

Dimensional Descent

Dimensional Descent

Chapter 2041: Abhorred

2041 Abhorred

How could Leonel not feel the way he did?

When he first entered the Dimensional Verse, he absolutely abhorred killing. He felt that every life was worth the same. He had always thought himself to be a logical person, and because he couldn't deduce the value of a life, he felt that he had no right to dictate the life and death of others. There wasn't any objective measure of a person's life, this had always been his reality.

The first time he entered a Zone, he felt so guilt-stricken by what he had done that he almost allowed someone to take his life. No, it wasn't almost, he had already given up at that point. He had already turned 18 by then, and what he thought were his final thoughts were toward his father, telling him to not mind his death because he had already succeeded as a parent, raising him to be an adult.

After he left the Zone, he practically had a mental breakdown after witnessing Aina's sheer disregard for the life that he held so sacred.

Up until that point, the only person other than his father that he truly loved was her. To him, even though they had never been in a relationship, and even if she never accepted him, she was his family.

Maybe even until now, Aina wasn't aware of just how cruel that moment had been.

She wanted to wake him up to the reality of the world, to allow him to realize in a single stroke that she wasn't the idealized woman in his mind and that the world they were in now was far crueler than he had ever known. But back then, he had just allowed himself to die at the hands of another, he had been in an incredibly fragile state, that sort of shock wasn't something that he should have been able to handle.

And quite frankly, he didn't handle it very well.

Not long after that, he forgot his own morals to rage. He met an A-grade Invalid and beat it to death with the metal rod of his bicycle, completely forgetting his humanity in that moment.

It might have been an Invalid, but who was to say that an Invalid's life was any less valuable? Wasn't he someone who couldn't objectively tell the value of a person's life, now he was so mercilessly beating something to death just to vent his fury.

Then there was the Joan Zone after that, and he seemed to begin to justify his murders by the fact that the people in these Zones weren't real. It was fine to kill them, they weren't living, breathing people anyway, they were just constructs, echoes of a past that had already been lived.

This seemed to open the path toward Leonel's acceptance of the situation, and now he didn't even think much of his kills, although he always kept count at the back of his mind, he would be lying if he said that he was affected the same now as he had been in the past.

But what now?

Now he was finding out that his life was no different from the people in those Zones, maybe no different from an Invalid's. That sounded like an exaggeration, but to the people who had created this world, formed everything that he had come to know, was he really that different from an Invalid to them?

Was there really no objective measurement of a life if people could create a world like this?

Was there really no objective measure of a life even if this simulation didn't exist?

No matter what sort of secret of the universe you chose to prescribe to, whether it was religion, whether it was science, whether it was the new world order than Leonel had just been enlightened with, in which of those cases had life not been formed by the hands of another, whether that was nature or a sentient being?

What was his life worth, then? There had to be an answer, and he felt that the only conclusion was that it was worth very little, an insignificant amount, a total so infinitesimally small compared to the grand scheme of reality that it would be laughable to even care to bring it up.

This answer that he had been chasing all of his life was actually meaningless.

It was the foundation upon which he built everything. His want to be a King, to unite the Human Domain, to help them face off against the aggression of the other races, it was everything.

He had spent most of his life aimless, smiling and chuckling, without a goal and without a care. He hadn't known what he was missing, the kind of life he was living if he wasn't without purpose and without meaning, until he actually gained himself such a meaning.

And now that he was watching it crumble before his eyes, he was so infuriated that he couldn't even properly put it into words, so enraged that he simply wanted to destroy everything in his path.

Leonel rampaged at the bottom of the ocean to the point that even the surface began to bubble. His eyes turned a striking red and chains within his consciousness seemed to vibrate wildly, on the verge of collapsing entirely.

A fiery pair of wings appeared to his back, his suffocating momentum causing the Heir-Grade Generals around to cower. Their skin began to burn and char even beneath the ocean waters, Leonel seemed to entirely forget that he would have been better off using his Water Force. And then...

There was suddenly nothing left.

Leonel ran to the end of the line, but there were no more beasts, no further waves, no other Heir-Grade Generals to vent his frustration upon, there was nothing but emptiness.

Leonel roared, a vortex forming at his mouth as he lifted his head, the spinning black hole of dark waters extending so far that even a whirlpool formed at the surface.

The violent heat at both sides of his hips, coming from his kidneys, threatened to bore a hole through his skin, but he didn't seem to notice in the slightest.

But just when it seemed that Leonel was about to lose all sense of rationality, he felt something suddenly bury itself into his chest and wrap around his waist.

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Chapter 2042: Okay, No Problem.

2042 Okay, No Problem.

Leonel came to an abrupt stop.

He could finally seem to hear around him and the sound of his heartbeat was so loud that it rumbled like thunder. Every pulse sent waves through the waters, causing it to shudder and wince. It beat so loud that Leonel felt that a single thump could have shattered his previous set of bones before he had been eaten by the Cobra Demon.

Leonel hadn't truly been aware of how powerful this new heart of his was until now, but it was exactly because such a heart was beating so wildly and strongly that it was so concerning. If not for the fact that it was so strong, it would have given out long ago.

Now, there was nothing but a searing hotness in his chest. It felt like hot coals were resting within his ribcage and billowing scalding smoke up his throat. The pain was unbearable, and the heat of the waters around was almost as well.

Looking around, Leonel realized that even the stingray beasts in the surroundings were forced to retreat a long way from him in order to avoid being crushed by their master's might. If not for this, Leonel might have wiped out three days of hard work all on his own.

Finally, Leonel looked down to find that it was Aina. She didn't say anything and simply held onto him tight, refusing to let go. A large portion of her clothing had been burnt away, and if it wasn't for her tightly holding onto him, she may have very well shown the world far too much.

Leonel took a breath, and then another, and another. Only then did the searing pain in his chest seem to finally begin to calm down. The fact it only took three breaths was a testament to the strength of his recovery abilities, but

even so, the dull pain continued to linger and would probably take several hours to vanish entirely.

