

Dimensional Descent

- Chapter 2381: Correct

Chapter 2381: Correct

In truth, Leonel expected it to be ranked higher. At least until he saw that Elorin's progression in the Ability Index was still at the very first tier.

'It's so powerful at just the first tier? He looks like he's completely focused on his Ability Index as well, and he's had the drive and conviction to improve it every day. From what I've seen, he uses it cleverly and with sharpness. Is it just that difficult to progress Time Force?'

Wait, but he had felt Elorin sense him in the Dream Plane. Even Emna hadn't been able to, and neither had Goggles. Only Aina was able to replicate that feat.

That should mean that Elorin was on the verge of the Impetus State, but...

If Elorin's Time Force was that strong, his Ability Index shouldn't still be at the first tier.

'Fascinating...'

Elorin's Ability Index allowed him to use his eyes to see the path of causality. He could then gather those causalities and use them for his benefit.

If he wanted to streak across a marathon, he had to observe himself complete that marathon first within one of the potential causalities, then pick that causality. Once he did, he would cross the distance of a marathon in an instant.

Of course, that would require time. If he had been a mortal, even an elite one, that would have taken two hours of observation of casualties.

This was where the strength of his Ability Index came in. He was able to accelerate time within these casualties and gain a small advantage.

Essentially, he could observe himself cross a distance at an accelerated pace, and thus finish that task faster overall.

If it would usually take him a minute to run a kilometer, he could observe the causality at an acceleration of 10%, and thus finish in 54 seconds instead.

When Leonel laid it out like this, this did truly sound like the first tier of an ability. There were countless restrictions and it was extremely difficult to use in the midst of battle.

It was no wonder Elorin couldn't focus on anything else. If anything, making his Ability Index any stronger would be a detriment to him.

Unlike James who focused too much on his Lineage Factor, Elorin was the opposite, focusing too much on his Ability Index.

But Leonel couldn't even really blame him. If he could toy around with time, would he even waste his time with other things? He could imagine what he could do with Elorin's abilities and just the thought made him want to salivate.

Of course, though, if he had Elorin's Ability Index, he would lose his own and thus lose the sharp mind that would allow him to execute his ideas.

'That's enough reconnaissance. I've got it. First, Joel.'

[Joel Dangote]

[Ability Index: Sharpness]

[Lineage Factor: -]

Joel's Ability Index was as simple as it came. In the past, Leonel had thought that it was similar to Emna's Ability Index, but this was due to his ignorance.

Joel's Ability Index did one thing: increased piercing power. It was that simple, almost like a buff in-game.

This wouldn't have been interesting to Leonel in the past, but with his current understanding of Weapon Forces, he found it maybe even more fascinating than Elorin's Ability Index.

Sharpness. It was a physical law of reality. When an object reached a certain unspecified number of parameters, it would be sharp. Joel could enhance those parameters.

What was interesting was that Sharpness was one of the laws of physics Leonel thought of when he was comprehending Weapon Forces.

What made Weapon Forces exist? As he had comprehended, on one side there was the human consciousness with birthed all sorts of weapons, and on the other side there were the laws of physics those weapons relied upon to be effective.

All weapons but blunt force ones relied on sharpness. The spear might also rely on laws of leverage and the like. Whatever unique combination of these laws that a weapon leaned upon would decide what kind of Weapon Force it was.

If Joel came to understand this, Leonel had a feeling that his power would shoot up like a speeding rocket. But looking at his Ability Index...

Joel was still at tier three and that was after decades of effort.

Leonel understood why. It wasn't just due to lack of talent. When he wasn't there, the role of leader fell onto Joel's shoulders. Joel bore this weight well, but it hindered him in many other facets.

'Joel's Ability Index has much more potential than I gave it credit for. I won't touch it unless I find other Ability Indexes that are extremely similar. Maybe one related to the laws of hardness or...'

Leonel's gaze flashed, he looked through all million Ability Index Force Arts in an instant before he landed on one.

Leonel couldn't just give Joel his insights. Comprehension never worked like that. Instead, he had to find a way to lead Joel to the same conclusion he had reached.

[Ability Index: Heaviness]

'Perfect.'

Leonel tested the synergy between this Ability Index and Joel's. And as expected, they were akin to two peas in a pod. They fused more easily than any Ability Indexes that Leonel had tried out until this point.

While the result was still Common, that was because both Joel's and the person who had once wielded Heaviness had both were stuck at quite low tiers and had limited understanding of what they truly had.

'Now he just needs a Lineage Factor to pair with it.'

Leonel looked inwardly toward the Glaive Domain Ring.

It was perfect for Joel, but he shook his head.

Not only did he feel that these Lineage Factors were ticking time bombs, but-

Leonel's thoughts were cut off as another tablet appeared within his library. His gaze sharpened as he brought it out.

[Ability Index: Glaive Domain: Corrupted]

Leonel sat in silence for a long while. Sometimes, he really hated being correct.

'... Those sons of bitches...'

Chapter 2382: Corruption

Leonel looked at the "corrupted" tag for a long while, his eyes narrowed. He had expected this already, but it was still annoying to see.

The good news was that he didn't receive the same tag, and the reason was quite obvious. His Spear Domain Lineage Factor had fused with his Metal Synergy Lineage Factor, not to mention the Radix, Midas, and Florer family Lineage Factors to become [Unnamed].

As for his Bow Domain Lineage Factor, it was incomplete and had yet to fully form. He had also not taken the steps to complete it even though he had the Bow Domain Lineage Factor. So, obviously, he didn't have to deal with that issue with it either.

Instead, his Bow Domain Lineage Factor received the tag of "Fragmented," if he recalled correctly. If he completed it, though, he was almost 100% certain that it, too, would be marked down as Corrupted.

'Wait...'

Leonel looked toward the Force Art, focusing his attention. After just a split second, he waved a hand and got rid of it. He was being foolish. If he wanted to comprehend the corrupted portion of the Lineage Factor, he had to pick a Lineage Factor that he was intimately familiar with.

He took out his Spear Domain Ring and had the Silver Tablet scan it. It was a ring that was always on his finger, and he felt that it was about time he comprehended its true depth.

Even though [Unnamed] wasn't corrupted, who was to say that it wasn't imperfect due to the corrupted nature of Spear Domain being part of its foundation?

Due to this, it might very well be more important than just for the sake of his curiosity to get an understanding of what was going on.

Leonel spent the next half an hour memorizing, analyzing, and teasing apart the secrets of Spear Domain. Not only did he feel like he learned a lot and even new methods, but he felt that he had nailed down the corruption of the Lineage Factor.

There were two aspects to the corruption, the first was something that he had already expected: control.

Spear Domain was a Lineage Factor that gave one access to a Weapon Force with hardly any conscious effort. A Weapon Force was highly linked with one's very being as it relied on the will of a person and the laws of reality to manifest. As such, controlling a person through their Weapon Force was as far a stretch as it seemed.

The second aspect, though, was more surprising, and that was just the fact that the Lineage Factor was imperfect.

This shouldn't have been as surprising to Leonel as he originally felt it was. Of course, the Lineage Factor was imperfect; that fit well with everything else he knew.

He had a feeling that the existence of the Domain Rings mimicked True Sovereignty because the original intention of the Domain Lineage Factors was to birth True Sovereigns.

Leonel didn't know who had created this Lineage Factor, but they had to be a genius to get so close to a perfect product even though they hadn't succeeded.

Lineage Factors and Ability Indexes could provide affinities that could help one's comprehension, making the world of a certain Force easier to understand. But this Lineage Factor was trying to take it a step forward, directly granting comprehension. Or at the very least, making the path toward comprehension so easy that it was barely a step or two away.

'I see. The imperfection part of the Lineage Factor can be fixed just by becoming a True Sovereign on your own. However, the control part...'

The control portion of the Lineage Factor was designed as a failsafe. It allowed, assumedly the creator, to control those who had the Lineage Factor.

Of course, their targets were likely those that could perfect the Lineage Factor by becoming True Sovereigns themselves, which ironically meant that Leonel would have become one of their prime targets. In fact, he still might be their target even now, even more so since they couldn't control him.

Just what he needed, honestly. More enemies in the dark. Who didn't love that?

However, Leonel disregarded that. What he cared most about was the fact this "control" aspect also masqueraded as a dampener on the Lineage Factor, not allowing it to display its full strength once completion was reached.

Now that Leonel thought about it, there wasn't any bump in strength in his Spear Domain Lineage Factor at all that didn't come directly from his Spear Force. But his Spear Force was his own; he could use it with or without the Lineage Factor.

He hadn't thought much about it in the past because he didn't not of the connection. But now... he realized that his Lineage Factor likely hadn't reached its full potential precisely because of these blockers.

With a thought, [Unnamed] appeared before Leonel.

It was a complex, jumbled mess. Leonel got a headache just looking at it. It was so much more complex than even Goggles' that it was hard to pay attention to the details he needed to.

This was quite shocking for Leonel considering just how strong his Dream Force was, and he felt that it might be a helpless endeavor, until he suddenly had an idea.

'My Spear Force fell out of True Sovereignty after my recent comprehension. That means that if I reach True Sovereignty again, I can compare the changes to the [Unnamed] Force Art with and without it. That should help me pinpoint the location in the Force Art that Spear Domain made up.

'Once I do that, I should be able to find the corruption as well as they should be nearby one another.

'If I can fix the corruption on mine, fixing the corruption for Joel would be a breeze.'

Leonel got to work. It would take him forever if he was alone, but didn't he have a lovely wife that would be a perfect sparring partner?

Unfortunately, he underestimated just how much this lovely wife of his loved to kick his ass.

Chapter 2383: Too Heavy

Leonel coughed, feeling like he was about to hack up a lung.

"-Is all of this strictly necessary? Haven't you heard of being gentle? I'm not a masochist like you, you kn-"

Leonel quickly rolled to the side as a long-haired beauty descended from the skies like a war god. It seemed she didn't like what he was about to say even one bit.

"Since you can still run your mouth, you obviously haven't been pushed to your limits yet."

Leonel rolled out of the way again. "You know I'm doing this for you too!"

"I don't need that damned corrupted ring, I can become a True Sovereign on my own, it's easy."

Leonel's lip twitched. If anyone else said this, he'd call bullshit. But since it was Aina, he knew just how true it was.

Aina's Body Clairvoyance and Soul Clairvoyance abilities were absolutely broken. They did exactly as their name suggested and practically gave her the ability to see the future so long as it was related to her own body.

He could barely look at his own [Unnamed] Force Art without going into a tailspin, looking at those two Clairvoyance Force Arts felt like he was thrown into a blackhole and forced to watch his body stretch across time.

What was interesting, though, was that Aina's Ability Index and Goggles' had great synergy between one another.

However, he decided to leave this matter be. The one person who didn't need his help for her path was Aina. This was already how he felt before she "died", but now it was even more exaggerated, she was on a completely different level.

In just the last few days, Leonel felt that her strength had probably doubled, and she was still unearthing more strength every day.

By this point, she could probably fold Alpha Clown in half and make Rhangyl her whipping boy. Leonel doubted it would even take much effort.

