Morales.

A woman he may have once been happy to call grandma.

The Demoness' eyes were calm, but the beating of her heart returned. She tried to expand her Dream Force further, but she had suddenly run into a limit.

A limit?

That was impossible.

She was a Goddess.

A Demoness.

How could she have a limit?

"It won't make a difference," she spoke. "How can you work together? Can't you see that she's too weak to follow you? You, Little Lion, you're perfect. You can help your grandfather return; you've passed my final test. No, you passed it twice over already... Now I'm certain... Now I'm sure there won't be any mistakes..."

Her words were so calm. They looked like they came from a woman that couldn't have been more measured and level-headed. But the more she spoke, the more insane she sounded.

How could a woman who wanted to use her grandson to reforge her husband possibly be in her right mind?

It was suddenly all too obvious to Leonel why she had needed his Dream Asura Heart.

She was treating the lives of her descendants as pawns to move on a chess board, and the reason she could do so was just as obvious to him.

A mother's love for her children, and her children's children, was unconditional. She didn't care what sort of tweaks Velasco's or Leonel's personality might have undergone

after forcing them to reincarnate... or, at the very least, the Demoness had been twisted so much that she didn't.

But her husband... that was a man she chose with her own hands... he had to be perfect, he had to be the man she envisioned, the man she had always pined after.

He could only be one way; he could only be the very best.

And Leonel was that.

"You're wrong," Leonel replied lightly, pity overwhelming his other emotions. "It's because we lean on one another that we are strong. I can only stand here because of her.

"She is my Queen."

The dull Aina's lips parted as though on instinct.

"And he is my King."

The Demoness' pupils stopped trembling, constricting into pinholes.

The pair of husband and wife moved at the same time, rushing into battle side by side in earnest for the very first time.

## **Chapter 3289: Kill**

The two seamlessly weaved in and out of one another, their images blurring and somehow becoming difficult to track.

Leonel was flooded with Natural Force Arts, his body that of a Spiritual, and it felt like he embodied the world itself.

Aina was akin to a specter. Her soul was locked away in her body, undergoing a perfect fusion. But now, it had become so perfect, so seamless, that even her Dream Force couldn't be detected within the Dream Plane.

One fused into the world.

One entirely disconnected from it.

When they worked together, one burning star and one shadow, one specter and one blazing light...

The world fell to obedience.

Leonel's blade appeared at the Demoness' throat. To her credit, as shaken as her mind was right now, she reacted quickly. She slashed out; a spear appeared in the same fluid motion.

Whether by coincidence or not, she pulled out her end game spear. She didn't even have the instinct to underestimate what she was seeing right this moment. Every fiber of her being was screaming danger.

However, Leonel's spear vanished.

'Space?'

No, Leonel had literally erased himself from existence. How was that possible? Only she had reached this level of Dream Force?

The Demoness' mind had been spread out too far for her synapses to connect fast enough. By the time she realized that Leonel was relying on Aina just as much as she was relying on him, Aina's palm had already slammed against her chest.

PUCHI!

A spear ripped through her chest.

At some unknown point, Leonel had written himself back into reality, appearing behind her seamlessly.

However, it seemed like they had made a mistake. With the trajectory of Leonel's spear, it would run right through Aina's palm as well.

But what actually happened made the Demoness realize just how much trouble she was in.

Leonel's spear became akin to an extension of his arm. This wasn't an analogy or an image-painting sort of description. It was well and truly akin to an extension of his arm.

He pulled the Self Realm of Force Crafting to another level, injecting his very soul into his blade.

Aina, even with her eyes dull and her mind blank, reacted in the very same way.

The Demoness felt herself lose control of her Force once again. This was already the third time Leonel had succeeded in doing this.

But she could hardly feel shocked when Aina seemed to do the same thing. Taking advantage of her loss of control, Aina reversed the flow of her blood.

The Demoness coughed up a mouthful of blood, her body shearing and shredding apart.

BANG!

She exploded and then, in the far-off distance, she forcefully reeled in her blood and flesh, gasping for breath.

Aina was already upon her.

Leonel allowed his Clairvoyance to direct the changes. While he could sense the changes to the Demoness, Aina could read and react to them before they even happened.

When Aina moved, Leonel reacted to his wife instead.

This time, he trailed behind her, his mind sharp.

Aina attacked, he would plan.

The two halves of the coin played off against one another.