He had really pushed his body to its limits just now, if he had been any less cautious, he might have truly overheated himself and died... again. It was also unknown if his soul could even survive the rampaging of his Scarlet Star Force, he really might have burned himself to death.

Leonel looked around at his body to find that it was truly in a mess. His left arm was half missing, his right leg was chopped at the knee, his body was caked and covered in blood. He had truly fought like a fool, he hadn't even used his Divine Armors. But honestly, if he had taken out his Divine Armors just now, aside from maybe his third tier one, the first and second tiers would have both been destroyed under his own power, and he would have had to drain his stamina even further just to upkeep them.

Leonel could only shake his head. 'How pathetic. [Instant Recovery].'

Leonel's hair gently waved, and a large pillar of Light Force and Star Force fell upon both himself and Aina. Not long later, though he was pretty much naked, he was in perfect condition.

He wrapped his arms around Aina and ran his fingers through the back of her hair. He felt more at peace now, the slowly calming waves of the water slowing his beating heart further.

"Are you okay?" Aina asked.

She didn't know why she had rushed over here, she had a lot of work to do elsewhere, but there had been a suffocating feeling in her chest she couldn't ignore until she ran all the way over here. When she saw the state of Leonel, she knew that something was wrong.

Originally, she had thought that maybe the pressure was getting to him, or maybe it was because his Scarlet Star Force Innate Node was taking over well ahead of the time that Wise Star Order had stipulated. However, now that she was here, she felt that it was something entirely different.

Leonel didn't answer immediately, and it seemed like he wouldn't... Until he suddenly did.

"I don't really feel like participating in these Heir Wars anymore," Leonel suddenly said.

Aina was shocked by these words. They seemed simple, but the weight behind them was extraordinary. This was Leonel's dream, everything he had been working toward in the last several years, everything he had done since exiting Valiant Heart Mountain, up until this point, was all for these stretch of days. And now... he suddenly didn't want to participate anymore?

Even on his way here, Leonel was only acting out of habit. It all felt quite meaningless. If he hadn't been trying to stop his mind from wandering, he probably wouldn't have even triggered this upgrade challenge at all.

Aina didn't know what to say for a long while. All she knew was that she couldn't allow Leonel to quit, but she didn't even know what was wrong, so she didn't know how to convince him to continue.

He didn't believe that it was the weight of the situation. Leonel was the kind of person who thrived under pressure, she knew him well enough to know that.

What was the last thing he had given up on, was it herself? And why had he done that? It was purely logical. She had crossed a line that he had drawn quite early on and he wasn't willing to forgive it at the time.

Then there must be a logical reason for this as well.

Thinking back, the entire purpose for this was his want to become a King. And he wanted to become a King to help the most people possible. And he wanted to help the most people possible because he couldn't logically deduce a worth to a person's life.

That meant one of two things. Either he felt that he had found an objective metric, or he had deduced that the answer was insignificant enough to be ignored.

Regardless of which one it was, there was no simple answer to change his mind. Leonel was smarter and thought faster than anyone in existence, or at least, anyone that she had ever met. The only person who could draw a conclusion different from his own that he would actually listen to was his father, and he obviously wasn't here now, and knowing that man there was no telling what he might say.

In that case, trying to convince Leonel that he was wrong was something beyond her.

Her gaze flickered for a moment, and after some hesitation, she spoke.

"Do you still love me?"

Leonel's gaze sharpened as he suddenly looked down. "What are you talking about, of course I love you."

He didn't even bother to add the "still" part, to him it was an unnecessary addition. His love for Aina was constant, it would never change.

Aina smiled sweetly. "I want our babies to be little princes and princesses, can you do that for me?"

Leonel blinked. "They will be already—"

"Not of Earth, or even just of the Morales family. I want them to be able to go anywhere and still have people look up to them, to be able to go anywhere and not have to fear or hesitate about anything.

"Can you do that for me?"

Aina looked into Leonel's eyes, her golden irises dancing with a reflective light.

Leonel paused for a moment, but then nodded. "Okay, no problem."

He spoke these words as though it was a matter of fact. So long as he cared enough to participate, wasn't the end result guaranteed?

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Chapter 2043

2043 ...

Aina smiled sweetly, standing up to the tips of her toes and kissing Leonel deeply. Leonel seemed to feel his heart calm. The feeling of Aina's soft waist in his arm and her ample bosom pressed against his chest was like the

sweetest taste of heaven. It was so simple, and yet so relaxing at the same time.

He didn't know how long he kissed her for, he seemed to have completely lost track of time, or maybe time simply didn't matter much to him any longer. If it wasn't for the fact he knew others could start watching them at any time, he would have most definitely taken his wife to bed now.

Although he thought about forcefully using his Dream Force to shroud such a connection, he decided against it in the end. He simply held Aina, feeling more and more at peace with every passing moment. His lips even curled into a smile as he pulled away, running his fingers through her hair.

Seeing Leonel like this, Aina felt a warmth within her.

No matter how hard she tried to run from it, the matters of all those years ago still haunted her. Sometimes she wondered when the next time Leonel would cruelly cut her off again without a word of care. Although she knew that she had a role to play in the matters of the past, this was still a very much human reaction on her path.

However, there was no greater sign of love than what Leonel had done just now. Maybe he knew that she had only said such things to get him to continue fighting on, but just the fact she had said it was enough for him to continue.

For someone like Leonel to say that he didn't care about the Heir Wars anymore took a great deal, whatever had happened was most definitely not just a small matter. And yet, for him to take back those words almost instantly just because of a request on her part just went to show how much weight she held in his heart.

Even without saying as much, just this gesture alone assured Aina, there was never anything much to worry about in the first place. This was her man, her future husband, the person she would grow old with.

Aina put on a new set of clothing to cover herself up while in Leonel's embrace and then took his hand, entering the Atlantis Territory along with him. She brought Leonel to the city core under his questioning gaze and then she waved a hand.

When she did so, Leonel was suddenly enlightened.