He didn't know what had triggered this, especially since it didn't actually seem to be related to her Blood Sovereignty. But what else could he do but stay here and take a beating?

...

'There it is...'

A day later, Leonel finally felt the threshold again, his head filled with lumps that were growing their own lumps.

His Spear Force regained its golden sheen, its power skyrocketing. At the same time, Leonel felt that he actually gained a little bit more control as well, not in terms of the Spear Force itself-that went without saying-rather, it was the ability to use the Spear Force even with his fragile body.

By this point, even without having used [Caged Body: Chained Soul] yet, Leonel had a body that was almost as strong as it had been before his grandfather unceremoniously knocked him out.

He had expected to be able to use his Force by now, but he guessed that having a body strong enough to withstand powerful Forces was about more than just a strong body, but the Dimension of the body almost mattered.

It was a metaphysical matter rather than a purely physical matter.

Leonel crossed his legs and he entered the Silver Tablet, focusing his attention and Aina reluctantly had to stop the swing of her staff.

This staff was the latest weapon that Aina had decided to pick up. She usually alternated between her battle ax and other weapons. Once she mastered whatever random weapon suited her fancy, she would always go back to her trusted ax.

It was true when she said she could become a True Sovereign when she wanted, but until now, she hadn't. She trusted her instincts and followed what her body and mind told her to do. As far as she was concerned, it had never led her astray.

In truth, for years now, for as long as she could remember, part of that nagging voice in her mind had been telling her to commit suicide. It was the one thing she had always ignored because she had too many things to do, too many things to accomplish, too many people to make pay for what they had done to her family.

But ever since she had awakened, that voice had vanished and without the constant bombardment, her Clairvoyance was hundreds of times clearer to her than it had been in the past.

She didn't know exactly what this meant, but she was happy. This meant that she would be able to keep up with Leonel's steps and she wouldn't have to worry anymore.

Even if this meant that she would leave Leonel behind in terms of strength, it would be even better. She would happily protect Leonel for the rest of her life if that's what she had to do.

She smiled to herself. Of course, she would definitely enjoy whacking him on the head during said time.

...

Leonel didn't know Aina's thoughts, he was far too focused on the task at hand. Plus, it wasn't as though he could use the Dream Plane to read her mind, she was the only one in the Segmented Cube aside from Elorin who could sense him with ease.

'That's it, this part right here...'

Leonel's eyes narrowed.

With his mind focused on one part of the Force Art, and with this part being easier for him to comprehend now that he had regained his True Sovereignty, the impact on him was far less.

After a moment, he entered a deep state of meditation, one that lasted three days and nights.

When he opened his eyes, they were bloodshot, and their disappointment was clear.

He had overestimated himself a bit too much. How could he unwind this kind of thing in a short time? The task was far too heavy.

He could hardly look at the Force Art directly, how was he going to modify it to any great extent?

Leonel exhaled a breath slowly and slipped into a pod to rest.

When he came out, his determination was renewed.

He couldn't do anything about his Lineage Factor the conventional way, but that didn't mean the Silver Tablet couldn't.

Chapter 2384: Choice

A Force Art was essentially a series of symbols that acted like a programming language. This language could communicate with the universe to elicit a certain response that usually came in a combination of Force. This corrupted section of the Lineage Factor was designed to dampen the overall structure and weaken it. So, what if Leonel fused it with several other Force Arts that could do the opposite.

After some testing, he felt that it might be viable. This was because he didn't seem to have to fuse Force Arts as a whole, he could do so in parts, and even concentrate which sections to fuse where.

He currently had four complete Domain Lineage Factors on hand. He had the Bow, Glaive, Ax and Spear rings. Although each was built on different concepts, they all had

overlapping sections. So, his first thought was what if he took these overlapping sections, fusing them into the Lineage Factor, and used quality to outmatch the corruption.

While this wouldn't deal with the control aspects of the corruption, it might be able to deal with the weakening.

This method worked, but the result was unsatisfactory. Not only was there the previously mentioned issue, but it was also lacking in something fundamental. Leonel understood what it was immediately. The only portions of the Force Arts he could fuse were general purpose and not specific to the weapon.

So, he chose a different approach. Why not just stack several of the same Force Art on top of each other?

This worked much better, but the corruption actually seemed to feed off the Force Art, growing stronger in kind. This told Leonel that the corruption wasn't some inanimate object, it had some bite to it, and he had to be cautious of that. Trying to do this within his body might have had even worse effects.

So that left Leonel thinking until he came up with another approach. He began rifling through the Ability Index until he found one.

[Energy Shield]

'Interesting...' Leonel's eyes narrowed. Energy Shield was obviously the Ability Index of James and Milan, but it shared some characteristics with the corruption.

He continued looking and soon he found three more that triggered his Dreamscape and Leonel felt like he was beginning to put the pieces together.

'Could it be that this person is also a Wise Star Order? Or was the person that created the Domain Rings King to begin with?'

Although Leonel didn't discount the possibility of there being yet another Wise Star Order, the fact that King had done this was in line with everything he knew and easier to accept.

Wise Star Orders weren't as rare as Northern Star Orders like his grandmother, and from what he had learned, even Northern Star Orders weren't exactly extinct either. He would definitely have to deal with others in the future.

'This Wise Star Order combined the Force of several Ability Indexes into one to create this corruption aspect.' Leonel entered a state of focus again, mixing and matching the four Lineage Factors he had picked out until he compiled a perfect replica.

'Yes, this is it.' Leonel had succeeded in reconstructing the corruption perfectly. By now, he was even more certain that this person was a Wise Star Order. In fact, it should be a Wise Star Order that was using their Tablet to create a new Force Art, but they had ended up failing and took this approach instead.

Now, though, Leonel understood the corruption perfectly and all the parts that made it up. What once was an enigma to him fell into a logical train of thought, and likewise, how it connected with the original Lineage Factor made all the more sense to him.

So, when he reached forward, and began to pull the corruption out of his Force Art as though he was plucking an apple from a tree, it all flowed smoothly and naturally. He was no longer confused about where the corruption started and where it ended, nor was he confused about which of his actions might ruin the Force Art and which one wouldn't.

When he finished pulling the corruption out, he felt a rumble in his mind. [Lineage Factor: Glaive Domain] [Lineage Factor: Ax Domain] [Lineage Factor: Bow Domain] [Lineage Factor: Spear Domain] Not a single one had the corruption tag on it.

'It'll take a little more time, but I think I can do this one too, now.' Leonel looked toward [Unnamed] and grinned. ... Another three days later, Leonel stepped out from the Silver Tablet practically brimming. He could feel the energy coursing through him, though it didn't come from changes in his Lineage Factor.

Although he had succeeded in changing the Force Art, he hadn't implemented the changes in his body yet. For one, this wasn't about him, he had promised to focus on helping his brothers to improve. If it hadn't been necessary, he wouldn't have wasted time on returning to True Sovereignty either.

Secondly, his Lineage Factor was dormant right now anyway, it wouldn't make a large difference in combat strength even if he did choose to be selfish again.

"Alright, everyone gather up, I come bearing gifts!"

Soon, Leonel's brothers and some other interested participants came forward. Many didn't know how to face Leonel anymore, whether that be due to their own animosity or their own inferiority. But at the very least, that wasn't everyone.

"Joel, you have two choices. Well, this one isn't a choice."

Leonel pressed a palm into Joel and passed on the Heaviness Ability Index to Joel.

Joel's brows raised up and he felt an extra hint of something special, but he didn't quite understand it.

"Think about this new Ability Index, how it's similar to your previous one, and what lines connect them. Once you understand that, I promise you'll have a huge leap in strength."

"As for what your choices are, it's quite simple."

Leonel waved a hand and the Glaive Domain Force Art appeared.

"You have two. One is to learn this Lineage Factor by directly absorbing it. Two is to learn this Lineage Factor by meditating upon it."

Joel's eyes narrowed. "And what do you think I should do?"

Chapter 2385: Simple Ability Indexes

Leonel smiled, feeling that Joel's question wasn't as simple as it seemed. It was almost like the latter was testing something.

"Well, that would depend on you, now wouldn't it?"

"How would your opinion depend on me?"

"I think you know."

"Still the same Leonel," Joel said, shaking his head.

Indeed, the changes to Leonel were a bit subtle. He seemed more expressive than usual. No, he seemed more expressive than he had been originally. The Leonel of Royal Blue Academy was a lot more like this.

It was enough that Joel was a bit skeptical of what was going on. The fact that Leonel was giving him a choice and not just telling him what to do was the most baffling. Since when did Leonel do that?

The last time they had a session like this wasn't long after Aina left for Planet Viola. Back then, Leonel had just told them all directly what to do. This time, though... it was very different.

"Just checking to make sure you didn't have a brain worm."

Leonel grinned.

"I assume that this choice is pretty straightforward. Absorbing it now will give me a more immediate strength increase, but waiting and comprehending it on my own will give me more potential in the future. I choose the first."

Leonel smiled, he didn't question Joel's decision. Of his brothers, Joel was without a doubt the most insightful. Although Allan was the smartest and the closest in

intelligence to himself, that was more so toward the physical sciences and mathematics. When it came to people or reading social situations, he was very much lacking.

Joel hadn't chosen the option with seemingly less potential out of frustration or anything of the like. Rather, he read the situation quite well. Whatever this ability was, Leonel had only gotten his hands on it recently. By all rights, just like Leonel's advice for them had changed since back then, it would change again into the future. Leonel would likely also have changes in philosophy and gain more from the Silver Tablet than even what he had now.

By then, even if he chose the path of greater potential now, the difference would be marginal as he benefited more and more from Leonel's breakthroughs.

In fact, if picking to fuse with it was so detrimental to him, Leonel would have made a note of it. It was more likely that while it would be more difficult to comprehend by directly absorbing it, it wouldn't be impossible either.

Without hesitation, Joel took the Glaive Domain Lineage Factor and absorbed it, sensing the changes within himself.

"Here," Leonel tossed the ring over. "There are many glaives within that can help your insights, but be sure to be careful as you progress. I had to remove some corruption aspects of the Lineage Factor before I gave it to you. It's possible that there might be some more lingering traps within."

Joel nodded solemnly before going off to focus. He didn't want to waste any time, as curious as he was about everyone else's improvement.

"Alright, James, after thorough analysis, the evidence is conclusive."

James wore a rare serious expression as he waited. It was clear that this would decide a lot of his future.

"You're a useless blockhead."

James was stunned for a moment before he recovered to everyone's laughter.

"You son of a bitch, and here I was being serious for once."

Leonel grinned. "I'm only telling the truth. You focused so much on your Lineage Factor that you've neglected other things.

"Milan, by comparison, focused so much on his Ability Index that he has no other supplemental skills to go along with it. The two of you could learn quite a bit from one another."

Leonel brought out two Force Arts, swapped them, and then pressed them into the two Energy Shield users' chests.

"Milan, I've given you James' self-created Lineage Factor. As for James, I've passed onto you Milan's Ability Index progression."

James was speechless. "What kind of bs is this, this useless lug has always had a worse Ability Index than me. You're selling my body for cheap."

Milan, who was feeling quite happy, suddenly felt attacked.

"You tryna start something?"

"And so what if I am?"