There was a lot of talk about just who was the strongest in Existence these days. But maybe no one expected that it would be a duo.

The Demoness recovered, pale-faced, only to find a fist at her head.

PENG!

Akin to the sound of metal clashing against metal, her neck snapped back.

Leonel's spear weaved beneath Aina's arm, piercing through her chest.

Aina's leg swept up, her shin slamming against the side of the Demoness' head.

Leonel had already retracted his spear, spinning it around his back in a seamless, fluid motion, and slashing out with all his might.

His blade came from the opposite direction in which Aina's kick had sent the Demoness' body snapping toward, their momentum and strength multiplying over one another to slice her in two.

Aina moved for her lower half, Leonel moving toward her upper.

Leonel completed Spear Dance in an instant, pulling on Aina's Clairvoyance to communicate and formulate the Natural Force Art in a breath.

Aina pulled on Leonel's calculative abilities, roses of blood appearing around her as she completed a Force Pill in the same breath.

She slammed the Force Pill forward with a palm just as her husband thrust out his spear.

Leonel roared, a complex magic circle appearing beneath his feet. His King Force flooded into it and then the Force Art rushed up his body, concentrating into his spear as he pierced forward.

A concentrated blast of controlled Spear Force ripped through the Demoness' forehead, through her Ethereal Glabella, and out of the back of her skull.

There was an eruption of Force, a violent tempest that shook the skies.

Time became so warped and distorted that it seemed to unstick—unfreezing from the Demoness' presence and continuing to move forward again.

But then it suddenly reversed, flowing backward in a shuddering ripping.

The Demoness burst to pieces once again, her Ethereal Glabella falling from the skies in a sprinkling rain much like Leonel's had before.

Leonel took a step back, appearing by his wife's side.

Both of them wore placid expressions, Aina's dull, Leonel's cold as ice.

They were both well aware that this wasn't over, but they were ready for more. No matter how many times she showed up, she would be crushed just the same.

The ripping of time, its fierce reversal, rewrote reality once again.

The Demoness reformed, her expression paling further. There was a malevolent aura to her, as though she was truly infuriated, long having forgotten just what it was she was fighting for.

All she felt was that these two were in her way. And they couldn't be here; they had to go away... if she wanted to see her husband again, they had to be erased.

"GO AWAY!"

The shriek of a banshee filled the skies, and one after another, seas of Invalids began to appear.

Leonel's eyes narrowed as he seemed to sense something.

These Invalids... they felt like extensions of the Demoness...?

What was...

Leonel's pupils trembled as he understood. The final piece of the puzzle slid into place.

"You... haven't been Human or Dream Asura in a very long time..."

The first Dream Asura?

The first Human?

No.

The first Variant Invalid?

No.

She was the reason Invalids even existed in the first place. Leonel had been wrong. Invalids weren't a creation of the Northern Star, how could they be when the Northern Star only existed to protect them from the vast nothingness?

"... You don't even realize it, do you? They live because you do. They destroy because you want to destroy. You've dispersed your Dream Force so far you don't even realize the sort of carnage you've brought. Or maybe, subconsciously you do and this is just exactly what you want..."

The Invalids... they were products of the Demoness' Dream Force, people who weren't able to escape the influence of her will for the destruction of the world, her want to see everything crumble and collapse before her eyes.

They were the truest essence of the Demoness' helpless pain.

Leonel looked off into the distance, his eyes landing on his uncle and aunt amongst the sea of monsters.

He lowered his head, his expression darkening.

A hand clutched at his, its warmth pouring into him.

But at that moment, the chilliness in his eyes reached its peak.

"Kill."



He and Aina spoke at once.

## Chapter 3290: Hide

Leonel didn't want to think about why the Demoness had chosen to turn his uncle and aunt into Invalids. But his mind whirred to its own conclusions almost instantly.

And it filled him with fury.

He knew when he sent his uncle out it would probably be the last time he saw him. He told his uncle to call on his name should he ever need help, but Montez... he would never do that.

Especially not if he ran into the Demoness, only to find that his wife had already become an Invalid.

Even Leonel couldn't trust what he would do in such a situation.

He hadn't been there, he hadn't sensed it, but looking into his uncle's eyes from the distance, he knew how it had gone nonetheless.

Much like he had almost been, his uncle was just yet another sacrifice, his wife nothing more than a small pawn to lure him in.