In truth, he had acted without regard earlier. He had triggered the upgrade challenge without any upgrade rewards or territory rewards. So, technically, he had faced off against three Heir-Grade challenges, and two each of Bronze-Grade, Silver-Grade, and Gold-Grade. That said, a Bronze-Grade and Silver-Grade and Gold-Grade challenges weren't worth much of anything in the face of an Heir-Grade challenge, especially not one that was three times as difficult, so Leonel hadn't cared much.

Now, Aina had come with the territory upgrade reward that he would need to claim the entire sea.

Like this, he had claimed his third sea, and he exhaled a breath.

"Do you want me to come with you?" Aina asked.

The previous Leonel was on track to maximize efficiency, so when it was convenient, he had sent Aina off on her own missions. However, she wanted to know if Leonel preferred her here now.

She knew that whatever Leonel was going through wasn't just magically cured with her words, she was just happy that he cared enough about her to be able to ignore it for the time being, but that didn't mean that she didn't want to find a solution as quickly as possible.

Leonel didn't respond immediately, looking out into empty space for a moment.

"What do you think about life, Aina?"

"Hm?" Aina was a bit confused, not sure where this question was coming from. In reality, no one could have known what was going on in Leonel's mind, even her. To have deduced what he had from such small and minor bits of information, was absolutely ridiculous. Maybe even those in the background, pulling on their puppet strings, would have never guessed such a thing.

"If you didn't have the drive to gain revenge for your mother and make up for the loss of your childhood with children of your own, what do you think you'd be doing with your life right now?"

Aina paused, uncertain of how to answer.

Leonel's question wasn't only difficult to answer, it was nigh impossible. Removing such things from her was like creating an entirely new person. If she never experienced such things, how could she still be the same Aina? In that life, she might not have even ever met Leonel in the first place.

Leonel was asking her who she would be if she wasn't herself, and even deeper than that, he was asking what her fundamental being was.

However, even that seemingly fundamental question was layered with yet another even deeper meaning.

What made a person? Was it their life experiences? Or was the person they would be decided upon at birth?

If there was a "fundamental Aina", then that would assume that everyone had an innate nature to them. If there wasn't, then that would mean that it was entirely a matter of nurture.

Someone else might have tried to casually answer this question, but although she didn't seem to be as smart as Leonel, Aina held her own sort of weight in this regard. So, quite truthfully, she didn't know how to answer for a very long time.

Aina had once lost her personality... Back then was she still Aina? She still had all of her memories, so why had she acted so differently than usual.

The answer was complex. Aina felt what made a person wasn't just a series of events, but also the variables associated with them. The timing, the sequence, these two things were highly important.

Aina took a breath. "... I don't know."

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Chapter 2044: Third Party

2044 Third Party

Aina wanted to give Leonel an answer that could satisfy him, an answer that would sweep away all of his worries and lift the veil of darkness from him. She wanted nothing more than to put a smile on his face, but the question was simply far too difficult.

But what Leonel said after hearing her answer swept away all of her hesitation and disappointment in herself, replacing it with shock and a beating heart that refused to calm.

"... I don't know if it's an illusion, but I feel that I know the answer for me all too well. I would be exactly the same person, just as lazy, just as unmotivated, entirely unable to take the world seriously. No matter how many variables changed, no matter the sequence of events, no matter what twists and turns came, there would only be two constants...

"My personality and my love of you... But now I'm confused.

"I always believed that this feeling was like a guiding lamp everyone had, but as I grew up, I realized that not everyone had that same conviction. I chose to ignore it, as I usually did, because I can never be bothered to waste time thinking about things I know I can't find the answer to, but then came the Metamorphosis, and I gained a new understanding.

"The first time I heard the words, I was entirely stumped. It felt as though someone had gripped my shoulders and was shaking me violently, wanting me to wake up... The future can affect the past, they said.

"But if that was the case, why was I the only one that felt it? I don't have a time-related Ability Index, so the future should be just as blurry to me as it is to everyone else, but that nagging feeling remained.

"And now... I don't know anymore if that nagging feeling is even real, that light that had always been guiding me, that path I had always followed because I felt that I was at least being my true self, feels like a façade, a fabrication that was never real to begin with.

"I don't know what to think of it. I don't know what would happen if I suddenly started ignoring that path forward and took a step off of it."

Leonel's face was placid as he spoke. Despite the weight of his words, it didn't seem to carry to his expression in the slightest. It was as though he had entirely dissociated, observing himself, or what he had thought to be himself, through a lens as a third party.

He didn't even trust himself anymore. In his mind where there had once been two constants, there was just one, and that one was Aina.

Funny enough, Aina's worries weren't unwarranted.

Not long ago, Leonel had thought about what these urges meant, this tug he had always felt, what did it represent exactly. But then he remembered that he had not just one tug, but two of them. He wondered if he should stop associating himself with Aina as well.

Was his love for her real? Or was that something that had been programmed into him? And his personality, was that casual indifference he always felt in so many things truly himself? Or was it just useful for this simulation if he were to act in this way? Maybe he just happened to have an Ability Index that also made him more aware of it than others.

However, in the end, he couldn't bring himself to do it.

If he gave up on Aina as well, what good was living anymore. He couldn't trust his own likes and dislikes, he couldn't follow his dreams because it was all meaningless, if he also didn't have Aina, why did he even have to bother anymore.

His previous confidence in being able to enter the "real" world and rub elbows with them had vanished in a puff of smoke. Hadn't he been able to enter Zones just as easily as well? Didn't those people feel very real and very alive? What good was it for him to hold onto this as though it was truly some sort of saving grace.

Aina listened in silence, gripping Leonel's hand hard.

She didn't understand, she couldn't understand. The leaps in logic Leonel had taken to gain his current understanding of the world were only things an existence with millions of minds like himself could do, it was simply impossible for anyone else to succeed in such a thing. Although he had laid out so much, Aina still hadn't made the final conclusion.

"... Doesn't the fact you can take a step off of it mean something?" Aina said softly.

Leonel's pupils trembled as he looked down toward Aina.