"Alright, alright," Leonel spoke, trying to hold back his laugh. "While your Ability Index used to be stronger than Milan's, that's no longer the case."

"You stagnated due to your focus on the Nullification Tier, but above the Nullification Tier there's still the Reflection and Amplification stages. Milan is a step beyond you and has grasped Reflection."

"See that? Be a little more humble, shit-for-brains."

Leonel shook his head. "But there is something to be said about how deep James comprehended his tiers. He could probably use Reflection, and maybe even Amplification if he was focused on it."

"Isn't Amplification a Savant tier?" Allan asked with a frown, clearly paying more attention than these two.

"It is, because James created a supplemental Lineage Factor, it's possible for him to extend the abilities of his Ability Index into realms he would normally be unable to touch."

Allan's eyes lit up. That was possible too?

"I would give you two more, but I think that for now, focusing on this will help you to progress much faster. If you find a balance between your Lineage Factors and Ability Index, the benefits will be shocking."

Leonel sent the two away and then turned his attention toward Emna.

"Emna, what terms would you use to describe your blade?"

"Sharp. Swift. Agile. Subtle."

She spoke without hesitation. She felt far more like a soldier than a friend, but even so, Leonel was surprised by the directness of her response.

With a nod, he pressed Joel's Sharpness Ability Index into her chest.

"For now, I do not have the others you need. But I believe that this Ability Index will be of great help to you."

Although Leonel was still speaking, Emma seemed to have already entered her own world, a whirlwind of enlightenment turning into sharp blades that threatened to slice Leonel apart.

Chapter 2386: Pure Enlightenment

Leonel leapt backward, coughing a few times. "Take her somewhere safe, will you, Anastasia?"

"It's like I'm a maid or something, unbelievable."

Though she grumbled, she did take Emma away.

Leonel nodded to himself. He felt that there was some great potential in these so-called "Common" Ability Indexes and Lineage Factors, especially when it came to their synergy. It seemed that his calculations had been correct and everything was going smoothly.

For Drake and his Pure Marksman Ability Index, Leonel didn't go the expected route and hand him the Bow Domain Ring. This wasn't because he wanted to keep it to himself, but because Drake had never used bows or even crossbows. Drake liked guns and modern machinery. This had caused him no shortage of headaches because this path wasn't common in wider Existence. But he obviously had Leonel by his side now. What weapon he wanted to use was irrelevant.

Not only did Leonel give Drake a pair of pistols forged by him personally, he gave him a long-barreled sniper rifle. However, these were all ultimately external items. He fused Drake's Pure Marksman Ability Index with a Telekinesis Ability Index, feeling that the synergy would be great, and that it was.

Finally, Leonel gave Drake some general advice about Weapon Forces. He believed that if Drake wanted to continue down this path, he would need to create a new Weapon Force for himself, and that would require comprehending a new set of what Leonel was choosing to call Simple Building Blocks. These Simple Building Blocks were the aspects of Sharpness, Swiftness, and the like that decided the characteristics of various weapons. If Drake wanted to do the and create a "Gun Force", then he would have to

first break it down into its individual parts and understand what a "Gun Force" would entail. Finally, he gave Drake the sharper eyesight character of the Bow Domain Lineage Factor, though not the whole thing.

Afterward, Leonel moved on to Gil.

Gil, aside from being a top-tier pervert, was a Lightning Elemental Speedster. After absorbing the crimson lightning from an oceanic beast that Leonel had given him, his lightning not only gained the ability to boost his physical abilities somewhat but also a life-stealing character. The first thing Leonel did was help Gil shed this unnecessary life-stealing aspect; it was only hindering the purity of his path. Then, he helped Gil fuse with Normand's Pure Speedster Ability Index, raising him to an all-new level. This mutation allowed Gil's lightning to gain the ability to impact his nervous system direction. It made him sharper and allowed him to function at high speed with greater ease, on top of, of course, increasing his base speed a great deal.

Leonel turned to Franco next.

Franco had a simple strength buff Ability Index, but it made Leonel interested. If Joel's Ability Index could have such interesting effects, what about Franco's? So he tested it, fusing Franco's Ability Index with the Pure Speedster Ability Index.

[Franco Rohan] [Ability Index: Pure Amplification: Incomplete]

After the fusion of Pure Strength and Pure Speedster, this was the result. The Incomplete tag intrigued Leonel even more, especially since it already raised Franco to a level of a Black Contribution. Unfortunately, he couldn't find any more matching sets until he looked toward Arnold.

[Arnold MacArthur] [Ability Index: Pure Enlightenment]

Then Leonel remembered. When he first tried to guide Arnold, he realized that the latter's comprehension of Universal Forces was off the charts. Back then, when he asked Arnold to describe his Ability Index to him, Arnold said that he could shoot energy out of his palms that vibrated. But clearly, according to the Silver Tablet, these two matters were completely unrelated, and looking at Arnold's Lineage Factor screen, that was explained quite clearly.

[Lineage Factor: Vibrating; Strong; Explosive; Heavy...]

The list went on and on, so much so that Leonel was rendered speechless not just by the terrible naming sense, but the sheer number. Then he understood. Every time Arnold comprehended something, he would slot it into his body and it would manifest into a Lineage Factor because his comprehension was so deep. However, he had so many Lineage Factors, many of which played such a small role in his combat style. They were holding him back, Leonel was certain.

This was all because Arnold didn't have the knowledge that Leonel had. If he knew that his Ability Index was related to the mind and not the body, it would have changed his entire approach. Arnold's Pure Enlightenment Ability Index was, as a result, stuck at the first Tier, and all of his Lineage Factors were even worse off.

When Leonel learned this, he sighed. It was his fault, how could it not be his fault. If he paid just a little bit more attention, how could Arnold fall into such a hole? Leonel helped Arnold to sort it all out, and then, he transferred over Pure Strength and Pure Speedster to him, while transferring Pure Enlightenment to Franco.

"Holy shit," Franco mumbled. His thoughts were racing at a mile a minute. It was no wonder Arnold was half a mute. When would you have time to decide what you wanted to say when you could think of a million things a second?

Afterward, Leonel moved on to Raylion.

Raylion had the Telekinesis Ability Index, and among those that followed him, he had some of the strongest will power that Leonel had ever seen. But it was also a bit difficult to help Raylion out. While he had given Drake the Telekinesis Ability Index, he couldn't just do the reverse, and this was the same reason why he gave Franco Pure Enlightenment, but didn't give it to Gil. The foundation one started with was important. Franco was used to fighting with the body, but Gil was an outright Speedster who evolved to use his lightning better.

Meanwhile, Raylion was used to using his telekinesis to battle, but he wasn't a marksman. As such, Leonel had to help him out in a different way.

Chapter 2387: Perfect Match

After reviewing Raylion's path, his fighting style was fairly clear to Leonel. He was almost a mage of sorts. He liked to control a battle from a distance, and though he had recently begun using his body more actively due to the refinement of the Demon Pills that Aina had created, that was still not his preference.

What was more interesting than this, though, was the construction of the telekinesis Ability Index. Then, he remembered how Yuri had masked her true Ability Index by using Telekinesis as a cover.

The Telekinesis Ability Index was a method of imposing your will onto reality. It was far more like a Weapon Force than it was a manifestation of Force. Meaning, a person with Telekinesis didn't manifest "telekinetic Force" and then move things. No, instead they directly thought about the movement of an object and moved it.

This was why it was so similar to a Weapon Force, because it was precisely this that gave Weapon Forces their strength. One part was the fundamental laws, but the other portion was human ingenuity, or in other words, human will.

This was another reason that Leonel had given Drake a Telekinetic Ability Index to fuse with his Pure Marksmanship.

The question was how he could help Raylion strengthen himself, and once again, he found an answer in an unexpected place.

Allan, the smartest of his brothers, had an Electromagnetic Ability Index. He was able to magnetize objects and targets, using it for anything from accelerating his speed, increasing his attack power, or amplifying his defenses.

Due to his intelligence, Allan had thought of all ways to use this seemingly "simple" Ability Index.

The two seemed entirely unrelated-Allan and Raylion's Ability Indexes, that is-but Leonel didn't feel it to be so. Giving non-magnetic objects magnetism was a method of imposing your will onto reality. After all, Allan wasn't relying on a Force either, but rather his Ability Index entirely. The difference was scale. Allan focused on the quantum level, while Raylion functioned on a more macro scale.

Of course, he couldn't just swap their abilities like he had done with others and call it a day. They were compatible in terms of function, but not in terms of concept. They wouldn't become crippled if they fused, but they would still be stronger overall.

Instead, he began to look through the Ability Indexes that he had to see if he could find similar effects. Unsurprisingly, he did find some, each of them relying on imposing your will onto reality. There was a Gravity Ability Index, a Heat Ability Index, and surprisingly, Leonel's own Ability Index and that of King Alexandre's fell into this category, though they were not the exact same.

The Gravity Ability Index was self-explanatory, but what was interesting was the Heat Ability Index. The latter could control the excited state of chemical bonds, either chilling them by removing heat, or superheating them by increasing their state of excitement.

These two mirrored Raylion and Allan quite well and gravity was an especially good match for electromagnetic forces, though the latter was by far more powerful.

Leonel gave Allan both the Gravity Ability Index and the Heat Ability Index, and only portions of the Telekinesis Ability Index. As for Raylion, he did the opposite, giving him bits and pieces of all three.

Allan's eyes lit up almost immediately due to the changes, while Raylion was a bit slower to get there. He didn't have the understanding of physics that Allan did, and he was probably the least talented of those present as well.

But Leonel believed in his grit, and as such, sent them off to meditate on the changes.

That only left the more difficult of them. Of course, Leonel also had yet to help those of the Morales that were left, but he was still thinking about how to handle this matter.

Sael was one of the new members of his party that he had known for quite a long time, even longer than Raylion. She was also Raylion's wife and happened to have a particularly tricky Ability Index because it was entirely unique, at least in the Dimensional Verse.

[Sael Erouge] [Ability Index: Crowned Greenery]

Crowned Greenery allowed her to use plant life abilities and her battle form was akin to a queen flower of sorts. He found that her Ability Index had aspects similar to Apestus. Apestus was able to eat beasts and assimilate their strengths into himself, while Sael did the same with plant life.

He helped her incorporate some of that assimilation aspect into her Ability Index, but the most important thing was the Lineage Factor he matched it with: a portion of his own. Or, more accurately, the Florer family's Lineage Factor.

As for Apestus, Leonel reversed it and gave him some of Sael's assimilation aspects. At the same time, he took portions of the Radix and Midas family Lineage Factors which allowed one to give life to metals and the other to swallow flames for strength, and gave them to Apestus as well. Of course, he didn't give Apestus metal or fire affinities, he rather took bits and pieces that would be useful to him in digesting beasts for their abilities.

Finally, he was left with Raj and Elthor. The two were quite similar.

Raj had an extremely high earth affinity and his ability index allowed him to control earth on a quantum level, changing its structure and strengthening or weakening it depending on his preferences.

Elthor's Ability Index gave him a high earth affinity as well, but mostly focused on just one Force: Chaotic Particle Force.