His uncle's Dream Asura Bloodline had always been suppressed. Since his youth, only Velasco had been able to access it, but Leonel's father refused to use even an ounce of it, much like Leonel had for a while.

Back then, Leonel thought that the Demoness had just done this because she liked to watch people squirm, enjoying the rift that formed between the two brothers because of this.

Maybe she was, in part, so sadistic, but it was clear that nothing she did was truly without cause or reason.

This time, she benefited from the suppression of Montez's Bloodline in some way.

When Leonel thought about the difference he felt when his Bloodline was activated and when it wasn't, it clicked.

In his Enlightened state, he had had many thoughts that he couldn't bring back to his suppressed self. His mind was too large, filled with too many things, for his suppressed self to keep up with. If he tried to remember them without the support of the Dream Asura within him, his Dream Force and soul would shatter apart.

It was only when he tapped into his Bloodline would he remember again.

Wasn't this... the perfect way to hide something you didn't want other powerful Dream Force users sensing? A method both simple, and yet elegant and perfect in its use.

When Montez finally tapped into his Dream Asura Bloodline on his own, breaking free of the Demoness' restraints, the only way she could continue to hide what she wanted hidden was by trapping his mind another way...

Forcing him to become an Invalid.

Upon becoming an Invalid, everything that was once a person was devoured, leaving nothing but an endless desire for destruction. It was arguably an even better method of suppressing a mind that Dream Asura Blood had been.

So the question was... what did the Demoness want to hide?

After knowing her story, the answer was obvious.

She was hiding his grandfather, Ishmael.

Leonel wasn't the only part of her plan. She was using bits and pieces of her sons and grandson to rebuild her husband.

What better way to form the man she loved than the seed they formed together?

Leonel would form the body.

Velasco and Montez would form the mind.

With the talent she had granted their descendants, and his mind stored away in the exact frame she remembered it, she would build the perfect man.

"Don't you dare move. You only have one job. Keep those annoying Ancient Humans off my back." Leonel said coldly, seemingly not speaking to anyone. "Her head is mine."

...

In a far-off distance, a hesitating Gervaise stopped his slowly raising hand. In the end, he sighed, and lowered it.

For now... he would trust Leonel.

...

**BANG!**

Leonel's spear and Aina's fists carved out a path. They moved seamlessly with one another, in such sync and with such united will that just the hairs of their skin brushed past one another as they shifted and glided across the battlefield.

They wasted not a single ounce of movement.

Fed by Leonel's fury, Aina's attacks reached a new level of potency.

Blood ripped through body after body in winding scythes. The Invalids themselves didn't produce blood after their deaths, but the motes of light seemed forcefully controlled by Aina, forming Force Pills of her own creation.

These pills shot into the skies, falling down like meteors and erupting into nuke-like clouds of destruction. She concentrated the energy into powerful bombs, raining them down from above with impunity.

Leonel's spear was relentless and violent, chiseling and precise. If one removed the enemies, it would look as though he was cutting out the perfect sculpture, his hands, palms, and blades gliding with heart-shuddering accuracy.

All the while, he never looked at an opponent a single time, his gaze firmly locked onto the Demoness who was shrieking in the distance. Her pale face, the cold sweat that marred her once beautiful but now twisted features, the wavering of her Force.

He felt it all.

Today, they would kill and kill and kill to their heart's content.

Until there was nothing at all left.

There was a flash before Leonel's eyes and his uncle appeared. His heart sank, but his blade didn't pause a single time.

Their spears crossed, a clash reverberating through the air with a battering force.

At that moment, he finally looked at something other than the Demoness, staring into his uncle's eyes and feeling the hurt deep within them.

There was something in there... at least that was what Leonel wanted to think.

But his deductions told him otherwise quickly. That pain, that fear Montez was feeling... it was for no other reason than the shrieking banshee behind him.

All he wanted to do was please her, and he feared what it meant if he couldn't.

"NO!" The voice of the Demoness came.

Leonel's blade flashed.

Memories danced through his mind, of the man standing behind the counter in an armor of shimmering gold... of the first time his uncle took his armor off to show him just the sort of work he put in every day... of the first interaction of his uncle and his little girl and boy...

Montez's head flew into the skies, his motes of light fusing into his spear as his aunt was shattered to pieces by Aina's palm.

The husband and wife paired roared, their Forces reaching a perfect sync as they sliced a path right through the Invalid army.