"I am very afraid, Leonel. I have heard many things about those with exceptionally high Dream Force affinity, things that I don't want to believe. I'm

very happy that you're saying so much, you rarely speak so much in a single breath, but it's also because of that that I'm so worried.

"I want you to remember that Dream Force is nothing but a vessel, a conduit, it's a projection of what a person could be, but it isn't a person. Just because you can use Dream Force, doesn't mean you can create life, it only means that you can grant the capacity for it."

Aina didn't understand what was going on, but her best deduction was that Leonel's Dream Force affinity had grown so deep that he was beginning to see past the layers of what it meant to be human, and as a result, he was questioning many things.

While she didn't understand fully, when it came to comprehension, and especially comprehension of her own body, Aina was far beyond anyone else. As a result, how could she not fully understand the role that Dream Force played in her own body?

Of course, her deductions were entirely wrong, this wasn't what was causing Leonel's breakdown at all, but even so, hearing these words, Leonel felt like he had been hit by a speeding truck.

"Fuse with me," Aina said lightly. "We haven't done it in a while."

Aina reached out and Leonel subconsciously deployed his Dream World.

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Chapter 2045: Idiot

2045 Idiot

Leonel felt as though a bomb had just gone off in his mind. When his vision cleared, he felt like he was standing within Aina's body, experiencing what she was experiencing, feeling what she was feeling.

It had, indeed, been a long time since they had done this. Since then, Leonel had improved greatly. Not only had his Dream Force Force Manipulation stepped to an all new stage, but he had also gained the ability to disassociate his soul from his body, granting him a great deal of strength in this aspect. As a result, when he touched his own Dream World with Aina's mind, the connection was far deeper than it had ever been before.

If before Aina had only been able to share a small portion, now it felt like she could share 110% of the aspects of her Ability Index.

Now, Leonel could truly feel what she felt, that instinct toward her body, and since they were connected, his own as well. He realized that Aina had even unknowingly already entered Tier 9 of the Sixth Dimension, and she was on pace to cross into the Seventh Dimension long before himself.

However, he suddenly came to a stop. That was because he could sense that Aina's soul was under a great deal of strain. He immediately pulled back and sealed away most of his mind's strength.

Just now, he had been far too rash. He had continued thinking at his normal speed, and because he was using Aina as a proxy to take on the benefits of her Ability Index, all of the stamina drain was on her to withstand. If he had continued for a few more seconds, she might have collapsed and even fallen into a coma.

This time, he only allowed a single one of his minds forward, leaving all the other ones to focus on his body. But in reality, he had seen all he needed to see.

He felt a shuddering change within him as his comprehension of Dream Force grew even deeper.

His mistake was in assuming that Dream Force was just like other Forces.

Take Water Force for example, not only did it make up the various bodies of water in the world, but the shifts and changes within. The ocean, as an example, wasn't just one type of Water Force, but rather an amalgamation of all the Water Forces in various quantities, almost like neutral Force which was a fusion of all Forces in existence.

Leonel had always viewed Dream Force in this way. An amalgamation of all kinds of Dream Force, and depending on the type of person you were, one kind of Dream Force would be more pronounced than another.

However, he was entirely wrong.

There weren't different kinds of Dream Forces, there was only one kind, the purest kind, the only kind in existence and the kind everyone shared.

This was what separated Dream Force from other kinds of Forces, in fact it could be said that the other Forces that made up the human body were more likely to impact your personality than Dream Force itself!

Dream Force was purely a vessel that allowed consciousness to exist, while Soul Force was what held the tainted colors of your personality.

Leonel had always believed that Dream Force was a derivative of Soul Force, or more accurately a purified version of it. But it was more accurate to think of Soul Force like an impure Dream Force. It was a subtle difference in order, and yet it made all the difference in his mind.

Suddenly...

CRACK!

Leonel's body trembled and his gaze became vacant.

Aina, who was allowing Leonel to explore and confirm the things she said, suddenly felt her expression change. She looked toward Leonel, shuddering at his dull gaze.

Leonel's aura seemed to have entirely changed.

At that moment, the universe resounded with a harrowing crack, it was a sound that every soul in existence heard, no matter where they were, no matter where they hid, no matter who they were. However, it seemed impossible to tell where this crack had come from.

Aina felt her shoulders trembling as she looked into Leonel's eyes. She suddenly felt both an endlessly far away and endlessly close feeling. She wanted to take a step back, and yet jump into his arms at the same time. It was an absolutely suffocating feeling, so all she could do was stand in place.

"Leonel...? Leonel?"

The dull gaze in Leonel's eyes seemed to snap into focus. He looked around and then down at Aina, and then seemed to be stunned for a moment.

His gaze suddenly became incomparably gentle, so gentle that Aina felt that she might melt. But to her surprise, tears began to stream down Leonel's face at the same time.

It was a moment that was difficult to describe. The aura exuding from Leonel was incomparably majestic, incomparably lofty, and yet the look in his eyes could put a newborn at ease, while his tears could make the same newborn burst into their own.

Leonel suddenly looked away, his tears vanishing under a mysterious sort of power that Alna couldn't even begin to understand.

"I see... It seems that even this one has been a failure. I guess there are just some things that you can't change..."

Leonel closed his eyes. When he opened them again, his dignified aura had reached his eyes. The air around him trembled and seemed about to collapse at any moment, but, although Aina wasn't sure if it was an illusion or not, it felt that it was also quickly becoming weaker.

"Aina."

"Yes?" Aina answered almost too hurriedly. She was nervous for reasons she didn't know why, for some reason it felt like she was meeting Leonel for the first time all over again.

"I'm an idiot that doesn't deserve you. No matter what state I'm in a month from now, promise to never leave my side, okay?"

Aina's lips parted, but she didn't know how to respond. In the end, she simply nodded, her face holding onto a strong determination.

Leonel didn't meet Aina's eyes again, almost as though he couldn't bear to, or maybe he was too embarrassed to. This version of himself was truly far too weak, whether in fist or in mind.

"All the calculations in the world, and it's still not enough..."

But at that moment, Leonel smiled, it was a handsome, unrestrained smile, the kind that came from the bottom of his heart.