The two were easily a match made in heaven. Chaotic Particle Force was called as such not only for its chaotic properties, but also the fact that unlike most earth Forces, it was powerful even as a single particle. But due to this, it was extremely difficult to control and when Elthor fought, he often had to gather up all of his Chaotic Particle

Force into easy to manipulate shape, relinquishing one of the most powerful characteristics of his Force.

Raj, on the other hand, was stuck with using simpler earth Forces, but he could control them to a molecular level. How much more perfect could they be for one another?

Leonel stored that one away for later. He was pretty sure that Raj was the one that took the picture of Joel sleeping in his arms. Revenge was abound.

Chapter 2388: Saber

In a corner of a battlefield drowning in the scent of blood, a young man sat huddled, hugging a saber in one hand and a barely recognizable woman in the other.

Whenever he had time, he could only check on her like this. Within his heart, there was a constant weighted fear that seemed to drive its erratic beating. It was a fear that she might breathe her last at any moment, that their next seconds might be their last seconds together.

By some miracle, she had managed to last for this long, but the bleak future ahead made every moment that passed only grow more suffocating. It was like the laws of probability themselves were toying with his fate.

Every moment she survived should have been a happy event, and yet it was just a reminder that every following second only made it more likely.

It was times like this that he wished he was stronger, wished he was more like his cousin, more unrestrained, more powerful, more capable.

Half of his body tensed, the other half so gentle and unwilling to harm the woman in his arms that it split him into an odd dichotomy. Even so, he pushed so hard that his saber pierced into his flesh, tearing into him.

He didn't seem to notice. He already had so many wounds, what did one more mean? What did ten more mean?

'Weak. You're weak. He wouldn't have given up already. He would already have a plan, ten plans, a hundred plans. He would have already healed his woman. He would have already crushed his enemies.'

The voice of insecurity, inferiority, and rage bubbled within him. Every day, they seemed to get more and more difficult to rein in.

Hot tears streamed down his cheeks. It was impossible to tell beneath all the mud, grime, and caked blood, but the searing heat felt more painful to him than even the saber blade from earlier.

He just wanted to be better, to be more capable. But every step he took felt lacking.

When it was just about himself, he was able to maintain his calm outward demeanor. But now the life of the woman he loved more than anything in this world was hanging on by a thread because of his weakness. It was no longer just about him.

He bit down on his tongue, hard, seemingly not caring even if he bit it off. What good was the ability to speak if it couldn't be with her?

She should have been safe. She should have gone with the others and stayed by the side of his grandfather. But she had insisted on coming with him, on being by his side like she always had been. And he couldn't even reject her firmly enough to make her stay.

He was always like that. Unable to say what he really thought, what he really felt. This tongue of his was truly useless.

Move. He needed to move.

The words echoed in his mind. He couldn't stay here for long; he would be found soon. Those beasts had strong noses and the scent of blood was accumulating too much.

He got up, carefully tying her to his back again and raising his saber. Not a single part of his body was without a wound, and yet the most crimson part of his were his very eyes.

He began to move again, and the battles raged on. He didn't know how long passed, but he did it again and again.

He would fight. He would stop. He would check if she still lived. He would cry. He would fight.

Then he came across a cave entrance that radiated an aura that enticed him. It was without a doubt the aura of a saber, but when he approached, it wouldn't allow him inside.

He knew that he had to be cautious. His grandfather had informed him not to absorb any energy from corpses, and he had also warned him to be wary of any benefits that he might gain.

What he didn't expect was that just when he had finally come across one of these benefits, even though it so very obviously suited him, he couldn't even enter.

At that moment, he seemed to snap.

A bubbling rage billowed out from within him as he raised his saber. He didn't care about anything else. He just wanted what was before him now to be split in two.

Everything his path seemed to come with a roadblock. He couldn't advance as fast as his cousin, he couldn't protect his woman, he couldn't even tell his "woman" that she was his.

At that moment, he seemed to realize that none of these roadblocks were even caused by others. They were all his own weakness, his own inferiority.

He was tired of it.

He was exhausted. His legs could barely stand beneath him. His ankles ached, his shoulders screamed under the weight of his saber, even his eyelids felt heavy. The very blood that caked his body felt like too much for him to carry.

But none of it mattered. He had had enough.

And in that moment, he felt his Saber Force react to him in a way it had never before.

The sword was a weapon of elegance, of nobility, of reservation and calmness. Maybe had he picked it, he would have sensed such a change long ago. However, he had felt that a sword was incompatible with his Ability Index. It wasn't a weapon that could expand in size and heaviness along with him and maintain its demeanor.

A saber was the weapon of a savage, of a warlord that ruled over war-torn lands. It wasn't a weapon of reserved emotion and calculated steps. It was a weapon of fury and violence.

He was weak. He was much too weak. And much of it was because his own steps were hesitant and lacking in conviction.

In that case, he would just hack all of these barriers before him to pieces!

His Saber Force flourished and from a white-silvery light, it became a blinding gold tinged with just the slightest sheen of a majestic green.

The barrier before him was split in two and he walked in with rage still on his mind, not facing any danger at all until he suddenly reached the end.

On a pedestal ahead, a ring lay.

Chapter 2389: Blood Force

Leonel and Aina stepped out into a stretch of desert. It was pretty easy for Leonel to hide himself and the others here, but the environment itself was quite annoying and oppressive. The heat was almost unbearable, and it seemed to sink into your body whether through the sand that hunkered your feet and ankles within, or in the perpetual mild sandstorm that pelted against their skin.

This sandstorm felt like droplets of piercing molten metal were colliding against you again and again. It was a horrible feeling without a doubt.

Leonel was especially quite uncomfortable with the situation, but Aina seemed fine, not even squinting her eyes in the midst of the gusting sand. In fact, to add insult to injury, Little Blackstar seemed to be just fine as well.

"Yip! Yip!" A condescending and yet adorable chirping came from Blackstar.

"Hey, hey. Do you see whose shoulder you're standing on right now? Show me some-"
"Little Blackstar hopped off of Leonel's shoulders and buried himself within Aina's bosom. Leonel's words could only be caught within his throat.

Little Blackstar stretched and yawned before waving a paw and starting his nap.

"Unbelievable," Leonel shook his head. Aina smiled. This had always been Blackstar's favorite spot; Leonel was just overestimating his importance in the human-transportation hierarchy.

"So, what do you want to do?" Aina asked. Leonel sighed, pushing the betrayal to the back of his mind. At the very least, Little Tolly hadn't abandoned him.

"Well, I don't think there's much for us to do. I have a feeling that the first round will end very soon, we've spent quite a long time idle. So really, we're just here to gather information if there is any. If not, we'll just see if there's anything we can conveniently pick up and benefit from."

Aina nodded and they began to move.

Leonel conjured some Scarlet Star Force and began to use it like a shield, deflecting away the pellets of sand and rock from colliding against him.

He still had quite some way to go before he could bring it to the Impetus State, so he thought that he might as well work on using it.

What was interesting was that his control was actually... so weak.

With his Innate Node dormant, and now having the ability to directly compare and contrast it with his Weapon Forces, it was impossible for him to miss just how unruly this Force was in his hands.

Part of it was the gap between it being in the Third Layered State and the State of his Weapon Forces, another part of it was the fact his Innate Nodes were dormant, but he felt the largest reasons were the characteristics of the Force and his lack of familiarity with it.

Scarlet Star Force already casually listened to him when his Innate Node was present, but this had clearly masked his own lack of control.

There was something deeper, though. Leonel could just barely sense it.

His Scarlet Star Force was unsatisfied with his current character. He was too nice, too laid back-the version of him it wanted was the one that had almost cursed Aina for charging at the Shadow Tail.

'... Interesting...'

It seemed that the change in personality was a two-way street. But he didn't like it. If he would have to change himself just to learn to control a powerful Force, was it even worth it.

'Be obedient.'

Leonel constricted the Scarlet Star Force to be more in tune with his will, but it lashed out, quickly draining his focus and placing more pressure on his mind. It felt less like he was slowly using up his stamina, and more like the Scarlet Star Force was actively eroding it away.

"Up ahead," Aina suddenly said.

Leonel and Aina's figures flashed and they landed amidst a sea of corpses. Or, more accurately, it would have been a sea had the dense sands not turned an eerie rusted color while absorbing all of the blood.

Even that color, though, was slowly fading as the sandstorm kicked up, moving and displacing the sand while covering up the scene that had been here.

"What interested you?" Leonel asked.

He had of course seen this scene, likely before even Aina had. She obviously also knew this. Despite the gap in their strength, the gap in their Dream Force remained firmly in Leonel's favor.

The fact that she pointed it out meant that there was something special about it.

"The blood, it has no Life Force within it."

Leonel frowned.

In a lot of ways, Blood Force was to the body what Soul Force was to the mind, though there were some differences.

Not everyone could make use of Life Force, so a vessel was needed to make it more manageable for the common person. The same was true of Dream Force, which was why Soul Force existed.

Of course, it wasn't a one-to-one relationship and there were clear differences. For example, Soul Force could completely replace Dream Force, but Blood Force would always just be a vessel for Life Force.

This aside...

"Isn't that normal?" Leonel asked. "They're dead, after all."

"They haven't died for long enough. Blood Force is very good at retaining Life Force; it's designed to be like a filter for your Life Force.

"At birth, and after every breakthrough, everyone is given a certain amount of Life Force. Without Blood Force, the Life Force would be used up almost instantly. Blood Force is like a limiter that allows you to only use as much Life Force as you need at a given time.

"Even after death, unless there's a Blood Sovereign that acted or a curse or poison of some sort, blood will continue to act like this. For people as powerful as them, it would take months for their blood to be completely devoid of Life Force. But if I'm correct, they've only been dead for three days at most."

"So is there a Blood Sovereign?" Leonel asked. "I don't sense any poisons or curses."

Aina fell into silence. "... It doesn't look like a Blood Sovereign, but it's definitely someone with a high Blood Force affinity."

"Is that rare?"

"It's hard to say; I don't know how things work out here. But that's not the main problem. The issue is that there's a hint of a twisted nature in the Blood Force.

"This was done by a Demon."

Aina had only just said these worlds when the world trembled.

The first round had come to an end.

Chapter 2390: Aged as Milk

Leonel was actually curious about how this matter would work. Aina was technically "dead" when this matter began, while James and the others were practically slaved. He wondered how the people of the Vast Bubble would parse these things. Everything felt too disjointed and unorganized. But he also felt that this might just be a feature and not a bug.

Maybe they simply didn't care about the rules and how they were bent and twisted. They weren't here for the Fairness Olympics. The world wasn't fair and the enemies that they would be facing would definitely make certain that whatever unfairness existed would be exacerbated.

In that case, they preferred those that could thrive in unfairness and take advantage of loopholes there may or may not be. That should also be why they hid such methods of control within their round as well. Whether it was the energy-absorbing trap or the Domain Rings, both were methods of control. Leonel was even quite sure that there were many more pitfalls he just didn't have the "luck" of running into.

As for Aina's conclusion that there were demons, he felt it was odd, but not enough to be shaken up about. Didn't the Dimensional Verse also have demons? Who was to say that the other Verses didn't also have such Races? He simply tossed it to the back of his mind and looked into the skies as the world around him seemed to vanish.