"... Even I cannot play with lives so casually."

Leonel laughed, he laughed so heartily, a laugh filled with relief.

It was completely contradictory, especially since he said he had just failed, and yet he was so happy.

He had never been happier in his life.

"Take care of this idiot," Leonel said finally. "One day I won't disappoint you."

Aina could only be confused as the suffocating aura suddenly vanished and Leonel collapsed. She hurriedly rushed forward to catch him, but even in this state, the smile on his face hadn't vanished.

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Chapter 2046: Are You?

2046 Are You?

Aina didn't have the words to describe what she was thinking about or how she was feeling. Any other person would have probably thought that their boyfriend had entirely lost his mind. He spoke about himself practically in the third person just now, as though the him she was looking at wasn't him at all.

But also, just now, Leonel's mind had been connected with her own. And yet, despite that connection, he had never felt farther away from her than he had in that moment. It was as though she was a small water spout and he was a vast, endless ocean. Although she was feeding into him, she was hardly helping or changing anything at all, and what he had to offer was far too vast for him to be able to share anything without risking her destruction.

Aina trembled.

Something similar had happened before, although not exactly in this way. Maybe, in fact, it had happened two times before, once when Leonel suddenly cleared more than 70 floors of the Void Tower when he should have had no capability of doing so, and second when his father had appeared suddenly in the Rapax Nest and undid some kind of seal.

But how were those two things related at all?

This sort of unfathomable feeling... Aina hadn't sensed it when she met Leonel's father. In her opinion, Leonel's father wasn't even half as strong as the Leonel who just spoke with her, and maybe even that wasn't anywhere near exaggerated enough.

So how could Velasco be the one who had sealed Leonel? It had seemed as though, back then, that he had done something for Leonel's own good, but the Leonel that she had seen just now was beyond the capability of anyone to seal.

And setting that matter aside, why did it sound like he had come from a far off land? Why did it feel like he had experienced so much, hurt so much...

But what she was most interested in knowing was why was it that he was so happy about his failure... It felt like she was looking through a mirror... On one side, there was the Leonel who was still looking for his answers, and on the other side, it seemed that there was another Leonel who had finally gained his answer.

Both were the same man, maybe weak in their own ways, strong in others, but still pursuing after the same matter. Aina couldn't fathom just how much hardship this elder Leonel had to go through to finally find the answer, but she had never heard Leonel laugh so heartily and happily, as though he was finally free, finally resolute in his path.

Aina held Leonel up, her palm gently resting on his cheek, her mind unreadable. Although there was worry between her brows, there was still a light smile on her lips. She felt that even this older Leonel was an idiot too. How could she ever leave him?

Leonel's gaze suddenly snapped opened minutes later. He sat up so quickly that his head almost smashed into Aina's, but he managed to weave out of the way just in time.

His breathing was slightly labored and he looked around in confusion. He distinctly remembered the last time he had felt a similar feeling, but there was something odd. The situation wasn't exactly the same. He couldn't remember anything that had happened in the Void Tower, but this time he felt like he could vaguely recall something.

Leonel looked down at his hands, his pupils constricting.

His Dream Force was nothing like he remembered it. A tenfold increase wasn't enough to describe it. Although his Force Manipulation remained the same, his Ethereal Glabella had become like its own Innate Node, so large that it had basically replaced the entirety of his frontal lobe, and it even looked as though it was eager to replace his entire brain.

If his Dream Force output was one unit before, it was over a thousand now. It had gone from a drop of water, to an overflowing bucket, but he couldn't quite understand why.

It didn't feel like his affinity had changed much, it was still outstanding. Or maybe it had grown to a point where he couldn't even differentiate any longer.

The most obvious change was that his number of split minds had gone from a factor of millions to billions. In fact, it was even approaching 10 digits rather than just nine.

Leonel realized all of this looking at his hands because right now he wasn't observing his hands at all, rather it felt like he was looking at the individual cells that made it up.

It was akin to the difference between observing a planet through a telescope, and then zooming in to see the peaks and valleys, not to mention the populations that called it home.

He was having a hard time wrapping his head around this matter and he couldn't help but think back to what had happened in the Rapax Nest. Back then, his Dream Force affinity had gotten a huge boost, this time his Dream Force quantity had gotten its own huge boost.

If he had had this much Dream Force when he was creating his army of stingrays, rather than an entire three days to outfit them, even a quarter of a day might be overexaggerating the time he would need, and that was only taking into account Little Tolly's own limitations. The gap was simply as vast as an ocean.

When this was simultaneously matched with the improvement of his Dream Force before this odd change, then the gap was overwhelming. In fact, Leonel wondered if this change was triggered by the improvement to his Force Manipulation or not, but it seemed unlikely... This hadn't happened with his Scarlet Star Force when he had improved it, so why now?

"How do you feel? Are you okay?" Aina's questions suddenly snapped Leonel out of his thoughts.

When he looked toward her this time, he couldn't help but feel she was even more beautiful now than he remembered.

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Chapter 2047: Mini Vacation

2047 Mini Vacation

Leonel suddenly kissed Aina, catching her off guard. She hadn't been prepared for this sudden change as she was still worried about Leonel and if he was doing okay, so she was far too stunned even to fight back.

Eventually, she regained her bearings and bit at Leonel's lips.

"Ow, ow. What are you doing to your husband?" Leonel pouted.

"There are people watching, behave yourself!" Aina chided. Even so, she couldn't help but lick her lips. The taste of Leonel's blood was truly great, if it wasn't because she felt that it was too weird to ask, she would take a taste more often.

Leonel, though, had noticed the subtle, seductive action. He didn't know why, but watching Aina lick at his blood like that made a fire light within him. It was as though some repressed fantasies about being with a vampire empress were all resurfacing at once.

"What are you looking at?" Aina asked to hide her embarrassment.

"Lick your lips again, slower this time, I really want to imprint it into my memories. Take another bite out of my lip if you have to."

Aina was stunned speechless before she hit Leonel on the chest. "Be serious!"