He grabbed Aina's hand subconsciously, thinking about putting her into the Segmented Cube again. He didn't want to be separated from her again after they had just come together. But he had thought too much. He found himself in a bubble again, but Aina was within his along with him, as was Little Blackstar. It seemed that wherever they would be taken, it would be together.

A sudden bright light assaulted his vision, and when it cleared, he cursed under his breath. He had somewhat expected this, but he hadn't expected it to come so soon. He also realized why it didn't matter if they were separated or not.

They had all appeared in an arena. Tens of millions of participants were huddled together across what were only a few hundred arenas, each of which had dimensions of exactly one kilometer by one kilometer. Above, the stands of this so-called "arena" were nearly empty. It looked like it could have housed billions of observers, but instead, there were only a few dozen, all of whom chose to observe in a single sky box located at least a hundred meters into the sky.

Aina heard Leonel curse beneath his breath, and her gaze narrowed. She could understand his sentiment as well. Leonel probably thought he would have more time to improve himself before they reached this stage, and maybe he would have had he not diverted so much of his time to helping his brothers.

They didn't explain what the later rounds would be ahead of time, or else Leonel might have made a different choice. However, there was no use in crying over spilt milk at this point. There was really only one objective: survive.

He suddenly felt several powerful gazes land on him. 'Fantastic,' he thought. It was impossible that he wouldn't be marked in some way. If he had a choice not to launch himself into this death trap, he would have taken it. Unfortunately, his gramps was an asshole, and he was a glutton for punishment.

Of course, Leonel knew the matter was more complicated than that, and he was just venting some frustration while his mind thought of a way out of this. What he didn't know was that this round wasn't meant to start so early. There were supposed to be another two selections before this "tournament". But due to some variables, it was impossible to act as they pleased anymore, even with the time dilation.

The observers above were separated into several groups. One looked like an array of colors and were the very same eugenicists that Leonel abhorred-the Four Great Families. There was another section that wore robes embroidered with clouds, a section Leonel believed were likely the Dream Pavilion, not just from their style of dress, but also the fact they were not only the first to set eyes on him, but also the only ones that held animosity equal to that of the Four Great Families.

Even so...

"Those uniforms... very cool," Leonel approved. Their robes were a somewhat reflective blue that looked trippier the longer you stared at it. Tiny clouds of white moved about dotted its structure. It truly looked like a lucid dream. The robes themselves only covered about three-quarters the length of their bodies, revealing black pants beneath that were both baggy and comfortable. Even without touching them, Leonel knew that they were probably as soft as the clouds that decorated their robes.

Each one of them wore a headdress that reminded Leonel of the turbans of Earth. They varied in colors from a gentle blue to a similar violet and even a dense black. The uniform came together quite well, and even though he hated their guts, Leonel couldn't help but approve.

Aina snorted with laughter. Only her boyfriend would go from existential dread to this nonsense in a flash.

There were several other groups that Leonel couldn't pick out the origins of instantly, but he couldn't help but sigh a breath of relief. Although it was a small win, at least that

mad-woman that was Aina's "master" wasn't here. He had insulted her pretty badly the last time they met, and if not for that mission that inexplicably brought her away, he might have already died at her hands.

But then his pupils suddenly constricted. In one of the groups, a woman as aged as old milk sat in silence. She was the only one who was seated, and it wasn't normally either. Her legs were crossed upon her set, and her eyes were closed. What Leonel was focused on, though, was the object in her lap. A tablet. A Black Tablet.

Chapter 2391: Mad Woman

Leonel looked at the old woman for a long time. Or more accurately, the tablet. He didn't seem to register anything else that was happening around him and he was completely focused on what he was seeing.

At first, his initial reaction to a Black Tablet was just what maybe anyone else would think. His Silver Tablet seemed to be inclined toward the Light Side of the Northern Star Lineage Factor, so what if he had just run into someone with access to the Dark Side?

But he threw that idea away almost the instant he thought of it. It was too ridiculous.

There was simply no way that there would be someone stupid enough to body present themselves as an Envoy of Destruction. In addition, her aura wasn't like that in the slightest. She was for sure a wrinkly old woman, but more in the Mother Theresa sense rather than an ancient witch sense.

That was when Leonel remembered. The rankings for Contributions were Common, Black, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Life. He had always assumed that Bronze was the lowest-ranked tablet, but what if it wasn't? What if there was a Black Tablet below Bronze? And what if below that there was a Common Tablet, maybe carved of wood or concrete, or something else "inferior".

Leonel thought of his Silver Tablet again. Although he had never put it in so many words, he thought it was a shame that it wasn't Golden, and he felt even worse about it after he learned there was something even about Gold.

But what if he was luckier than he had initially thought?

A flashbang seemed to go off in Leonel's mind as the old woman opened her eyes. She looked weak and frail but her eyes were as pieces as a curious child's, large, bright and carrying a hint of imposingness that was entirely unlike their child-like size.

Leonel blinked once before recovering. He looked at the woman curiously; she didn't seem to be targeting him on purpose. But she had clearly sensed his gaze and reacted.

That was odd, though. The reason Leonel was looking so openly was that there were millions of participants here and only a dozen or so observers. Even if everyone's attention was split evenly, this old woman should have millions of eyes on her.

Plus, he wasn't stupid enough to observe her from the Dream Plane. For one, while the first round's world still seemed to be within an Incomplete World, this one was not. So even if he wanted to, he couldn't.

And secondly, he knew about the taboos already. He wouldn't try something like that on someone he suspected might also be a Wise Star Order-a Wise Star Order with far more experience than himself, at that.

And yet, she was still obviously looking at him.

Though another person would find it hard to tell considering the distance and the sea of people around him, there was no way Leonel would make such a mistake.

In the end, he just gave the old woman a smile. At the very least, she didn't seem to be affiliated with those he hated, plus bonus points for being an adorable old lady, and he thought this was the most apt response.

He didn't seem to realize that under the influence of his Scarlet Star Force, this most definitely wouldn't have been his reaction. At the moment, he was far more like the Leonel of Royal Blue Academy.

The old lady was startled for a moment, but by the time she reacted, Leonel had already looked away and began to observe the others, taking note of each one of them. In the end, he turned his attention to Aina and Blackstar as though there was no one else in the world.

"Did that brat just smile at me?" She muttered under breath.

She could feel much more than Leonel thought, and what she sensed wasn't just his smile, but the intent behind it.

Suddenly, she began to laugh.

"Adorable old lady"? She had never been called such a thing in her life. She didn't know if she should have Leonel whipped to death on the spot or treat him like her own grandson.

Among the dozen or so near her, not a single one managed to remain unfazed by this laughter. One of the experts of the Dream Pavilion who had been preparing to speak was startled into silence.

The problem wasn't the woman's power. All of them here had their own shocking methods and the internal politics of the Human Race was only so complicated because there was no "top dog," so to speak. They could all be said to be of equivalent power.

However, that didn't mean that there weren't certain people to be wary of, especially when one of them was the mad woman, Mo"Lexi.

Even her name was eccentric. It was spelled with not one, but two apostrophes because they represented not syllables, but rather a pulse of Force-namely Dream Force.

Not only did she want you to say her name, but you had to convey a pulse of Dream Force or Soul Force that would be in line with the image she wanted to portray.

As for what that image was, well...

She picked a particularly famous painting, one created by a figure even more famous... Northern Star Van"Wellia.

It depicted the last bloody war of the Envoys of Destruction and Creation, a sea of blood, corpses and strewn flesh.

Van"Wellia, in an irony of ironies, had her own pulse of Dream Force to go along with her name. The difference was that her own was a beautiful tapestry of a special Force flower known as the Dream Lotus.

It was hard to tell if Mo"Lexi was mocking Van"Wellia or not, and quite frankly, no one dared to ask this mad woman. Maybe only she and few others knew the truth.

And now, for some incomprehensible reason, this mad woman was laughing.

Chapter 2392: Just Now...

Leonel could practically feel the laughter in his bones. He frowned and looked back up to find that the old woman was still looking at him, her eyes were far brighter than before, her irises practically taking her even her sclera.

"Brat, my name is Mo"Lexi. If you can manage to remember it-"

That was all Leonel heard. In fact, he didn't hear anything after "Mo". His eyes dulled and his mind seemed to shut down. He felt a trembling in his very soul and when his vision finally cleared, all he saw was death and destruction.

The blood came up to his shins, and yet it didn't feel like liquid. Rather, the flesh was so numerous, so minced and blended within that it felt like he had stepped into pudding, as though much of the liquid of the blood had been evaporated, leaving behind a dense glob of death.

He stood frozen in place. It wasn't that he couldn't move-though that might very well have been the case-but rather that he couldn't even muster up the intention to do so.

He could feel the very psyches of each one that had died. The sludge that wrapped around his ankles and calves, seeping into his toes and clawing into his flesh, feeling like the bony hands of those the dead.

Then the clawing began at his very soul, ripping him to shreds, piece by piece.

Had he known destruction? Had he known death? Had he known the heaviness that came with it? The pain, the horror, the sick and disgusting smells that twisted your gut?

These people had probably sacrificed themselves for what they felt was a worthy cause. Maybe they had hoped that once they were gone, they would be remembered as heroes, that their tales would be sung across the generations and that their will would impact the future into forever.

And yet this was the reality. There was nothing beautiful about this dense land of rotting flesh. Not the sight, not the smell, the feeling...

This was what true Destruction was. There was no beauty to pull out from this, even the skies above were dim and the sun was painted in red.

Leonel suddenly snapped out of it. When he awoke, he found plumes of smoke and ash coming from his feet and eyes, his Innate Nodes, one in each of his kidney, thrumming with a searing pain that threatened to burn even him to ash.

But hardly any of the participants noticed this, not because it wasn't obvious, but because so many of them had keeled over.

The weakest of them were dead. They lay in a pool of their own vomit, their eyes rolled back, their skin pale and the last vestiges of life slowly leaking from them. They released their bowels and the last relaxation of life grabbed hold of them.

This was the vast majority. Tens of millions died in fat swarms.

And then there was the second group, the group that had collapsed to the ground unconscious. Many of them may never wake up again, and those that could would find themselves chained to their beds for the rest of their lives, whether as vegetables or mad men and women.

The third group was incapacitated. They fell to the ground, also unconscious. They frothed at the mouth, and tears and snot streamed down their faces, but they were still alive, and given some time, they might be able to return to a normal life.

And then there was the fourth group. Some of them kneeled to the ground, clutching their chests, some of them kneeled and prayed to Gods they had maybe not even thought of in the last year, and some of them hyperventilated.

Among this number, there was Aina. She kneeled by his side, holding Blackstar in one hand and grabbing at her chest and rubbing it with the other. It was as though she was hoping that the pain would go away as though it was a stubbed toe rather than a scar on her mind.

And then there was Leonel. He was the only one standing, the only one that seemed to be clear-headed, and the only one radiating an aura of death and destruction all too similar to the echo of Mo"Lexi's name.

But he was shocked by something else entirely.

'Half a day. It's been half a day and they're still all in this state.'

What Leonel didn't know was that it had indeed been half a day, but what had happened in that half a day was unlike his original thoughts.