"I am deadly serious! Come, come, take another bite."

"I'm ignoring you," Aina stood in a huff, dropping Leonel to the ground, but when she turned back, her lips couldn't help but bloom into a bright smile. If Leonel was willing to joke around like this, he was at least feeling better for now.

She felt two arms wrap around her waist, a soft cheek pressing against her own. This time, she didn't fight back, her palm reaching up to touch Leonel's face.

"Look at you, still as smooth as a baby's butt."

Leonel was aghast. "How could you poke at your husband's insecurities like this?!"

Aina laughed, allowing Leonel a nice view of her bouncing chest over her shoulder. He couldn't help but shake his head, if only those perverts didn't set up cameras everywhere. What were those old perverts thinking?!

If the Morales Ancestors knew what Leonel was thinking, they too would have probably been stunned speechless. How was this their fault, it was just the way things had always been done.

The two continued to joke around without a care in the world, forgetting the time for a moment and just enjoying one another's company. Finally, Aina asked the question that had been on her mind all the while.

"Are you really okay? You know you can talk to me, right?"

Leonel smiled. "Maybe. At the very least, it's not enough for me to stress over it like I have before. Questions about life and its meaning, they're things everyone has, right? Why should I be the one to gain answers before anyone else?"

After seeing Aina's Dream Force, Leonel understood that it wasn't something that could just breathe life into things, one couldn't create life with it, and one wouldn't be able to manipulate the personality of another with it either.

Of course, that didn't mean that there wouldn't be other ways of doing so. For example, giving someone certain affinities, or tainting their Soul Force with certain aspects, both were viable options. So, that didn't mean that Leonel's worries were entirely unfounded.

But what it did mean was that there was a path to true freedom, it existed, and it existed within every single person equally. That sort of realization was beautiful enough in its own right. As for what was beyond, it was still exactly that. Beyond him.

If everyone had the same Dream Force acting as the foundation of their life, though, then Leonel was right back to square one. How could one possibly differentiate the value of a life?

In fact, now that he thought about it, if it was so easy to just create people, what was the point of this simulation?

If the point was to have predictive models of the future and use it to avoid catastrophes, that was still acceptable, it made sense for this simulation to exist. But if the creators of this simulation were looking for existences that could help them out of their plight, then that went a long way to addressing Leonel's worries.

As for why, one only had to ask themselves a simple question.

If it was so easy to create life, why bother creating such weak lifeforms? If they needed help, why not directly create the most powerful existences they could? Or if they were worried about rebellion, why not just directly create the most powerful existences that could be safely controlled?

The answer was obvious. It wasn't that easy to create life.

Maybe he was still being manipulated, but keeping the chains on him wasn't so easy, and as long as there was a chance, he was certain that he'd be able to break free.

Leonel rose to his feet.

He was sure that this Dimensional Verse along with the others had been created for the latter reason. If it was for the purpose of simulating the future, there would have been no point in allowing a connection to exist between the universes, but those connections very much existed, the Tribulation likely only being just one of them.

"Where are you going?" Aina asked.

"You mean where are we going?" Leonel corrected with a grin.

Aina smiled. "Okay, I'll bite. Where are we going?"

"To end these Heir Wars, of course. This piece of shit competition actually gave me a mid-life crisis three decades early, I can't stand for it."

Aina sputtered with laughter. "Don't be reckless, we still need to plan things."

"If James wasn't out there being a lazy ass, it'll all be okay."

"Talking behind my back when you've just been smooching on my sister-in-law while all of us did free labor? Let's revolt, everyone. This 'King' is too much of a bastard."

Leonel grinned hearing James' voice. How could he not have noticed him already?

The others had been worried after not receiving Leonel's orders for so long, especially after they had already gathered so many materials without seeing a peep from him, so they had come here. Who would have thought that he was taking a little vacation in an underwater resort?

James threw something over and Leonel caught it. After a look, Leonel's grin widened, it was precisely what they needed to conquer the final sea.

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Chapter 2048: Small Knot

2048 Small Knot

Leonel tossed the glass orbs in his hand.

"Let's go, it's about time we stop preparing. Now's the time to end then, I'm quite tired of this game."

The gaze of James and the others flashed. However, they simply nodded. Since Leonel had said so, that was how it would be.

The first thing Leonel did was finish setting up a network of outposts. Since outposts of different cities couldn't be connected, the best way to deal with this was to spawn separate outposts of differing cities near one another. Like this, it would be relatively easier to shift from one city to the next.

Then, Leonel commanded the Oryx and the Skies family to make their way to the fourth and final sea. At the same time, he sent a message to the Cloud Race. It was about time he made a move with them. He had wanted to save the Cloud Race for the perfect moment, they had played their role well enough. There were most definitely spies from the other continent present by now, and thanks to them, pressure that would have been on Leonel was greatly weakened.

Now, it was time to make true use of them.

When Leonel entered the Fourth Sea, his Internal Sight trembled. The range he had once had was just 10 kilometers while he could barely deploy his Dream World for about 100 or so meters. But now, there was easily a hundredfold increase, the suppression of this world couldn't bind him as well as it could in the past. He could easily see a thousand kilometers in every direction. Although this wasn't enough to cover the entire moon, it was definitely enough to cover over 50% of this sea.

Thanks to this, Leonel was immediately able to see that this sea was already occupied by someone else, and they were just a small measure away from forming an Heir-Grade territory and claiming it for themselves.

resemblance with the Quarius family. But Leonel had already dealt with the Quarius family, so that could only mean that this was related with Vega, and thus Adawarth.

Leonel's gaze narrowed. Did he want to clash with First Nova right this moment? Or did he want to wait instead?

Despite his words, he knew that he couldn't just casually bulldoze through the Heir Wars right this moment. At the same time, victory was important for more reasons than just Aina's happiness. He still couldn't allow Third Nova to get his way.

If Third Nova was truly connected to the Three Finger Cult, then that also meant that he was connected to whatever schemes that Cult was drawing up. Leonel had already deduced that the Demonness and King had to come from the "real" world, so the stakes of this matter were still the same.

When he had thought that he was being controlled every step of the way, he couldn't be bothered to care about this and didn't even want to continue to participate. But now that he was participating, he most definitely had to crush Third Nova's chances.

However, after a moment, Leonel's gaze flashed with a decisive light. Now wasn't the time for taking a step back, it was about time that he went all out.

"Let me," Aina suddenly said.

Leonel looked over toward Aina.

He remembered that Aina had a small relationship with Vega. In the past, Vega had wanted to choose Aina as her successor to the Faction after she was promoted to the Void Senate. Back then, Vega had even been willing to use Leonel's health as a bargaining chip.

This had occurred just after Leonel had cleared past the 70th floor and returned unconscious and heavily injured, it also happened to be around this time that Fourth Nova tried to sign Aina to a slave contract.

If one were comparing pettiness, Aina was probably even more petty and ruthless than even Leonel. It seemed that after all this time, Aina hadn't forgotten about this matter, which was actually quite amusing to Leonel. That was because Vega hadn't even forced her hand, she was just negotiating from a strong position.

But to Aina, she didn't take anything related to Leonel's life lightly.

Before Leonel could even say anything, Aina had already taken out her battle ax.

In truth, not many had seen Aina battle with her full strength. This was because although she was a beauty, she wasn't a Queen Beauty, and Leonel had gotten far more attention than her, so when they split, most chose to focus on him instead. However, after her feat of concocting a Life Grade Force Pill, it could be said that very few paid more attention to anyone else.

Leonel smiled. His demeanor seemed far more relaxed than it had in the past, Aina could tell that Leonel had somehow become even more like himself. That same, casual laziness was there and prominent once again.

Now, though, Aina felt like she understood where it was coming from.

Not long ago, she had spoken to what seemed to be a future version of Leonel. Just like everyone else, she was also aware of the fact that the future could affect the past, and if Leonel's future self was as powerful as he seemed to be, how could his current self not be completely and entirely bored of everything he came across?

There was no challenge that could speed up his heart, no obstacle that he would feel was too great.

In that case, as his future wife, if she was meant to keep her promise to stay by his side, then her one and only goal was to stay powerful enough that she could do just that.

Vega was a reminder of a time where she had been too weak to do exactly that, and she very much didn't like it. Although she had no hatred for Vega, this small dislike was enough for her to draw her blade.

It was her time to untie this small knot in her heart.

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Chapter 2049: Fluttering

2049 Fluttering

The seas rumbled as the light of dusk grew lower and lower.

First Nova had split his forces into two, trusting Vega to command the seas while he charged forth on land. As a result, they had done quite well. Although Third Nova believed that he was in the best position, relying on Orinik to take over the seas for him, his plans had been crushed by Leonel. Due to this, First Nova suddenly found himself to be in the best position.

Vega was, obviously, under quite a lot of pressure from her family. She had actually suddenly decided to abandon her responsibilities and join a man of the Morales family. It might have been fine under normal circumstances since Adawarth was, indeed, outstanding. However, given the weight of these matters and the political weight behind them, her choice was truly much harder than it seemed on the surface.

Her actions were akin to willingly standing on the side of a man who might very well soon take over a family that had the spears of the whole Human Domain pointed at it. This was a choice that took a great deal of courage, she might never be able to return to her family again.

There was no doubt that in order for her to do this, her love for First Nova was not shallow, and the amount of effort she had put into making certain that he would succeed was not a small amount.

Not only had she formed a Gold-Grade special ocean territory, but she was just a step away from being prepared to challenge the Heir-Grade.

However, just when she felt that she was about half a day or so away from her preparations being complete, her gaze flickered as she was alerted to a large movement on her territory map. When she checked, her brows furrowed.

There was an army of about a million moving toward her direction.

A million would have been a large number during the first few days of the Heir Wars, but a million now was nothing more than a drop in the bucket. Just the number of individuals she had scouting out her territory and clear dungeons and the like exceeded this number.

Even so, Vega wasn't a fool. Anyone who could make it to this point wasn't an easy opponent to deal with. There was no longer any fodder remaining in the Heir Wars, they had all been wiped out in the first few days. Now, all that remained was the cream of the crop.

Vega calmed and the first thing she did was alert Adawarth. Then, she gave out a series of commands.

...

Leonel nodded toward Aina and allowed her to take the helm. Since she wanted to act, he didn't mind. Maybe before all of these things happened, he would have insisted on taking the most efficient route properly. He had been in a serious state since the start of these Heir Wars, and he was meticulous about every detail. But right this moment, he felt more relaxed than anything else. It was difficult for him to take anything too seriously right now...

It was as though the entire world was in the palm of his hand. Even if something didn't go absolutely perfectly, he could just slide the misplaced levers back into place, adjusting for victory regardless of the circumstances.

When they finally crossed into the territory, Leonel's gaze flickered.

Harsh winds kicked up, and they began to come across large numbers of whirlpools. The closer they got, the more numerous and dangerous these whirlpools began. The stingrays, whose numbers were no more than a drop in the bucket given the size of the ocean, had no choice but to split up to continue avoiding these whirlpools.

Leonel realized immediately that this had to be something related to a special ocean territory, and this one used natural disasters of the water. If it was anything like the Lotus Territory, then they would also have to be prepared for the possibility of one time, large scale attacks that could be levied in exchange for a large number of points.

The good news was that most of his army was made up of oceanic creatures, but that didn't mean that they were immune from these disasters. If their formations were forced to become too small, then their armors would become less useful.

'Interesting...'

At that moment, Leonel finally spotted the city in the distance.

It was in the Gold Grade, as he had expected. However, other than this, it was quite unique. It floated upon a thick, grey cloud that rumbled from time to time. This cloud was at least ten or so meters above the surface of the ocean, and beneath it was an enormous whirlpool that rotated like the blades of a saw.

Just looking at it, Leonel's gaze couldn't help but flicker. He knew immediately that the stingrays couldn't even get close to the city, at least not through the water. The defenses of this city were quite exceptional.