He believed that everyone had come out of the illusion at the same time, then collapsed like this.

In reality, he was the only one that had experienced the illusion so clearly and for so long. For everyone else, they received just a brief flash before collapsing. For the vast majority, and those of the first and second group, they hadn't even seen the illusion. Just the name alone had caused their deaths.

"Aina!"

"Don't touch her!" A voice boomed in his mind.

At that moment, he couldn't move even if he wanted to. When his head barely managed to turn back up toward the sky box, he found that every one of those over-dozen gazes were on him.

In half of their eyes, there was a dense killing intent. In the other half, there was intrigue and interest. In Mo"Lexi's eyes, there was nothing but shock.

She wasn't the adorable old lady Leonel thought her to be at all.

Usually, Leonel was exceptionally good at reading people, but what about when the target was a Dream Force user leagues beyond him? It was impossible for him to pick up on his normal cues and he had to take said person at face value.

Just now, Mo"Lexi had, indeed, said her name aloud. But she had only allowed it to simultaneously reverberate in the mind of a single person. And that person was Leonel.

To make a complicated matter simple... Just now...

She had tried to kill Leonel.

Chapter 2393: Numbers

~Hours ago.

"What is the meaning of this-?!"

The man who had prepared to speak for the Dream Pavilion stopped his words, realizing that he had almost lost his temper toward this mad woman. Although he didn't fear her, he didn't want to offend her without reason either. Even so, this action of Mo"Lexi's was completely maddening.

She knew how much weight her name held, and she seemed to have even put a little bit of extra oomph into it this time as well.

Of their participants, she had killed off over 90% of them! Mo"Lexi was still frozen in shock, looking at Leonel. That was because everyone else had practically died immediately, while those that managed to survive were in an agonizing struggle with their own minds that manifested in waves of pain. However, Leonel just stood there in a daze.

It took her a while to snap out of it and realize that she was being spoken to.

"What are you moping about?" She said with a frown. "You wanted to kill at least this many regardless. We don't need numbers, we need elites. How can the numbers of even a thousand Incomplete Worlds match the population of our Bubbles? Let alone the fact we only have barely over a hundred. I just saved us all some time. Why have them fight one another when we can do this instead."

The man's jaw clenched. Mo"Lexi was correct, but only in part.

The issue was that not everyone had such powerful resistance to Dream Force, especially not if they came from an Incomplete World. They might have strengths that were focused in other areas.

In fact, for their purposes, they even preferred those with such weaknesses. It would make them far easier to control, almost superficially injured.

Among those that had died just now, there were definitely geniuses that excelled in certain facets that simply didn't even know about the importance of Dream Force protection. Even Leonel, who was practically a Dream Force savant, hadn't known about the importance of protecting yourself against the Dream Force of others until he, himself, entered the Dream Plane. How much worse off was everyone else?

All of those geniuses were as good as dead now, only leaving a small number that could actually protect themselves.

The issue was that the man-Clarence Emerii-couldn't just say this aloud. This wasn't because those here didn't understand this truth, none of them were fools. Rather, it was because he liked to uphold his public facing image.

Mo"Lexi sneered, clearly understanding this, and even more clearly not caring.

"Look over there, didn't I find a perfect little genius-pawn for you? You should be thanking me."

Clarence's eyes flashed as he looked down below. When he saw who it was, his expression darkened.

Leonel stood in silence, unable to move. He was completely vulnerable. If he died now, he wouldn't even know how it happened.

Suddenly, his feet and eyes began to smoke.

Mo"Lexi's heart skipped another beat as Clarence stepped forward, grabbing the rails of the sky box.

"Destruction Sovereign! Kill him!"

A red-haired woman, clearly of the Brazingers, spoke sharply. Her words practically came out in a bark.

This woman was obviously not the same woman that Leonel's father had fought. In fact, none of the four representatives of the Great Families were.

What the public didn't know was that those four were currently experiencing a great state of weakness. Clearly, aside from the strength of Leonel's father, the price to pay to descend to Incomplete Worlds, even with countermeasures, was too great as a Ninth Dimensional expert.

A hand was held out to stop the woman.

"I don't think that's appropriate, Rouge."

The one who spoke was not Clarence, but rather a man from a group that Leonel didn't immediately recognize. He wore plain linen robes that were a slight tannish-brown color and his words clearly held quite some weight themselves.

He was Vivak Godlen, a representative of the Godlen family.

"What is inappropriate about it? Are you a fan of the Envoys of Destruction?"

"I would remind you of the position of your so-called, self-proclaimed, 'Great Families'," Vivak spoke calmly. "You are experiments no different from those Envoys. If there's any close relations to them, shouldn't your family be first in line to be put on trial?"

Rouge's expression darkened. "It seems the Godlen's want war?"

"I would remind you who spoke out of turn first," Vivak said, unmoved. "In the end, what's important isn't what the child is, but rather if he can be used. You've all already seen the traces of the demon activity in these trials, we might very soon be on the losing end of the optics battle.

"But, optics are something only the powerful can care for. We've already made enough concessions in pre-emptively handing over all of the members of other Races over. We do not have the luxury to also start shaving away at the few talents that do remain."

If Leonel had been paying a little more attention instead of flirting with Aina, he would have noticed already. It might have also just been that he didn't care to put too much emphasis on the other competitors and was much more interested in those that could actually control his fate. But...

There truly weren't anyone but humans remaining in the arena. There were no Spirituals, no Nomads, no Rapax. Although there were a variety of people of all shapes and sizes that made it seem like there was an array of races here, most of them were just like the Beastman Dimensional Verse, following an unconventional path.

Due to the actions of the Demons, the Humans had no choice but to do this.

"A pawn that can't be controlled isn't one worth having," Rouge sneered.

"If you cannot control a Fifth Dimensional child, then just say so, and be clear that you are speaking up only for yourself."

A dangerous light flashed in Rouge's gaze once again, but she remained silent.

Clarence, all the while, remained silent as well, his grip on the rails quite firm.

With everyone to his back, no one could see the wild look in his eyes.

Chapter 2394: Tranquility

Leonel frowned as the words descended to him. His body felt frozen in place, but his temper flared and the smokey heat of destruction coming from the corner of his eyes and his feet vibrated wildly.

However, before he shattered the intention of the old woman, he restrained himself and closed his eyes.

He was not happy, not happy in the slightest. He didn't believe for a second that this old woman wouldn't know what would happen when she spoke her name.

Even now, he didn't know that this was the true method of relaying her name. Instead, he felt that she had tried to distract him before levying this attack. Maybe she wasn't even interested in him at all and this was the original intention of these people to begin with.

Ruthless slaughter. Why would she— €“

Why was he mad?

Leonel pressed his hand against his forehead, ignoring the fact that he shouldn't have been able to move.

He had committed slaughter on an even larger scale, had he not? Did he feel bad about it all of a sudden?

Still no. Even with the changes caused by his Vital Star Force, he simply couldn't bring himself to care. He felt like he was slowly starting to find his own baseline.

He felt that he had his own justifications for doing what he did. Was he also throwing a tantrum? Yes, he was. But it didn't change a thing about how justified or unjustified he felt it was.

As for this slaughter here? Why did the old woman act at all? It was on a complete whim, trampling on caged animals that she herself had been a part of caging in the first place.

And the worst part was that she had actually dared to get Aina caught up in her madness.

Leonel was slowly starting to understand more about himself as the days went on. He wasn't some hero of morality, as much as he had tried to be in his youth.

Part of the reason he wasn't any longer was because the world had jaded him, but another part was that he was never this person to begin with. That shadow of his former self was in one part due to the culture of Earth- that being one filled with the philosophy of equality- and another part due to his father's teachings of Respect and Persistence.

Who was he, though?

As he had said, he was a selfish person. Where his bottom line was drawn was decided by his own self-interest.

He was a normal person who had delusions of grandeur, a person who had normal convictions, normal goals, normal drives, and yet was granted power he thought could make him some untouchable deity that could pass judgment on everyone else.

Leonel's breath became calmer and calmer.

This wasn't a depressing realization, it was just the right realization.

If for the largest segments of your formative years, you had your personality being torn in all sorts of different ways due to the strengths of things and people far beyond your own, how could you be anything other than "normal"? There had yet to be enough time for you to make anything unique of yourself.

His Scarlet Star Force pulled him one way. His Vital Star Force pulled him another way. His future self had pulled him yet another way. His father had an ideal of the kind of man he wanted to be.

And what was he left with, exactly?

Was his curiosity even him either? Or was that just his genes as a Wise Star Order talking for him?

He thought back to the scene of carnage. Those people had extremely strong convictions. They all died with their heads held high and their own thoughts of grandeur fuelling their final breaths.

How much of that conviction was truly their own? How much was it what their parents had told them to believe? How much of it was what their children hoped of them? How much of it was far more sinister, the puppet strings of organizations as terrible as the Four Great Families manipulating their thoughts and pulling at their emotions?

Was he even unique in this sense? Did anyone truly know who they were?

He imagined what life would have been like had he stayed on Earth. His career path was already chosen for him; he would become a multi-millionaire, probably marry some beautiful woman who was likewise elite in her field, and they'd have children who'd go off and do the same thing.

Even if he had been born on Ancient Earth, would it have been much different? There wouldn't have been the Gene Assessment back then, but there would have been plenty of people to push and pull him in all sorts of directions. Maybe his parents would have insisted that he become a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer, anything that could have made them proud.

Who knew?

Leonel suddenly relaxed. The push and pull and everything around him suddenly felt meaningless. Even the callous disregard of lives Mo"Lexi had displayed didn't move him.

He wasn't special, not in this sense. He was so worried about how his Forces were manipulating him, how his future self was manipulating him, that he had neglected the fact that everyone dealt with the same things to different degrees. Even Aina had a voice constantly in her head telling her what to do; he wondered if she ever wondered who she truly was as well.

There was a fairly simple answer to all of this.

He thought back to how lazy and unmotivated he was back when his future self was a heavy influence on him.

Was it really laziness? Or was it a confidence in yourself, a confidence in knowing that no matter what you did or didn't do, it wouldn't matter because there was simply no one who could defeat you anyway.

That state... that "laziness"... it was a beacon. When you finally reached that level, it was the moment you could be certain that the only one that could influence you...

Was you.

Leonel's Dream Force vibrated wildly, but as soon as it appeared, it vanished in a puff of smoke, and he opened his eyes.

Within, there was nothing but the calmest reflections of tranquility.

Chapter 2395: Patient

Leonel felt a calmness that he had never experienced before. It was probably the case that not even as a baby, without even needing to worry about his own bowel movements, did he feel so free. However, he didn't explore what this chance was. He knew that he could.

It was a large change, that was for certain. It was probably no less important than one of his Force breaking into the Impetus State. But he didn't have the luxury of finding out exactly what it was because he felt that too many powerful eyes were on him. So he remained still, looking at the ground in silence and feeling the speed of his mind increase at least tenfold.

At that moment, he could see it even more clearly than ever before, that "man" within himself that seemed to be almost drowning within a lake of blood. 'Go away,' he thought, seemingly without much conviction.