'If the balance is proper, since this territory has so many powerful areas of effect abilities, the odds that it has other powerful upgrades is minimal. It's a lot like the Water Lotus Territory in this regard.'

At that moment, a beauty with fluttering blue hair appeared on the city walls. Although there were many others as well, it was simply too difficult to ignore her. When she looked down and saw Leonel and the others, her gaze couldn't help but flicker. Of all those she had expected, Leonel and Aina were definitely among the last.

Soon, her expression returned to normal and she waved a hand. At that moment, several ballista units on the wall took aim.

Leonel's army was already greatly spread out. Due to the whirlpools, the largest group gathered in any one location was only a few hundred in number. At the same time, there was much room to maneuver.

While on the one hand, this made it more difficult for a scatter shot to cause a lot of damage. On the other, it made it easier to target more powerful threats.

However, Leonel didn't do anything as he fell into silence.

At that instant, a vortex of volatile, swirling energy appeared to his side. As for Aina, who had just been in that exact location, she had completely disappeared.

When she appeared again, she had already appeared above the city, her speed so fast it might as well have been teleportation.

She raised her ax into the skies, her hair fluttering wildly as she swung down.

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Chapter 2050: Raging River

2050 Raging River

Aina's ax left a bloody trail in the skies. It felt as though it couldn't be stopped, carrying a momentum behind it that seemed to encompass the auras of a myriad of weapons.

Leonel had long since known that Aina had chosen her own path. While Leonel had first begun with calligraphy, before moving onto music, then painting, before finally having some accomplishment in translating his spear skill into Force Arts, Aina took a different approach entirely.

Whenever she felt that she had come across a bottleneck in the improvement of her battle ax, she switched to a new weapon, gaining mastery over it before switching back and applying what she had learned. Every time she completed such a cycle, her skill would enter an entirely new tier, touching upon levels those her age shouldn't have any business touching.

Leonel himself could touch upon the Fourth Layered State when he finished his Spear Dance. Of course, this was for his Sixth Dimensional Spear Force.

Aina, likewise, used Sixth Dimensional Battle Ax Force, and just that swing along was very clearly in at least the Second Layered State.

Watching the woman he loved display such skill so casually, Leonel's gaze couldn't help but glow. He didn't often think about how others viewed Aina. So long as they didn't dare to say such things before him, and he wasn't aware of their thoughts, he didn't care, quite frankly. All that mattered to him were Aina's feelings and his own.

However, he was still human. Seeing Aina shine like this couldn't help but put a smile on his face.

'I wonder...'

Leonel's lips began to move as Aina swung her ax down. He didn't seem to be saying anything, but if others played exceptionally close attention, it would be possible to see Aina's ears subtly twitching from time to time.

Due to the time constraints, Leonel hadn't found a moment to tell Aina about Force Manipulation. Everything she had accomplished until this moment was done on her own merits.

In truth, Leonel hesitated to tell many people about this, that was because he understood that sometimes, overthinking things could come as a detriment instead of help. There were many instincts beasts and children would have that adults would lose, and that because while awareness was a virtue, it was also a hindrance in many ways.

Being aware of Force Manipulation might help some, but it could very well hinder most. However, Leonel had a great deal of faith in Aina. Until now, she had already been forging ahead on her own... so what about now?

Leonel spoke quickly and Aina was more than strong enough in mind to catch it all. Her eyes seemed to become dazed for a moment before they sharpened considerably, her aura flourishing.

A delicate roar came from her lips that quickly morphed into something far more majestic, a war cry that echoed across the skies that shook the walls of the city below her.

BANG!

Aina's battle ax landed upon a shield of water that Vega had manifested. The latter had reacted quickly, her expression changing when she sensed the

strength that was behind Aina's blow. But rather than taking a step back, she moved forward.

Their clash echoed throughout the surroundings, the immediate sections of the wall crumbling and quaking as the other members of the Quarius family found themselves flying out in all directions.

Vega's gaze narrowed. Her defenses were probably her greatest strength, but right now her water shield was threatening to collapse beneath the blow of a Sixth Dimensional existence? Just what was going on here, exactly?

Her blue dress fluttered as she took a step back. Her fingers tapped at the air and the water shield's form shifted, inverting and forming a large net that shot toward Aina.

Aina's battle ax suddenly became akin to a venomous snake in her hands, losing its form and curving out while its twin blades twinkled beneath the pulsing streaks of lightning in the dark clouds that accumulated above.

The net of water shattered, becoming countless droplets of sparkling blue water. It didn't carry a natural hue at all, instead infused with a large amount of Force that increased the humidity to the point that although not a single drop had fallen onto Aina, it still felt like she was enveloped from all sides.

A sticky layer of something uncomfortable bore down upon her and Aina seemed to understand what it was instantly.

Vega wasn't just controlling the water droplets that were clearly visible to her naked eye, she was also controlling the invisible water vapor. This stickiness wasn't just humidity, it was a warning sign.

Aina's gaze flickered and her stance shifted, with a twist of her wrist, the seemingly flexible battle ax in her small palms became as rigid as an ancient tree piercing the skies. Its polearm crashed into the crumbling wall beneath them, sending out a rumbling echo that spread out in all directions. It sounded like Aina had suddenly hit a resonating bronze bell at that moment.

Instantly, the droplets of water shattered and the humidity scattered before it could coat Aina any longer.

She took a step forward as Vega's gaze narrowed, swinging her battle ax in a wide arc that bore down with a menacing momentum.

Her movement flowed like water, her body moving instinctually to shatter all the traps Vega had set up before they could even become fully formed plots. It really felt like she wasn't thinking at all. Her mind was her body, and her body was her mind. They moved and functioned as one without the slightest delay or lag.

Vega's expression became serious. She realized that this was no longer a matter she could just casually brush off. If she wanted to win, she would have to treat Aina like a real opponent.

Defeat Aina, gather the momentum to her side, and crush the army that lay in wait.

Vega's aura suddenly changed. From a governess, her demeanor became valiant. Her blue hair lifted into the air, becoming like a raging river.