The lake of blood was suddenly blown into by a gentle breeze. As though the crimson was stripped away, all that was left was a gorgeous and radiant blue, so beautiful and perfect that it seemed to be droplets of heaven themselves coming together to form it.

The once-chained man, his hair covering his features, trembled and waves of Dream Force threatened to roar out again, only to be suppressed by Leonel's will. The man entered a state of calm and finally looked up. Or, rather, his head tilted upward as he adjusted himself into a state of meditation.

As he did so, Leonel felt a strong pull on the atmosphere around him that he once again forcefully cut off. Just now, he felt a speed of collecting Dream Force that put his Three Stars to absolute shame. The gap was so large that Leonel almost thought that even if he never formed his Stars again, he would be just fine.

Ultimately, though, he shook his head and dispelled those thoughts. The Stars he formed this time around would be so far beyond what he had formed the first time that it was unfair to compare. However, he still found it difficult to view a path that would allow their impact to be as great as this.

'This man should be me... As for what it is, I think it's a manifestation of my Dream Asura Lineage Factor. One of its abilities should be taking the amorphous soul and giving shape and function. It's no wonder every time it moves there's such a large change to my Dream Force output.

'But, freeing it to work properly like this might not be a good thing.' Leonel wasn't thinking about this in terms of his vow not to use his enlightened form; he was instead thinking about it in terms of what his father had said.

When you escaped the chains of that woman, she would no longer treat you as a proper pawn, but instead as someone to get rid of. Leonel didn't know if he had truly escaped

her control, but he felt that there was a good chance he had. However, he wasn't worried because he had an advantage his father did not.

He was her only successful experiment while everyone else of the Morales were her prototypes. If there was one person she couldn't afford to kill, it was him.

"...Leo-"

Leonel immediately knelt down by Aina as though he wasn't just having a world-changing realization. He cupped her face in his hands and to any outside observer, he simply looked as though he was concerned for her. However, in reality, Aina felt some of her own Dream Force being steadily influenced by Leonel until her mind became completely clear.

"Aina, are you okay?"

"I..."

Aina felt her heart skip a beat. "... I think my Blood Force..."

Aina didn't finish her words because she realized where they were. She didn't want to say the truth, that truth being that she felt her Blood Force enter the Impetus State. She hadn't seen the scene that Leonel did, her Dream Force affinity wasn't as high as his. But she had felt it.

The reason she had been down and out for so long wasn't because of the attack on her psyche, but rather because there was a visceral change taking place in her body, one that filled her with pain. In the end, she smiled somewhat weakly and grabbed onto Leonel's palm.

"Don't worry about me, I'm more worried about..."

She looked down toward Little Blackstar, but found the little guy was actually still taking a nap. Unbelievable. All this time, she had thought that he was frozen like everyone else, when in reality he might not even have woken up.

Leonel stealthily put Blackstar away without saying anything. He had seemingly finally realized that there were no one but humans around, and he didn't know what they would do if they took an interest in Blackstar. There was a Beast Domain of the Dimensional Verse, so there were likely a few similar Bubbles here as well. It was best to act more cautious now until he understood more about the situation.

Aina weakly stood to her feet, leaning against Leonel. She felt much stronger now than she looked, but she didn't want to expose whatever Leonel had done so she remained like this. Plus, why would she pass up a chance to be close with her man?

The pair stood in silence as people began to recover one by one. However, even after another day passed, the number that managed to do so didn't exceed even a hundred. From tens of millions, barely over 90 people managed to retain control over their faculties. Most of the rest might only awaken months from now, and that was if they did at all. As for the remaining number Leonel didn't count, they were forever lost to this world.

'Why are they so patient...' Leonel thought. '... And is this number of people even enough to help them? What are they playing at?'

Chapter 2396: Wait

Leonel frowned, waiting for the other shoe to drop. But the more he observed the situation, the more uncomfortable he felt. Not only did he finally notice that there were only humans present, but there was a distinct lack of Noah as well.

His grandfather had said that he would make Noah participate in this as well, could it be that Noah had died? Leonel's relationship with Noah could be said to be close, and they had also started said relationship off on the wrong foot. However, Noah was still family and he didn't believe that his grandfather had spoken those words without reason. In all likelihood, Emperor Fawkes wanted Leonel to do what he could to help Noah if the opportunity was given, or else he might not have mentioned it at all.

Leonel hadn't run into Noah during the first round, and now he wasn't here even during this gathering. It made him feel that maybe he had to prepare for the worst. His dislike of the situation grew, but the tranquility in his eyes remained.

Finally, there was some movement above. Clarence stepped forward once again.

"Congratulations to those of you that have survived and regained your bearings. You have made it through the first cleansing."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. He might have been out of it, but he could pick up some fluctuations from the outside world. Or, at least he could now that his Dream Force had seemed to change again.

This was a round they definitely hadn't planned for. That old woman, Mo-something, she was called, had acted on her own and now they were pretending that this was the plan all along.

But why should he be surprised? This was always what these people did.

"Now that you have made it to this stage, I will give you your task-"

Leonel's frown deepened. That was it? No more fighting? Or was this just the start of the battles?

He looked around when he felt a gaze on him. After noticing that it was Alpha Clown, he shook his head and turned away. He didn't have the time or care to deal with this person right now.

"Soon, you will all be assigned to leaders and placed under your commanders. You will enter a battlefield and your performance will decide how much care and attention you will receive from the Gods."

'Something is off, what am I missing?' Leonel's pupils jumped back and forth between a focused and unfocused state, his mind speeding along with numerous thoughts.

"-Seeded Participants are different. You may choose a leader to be under the tutelage of right now. Step forward."

Leonel's gaze landed on the tablet once again, his mind trembling. A huge arc of lightning connected several disconnected streams of consciousness in his Dreamscape and his eyes widened for a moment.

'It can't be...!' Could their main goal not even be support from them, but rather from what Ability Indexes and Lineage Factors they could provide?

Leonel thought about Aina's Clairvoyance and his tranquility threatened to give way to rage, but he maintained his calm.

"Are you okay?" Leonel asked Aina.

Aina was weirded out by this question, not because of what it was, and definitely not because of who was asking it, but rather because Leonel had already asked this question earlier.

Then, she suddenly realized that the words were reverberating in her mind, not her ears, and it all clicked into place.

"I'm fine." Aina thought.

Leonel didn't expect this answer. Aina was the only one that could sense his movement in the Dream Plane. If something had been done to her, she would definitely know. But her answer effectively meant that no one had done anything to her mind, so it was impossible for them to have gained her Ability Index and Lineage Factor.

Leonel felt like he was a novice slowly making his way into the realms of a practitioner. The more he learned about this situation, the more he felt he was just far too clueless.

He watched as the Seeded Participants were forced to pick leaders without knowing anything about them. And these "Gods", who were pretending to be lofty, obviously wouldn't deign to explain themselves either.

Eventually, all of the Seeded Participants had gone. They made up the majority of those that had managed to survive, and the three standouts were the youth from the Dimensional Eyes Verse that Leonel had seen, Alpha Clown, and a woman who carried around that little pink-eyed woman like she was some sort of pet and called herself "Mama Bear".

As for the non-Seeded Participants that caught Leonel's attention, there was only Alpha Bluestar whose expression was just as placid as elsewhere. What was interesting was that he made a concerted effort to choose a different leader than Alpha Clown despite the latter's gaze. At least, that was an intention that Leonel could feel coming from him. But whether he would get a choice was up in the air.

Finally, there were the non-Seeded Participants.

"Non-Seeded Participants have yet to earn the right to be full members. You will be messengers and carriers. Seeded Participants will have a certain level of protection, but Non-Seeded Participants will have their lives and deaths decided by their leaders. Keep that in mind, lest you die for overestimating yourselves."

Leonel almost thought that Clarence looked at him directly when he spoke these words, but he was still focused on trying to understand what this farce was.

It was all so disorganized in Leonel's view, and that was because they insisted on trying to pretend like everything was still going to plan, when in reality things were barely holding up at the seams.

First their intention to have multiple rounds was thwarted. Then Mo"Lexi acted on her own, killing over 99% of them. Now they were still trying to act high and mighty.

Leonel wondered if he was the only one that didn't fall for this nonsense.

At the very least, Alpha Clown had seemed to sense something was off the last time they spoke. But just the same, neither of them could do anything about it.

"Now, Non-Seeded Participants will be randomly-"

"Wait."

Leonel's voice echoed out.

At this point, even Aina's pupils shook. She knew that Leonel wasn't a fool, but what did he think that he could do here?

Chapter 2397: Dangerous

Leonel gave Aina a reassuring smile. It seemed that even now, his top priority was making sure that she was comfortable.

He knew exactly what she was thinking. In this kind of oppressive environment, especially one where these old men and women were doing their best to portray themselves as gods, any sort of dissension would be squashed with impunity.

It didn't matter if Leonel had something "clever" to say. In fact, the more clever he was, the more inclined they would be toward directly killing him.

Everyone knew that, even the greatest fool could read the room. No matter how useful they thought Leonel may or may not be to them, if they had to pick him or their prestige, the choice was obvious.

It wasn't just a matter of face. This would quite literally decide whether or not they could maintain control over their subordinates. In the coming war, especially with all these variable chess pieces at play, they couldn't afford any sort of hesitation.

However, Leonel wasn't an impulsive person. He might seem to be completely reckless, especially when he was under the influence of his Scarlet Star Force, but his "recklessness" rarely came back to bite him because he always had an exit plan.

This time, he would just have to gamble to see just where the bottom line of these "gods" lay.

Almost the moment he spoke, he was the subject of a great deal of pressure. He could already see the lips Rouge flexing into what would, without a doubt, be a harsh reprimand.

However, the first step was to not allow them to speak. Even if they were compelled by his words, if they had an outburst first, then it wouldn't matter.

Making someone who hadn't voiced their opinions first change their minds was much easier than doing the same for someone that had made their opinion known. This was the same even for a "god".

So, Leonel had already begun to speak the moment the shock settled down in preparation for reactions.

"I have nothing to say about the rules of the esteemed gods. They are well thought out and filled with intricate details that I cannot properly understand with my station.

However, I would still like to say that my talent would be wasted as a non-Seeded Participant."

Clarence held a hand up, stopping Rouge from jumping in again.

"What makes you think your talent is worth a damn?"

"I can't say anything for certain," Leonel said with a solemn expression. "The only thing I know is that the elder miss Goddess used a strong pulse of Dream Force just now and I was the only one that remained standing."

Alpha Clown's pupils trembled. He didn't bother to believe that Leonel was lying. How could he be before these people?

After he got over the shock of the fact that Leonel actually dared to speak, he began analyzing everything as he usually did, so this much he was certain of.

Clarence fell into silence.

This was obvious to all of the "gods", but eagerly pushing Leonel forward to become a Seeded Participant would once again make them seem too desperate. It was easier for them if they pretended that they didn't care to waste Leonel's talent.

This, however, did make some things more interesting and other things more difficult.

As a Seeded Participant, Leonel would be able to pick his own leaders. He didn't want that. He wanted Leonel for himself.

However, it was also inconvenient to use Leonel for some things if he wasn't a Seeded Participant either.

What if he instead found a middle ground? That way he could-

"Hoho," Mo"Lexi's chuckle echoed through the empty arena.

She was having a grand old time.

Before, she could read Leonel like a book. Now, even after all her attempts at flipping the pages, she found nothing but blank spaces.

On top of that, Leonel was calling out to her so respectfully now, when she had just been an "adorable old lady". She was fascinated by this change.

"Sure, boy. You can be a Seeded Participant under me."

Clarence, who had been about to say the exact same words, felt his temper flare up again and he only barely managed to calm himself.

Before he could react, though, Leonel spoke again.

"Your confidence in me is a heavy weight on my shoulders, goddess. However, this is not the sort of acknowledgment that I want.

"I've noticed that there are no non-human races here, and this brings warmth to my heart. I was born and raised in a Verse where humans were nothing but the heel of other races, to be oppressed and suppressed.

"To see the power of you human gods lets me know that there is a world where humans reign supreme and I want to help in that endeavor.

"My own father died under the joint attack of several shameless non-human experts and the blood in my heart burns.

"When I say that I do not want my talent to be wasted, it is not out of selfish reasons, but because I do not want to be lost in the backline while my brothers and sisters shed blood for me."

The more Leonel spoke, the redder the gazes of the remaining participants began. It was as though he was doing a better job galvanizing the youth that these so-called "gods" had.

"The vision that the goddess showed us all, one of blood, carnage and the violence of war... I've understood it and I'm willing to take that responsibility onto my shoulders."

Mo"Lexi's gaze narrowed.

Was this why he was doing all of this? He wanted her to know that he had seen the vision.

She didn't believe for a single second that given Leonel's Dream affinity, he wouldn't be ignorant of how rare it was for him to sense anything, let alone see a vision.

Leonel's fists tightened and his eyes seemed to be lit with passion.

Mo"Lexi chuckled inwardly. 'This little boy is dangerous.'

Chapter 2398: No Sense

What happened next, without a doubt, enraged a large segment of the "gods".

Mo"Lexi didn't seem to care about propriety as she entirely ignored the words of Clarence and the others, taking Leonel under her wing.

In fact, when Leonel took Aina's hand and made it quite clear that he had no intention of letting go, Mo"Lexi turned a blind eye to Clarence's rage, while Clarence himself couldn't say anything too boldly about it.

For a moment, he had thought that Leonel was doing his best to draw a dividing line between himself and his father, even going as far as to say he died at the hands of non-humans as opposed to the Four Great Families. In fact, he even somewhat believed it.

But in the end, Leonel had gotten exactly what he wanted.

Or did he?

Leonel had no idea. His grandfather had told him about the Godlen's, the Four Great Families, the Dream Pavilion and the Cult, but he had no idea who this woman was a part of. Though, he had a good guess... A guess that was confirmed not long later.

...

"Brat, you think yourself to be very clever, don't you?" Mo"Lexi chuckled.

At the moment, Leonel, Mo"Lexi and Aina stood in a room of pitch blackness. And yet, in an odd method that completely defied the laws of physics, Leonel could see them both as clear as day. It was as though someone had photoshopped them out of reality, leaving them as the only light and heat sources in existence.

Leonel blinked, seemingly not understanding what Mo"Lexi was getting at.

"Goddess, I-"

"Stop, stop, stop-It's getting annoying," Mo"Lexi plucked at her ears.

Leonel blinked again, and looked down.

Seeing that Leonel's "act" was still ongoing, Mo"Lexi didn't know whether to praise him, slap him to death, or if she was making the wrong assumption to begin with.

What was fascinating to her, though, was that even this close, she truly couldn't tell.

Now that she thought about it, Leonel's only "slip up" was in thinking that she was an adorable old lady. Anyone with reverence for a god would never have this thought.

But then again, after that "slip up", she had immediately said her name and didn't get a chance to test his true intentions any more than that.

As a result, Leonel still had plausible deniability on his side.

That said... there was a second slip up, though this one was more of a quasi-mistake.

Mo"Lexi looked toward Aina. No matter how you looked at it, the fact Leonel had insisted on bringing this beautiful little girl would be seen as an attempt to use her.

Even so, she had ended up accepting it. The end result being that she couldn't even choose anyone other than these two while the other groups had at least a dozen to their names.

"So you're going to insist on this act, then? That is fine," Mo"Lexi smiled somewhat evilly. "Regardless of what you do, I'll be working you to the bone one way or another.

"Welcome to the Three Finger Cult."

...

Leonel didn't really get the chance to decide how he felt about his current circumstances. When Mo"Lexi spoke about working him to the bone, she meant it.

He and Aina were forced into a hybrid role. The battles hadn't even begun yet, but they were ordered around like slaves, picking up and moving heavy artillery and large vessels of resources.

One would think in a world like this one, there would be easier methods of moving things. But it felt like Leonel had gone back to the primitive times.

Now that he thought about it, in the Cataclysm Zone, they hadn't had large machinery like the starships either. Instead, they rode on the backs of huge beasts the size of which Leonel had never seen before.

Likewise, here, there was no technology, at least not in the natural sense.

Even so, Leonel didn't care. His mind was still on exactly what the purpose of these Human Race Powers were. What were they trying to do?

Mo"Lexi had explained it in part.

The gaps between "Bubbles" were a lot like the Void Battlefield, filled with dense Anarchic Force. The difference was that in Complete Worlds, Anarchic Force was so thick and viscous that it took on a liquid form.

This Anarchic Force was especially potent against powerful individuals. Much like the Anarchic Force of the Dimensional Verse, it tried to consume all of the Force it came

into contact with, turning it into nothing. But liquid Anarchic Force worked in a contradictory sort of way.

It sought balance, and it was hard to reach a "balance" when the target was too weak. As such, it acted much more like gaseous Anarchic Force against weaker, sub-Ninth Dimensional existence.

If it was a quick trip, a Ninth Dimensional existence could make it across with ease. But if it was a prolonged battle, they would be in far more danger than even a Seventh Dimensional existence.

This was why the gods wanted to use them to gain an advantage in this war before their Bubbles were invaded.

'Bullshit.'

That was the conclusion Leonel came to. Unfortunately, he had a feeling that most people would believe it.

Unfortunately, he didn't know what the real reason was, and he was too busy sweating his life away carrying these mountain-sized crates to investigate anything further.

Then the time came. Leonel and Aina called again, one of them looking much more tired than the other.

Not only was Leonel unwilling to let Aina do such mundane tasks, they had the strongest chance at survival if one of them focused on raising their strength. The best choice was obviously Aina. So, in these past weeks, Leonel had done the work of two people on his own while Aina focused on nothing other than strengthening herself.

Mo"Lexi's eyes flashed like lightning when they landed on Aina, but in the end, she said nothing.

"The first mission has been prepared for you," Mo"Lexi spoke, her lips quirking into a smile when saw that Leonel practically looked like death.

"We're entering alone?"

Leonel frowned. This was once again outside of his expectations. Weren't they afraid that he would escape?

Mo"Lexi laughed again as though she could read Leonel's mind, though he was certain that right now, she most definitely couldn't.

"Esteemed Goddess, what is our task?"

"Nothing too big. Come back with the heads of three demons and I will be satisfied."

Leonel and Aina were eventually led to a hidden room with a door on one end and a swirling portal on the other.

Confusion consumed him. It was a novel feeling, one that he didn't like in the slightest.

They hadn't seen any other geniuses of the Three Finger Cult. The people he had worked with over the last weeks were all old men and women at the end of their potential. Mo"Lexi hadn't given him any sort of guidance or even resources to improve himself...

Just what was going on? Weren't the Incomplete Worlds supposed to be the final trump card of the Humans to deal with their enemies? So why were they being treated so casually?

There was no structure. No sense. No common thread linking everything.

He was being led by the nose and he couldn't even do anything about it.

He and Aina entered the portal under Mo"Lexi's bright smile.

Chapter 2399: Love Affair

Aina's chuckle pulled Leonel out of his thoughts, leaving him speechless. They had entered another world of darkness, and a gaseous blackness flew all around them. On top of that, their lives were being plucked along under some unknown symphony, controlled by composers that likely didn't have their best interest in mind.

What could this little vixen possibly have to chuckle about?

"Look at your face, so serious and so confused. You've spent the last almost three weeks doing nothing but thinking. What is that worth to someone else? A couple months? A couple years, maybe? You're still not tired?"

Leonel didn't even know how to respond to this. For a second, he thought that someone was trying to whisper doubts into his mind and that they were using Aina's voice as a convenient in. But soon, he realized that it really was this future wife of his that was teasing him.

Seeing Leonel's expression, Aina laughed harder.

"Aren't you having too good a time with this?" Leonel finally responded.

"What can I do but have a good time?"

Leonel felt a hand rub at his crotch and squeeze a few times.

"I know what it is," Aina said seriously. "You're too pent up, I haven't been doing my wifely duties."

Leonel blinked, then turned and cupped Aina's face. Seeing the serious look in his eyes, Aina almost stopped her joke completely... until he spoke.

"Who are you and what have you done with my Aina?"

Aina scoffed. "You become a completely new person every other day and I can't change just a little bit?"

Although Leonel could tell that Aina was joking again, his eyes dimmed somewhat.

"I'm sorry."

Aina's heart skipped a beat.

"I know. I've been pulled in a lot of directions lately."

He never really thought about it, but if he changed so much and so frequently, would Aina even like him anymore?

He had been too neglectful. He thought a lot about how he would react to things, but not enough about how everyone else would. Just Joel's probes alone should have alerted him to this, but Aina actually had to make a joke about it before he registered that it might be a problem.

Leonel opened his mouth to say more but Aina's hand had already covered his lips.

"You're thinking too much about it. Do your parents know what your personality would be when you had just been born?"

"Huh?"

Staring into those beautiful eyes, Leonel was completely in a daze. He didn't have the brain capacity remaining to even understand what she was saying.

Aina giggled. "Not everything has to be logical. And don't give me some nonsense about evolution and protecting your offspring, you'll make me annoyed."

Leonel couldn't help but laugh, looking at that pouting face, it seemed that she was already annoyed.

"Your child will undergo a myriad of changes in their life. Your parents were different people before they had you, and as you grow, they would grow too. If we marry, and have children, how many changes would I undergo? How many changes would you undergo?"

"My love for you became unconditional a long time ago, why are you worrying about stupid things?"

Leonel blinked, remaining silent for a long time. After a while, his lips parted.

"You're trying to seduce me, aren't you."

"What gave you that idea?" Aina tilted her head to the side. "Was it the heartfelt words? The fact we're all alone now? Or was it my hand on your-"

Aina squealed as she was swept up again.

In the depths of flowing darkness, a group of demons moved. There were four of them, each one of which had powerful, crimson bull horns, skin as dark as night, and flaming golden eyes that looked as though they deserved to be floating in the skull of an undead.

Whether male or female, they were all extremely muscular and walked around bare-chested, having nothing more than a beast skin cloth covering their lower bodies.

There didn't seem to be a leader among them, even down to their heights, they were all of perfectly equal height and build. If not for the slightly puffier chests and longer hair of the women, it wouldn't even be possible to tell their genders apart at all.

At that moment, they all came to a stop at once.

Moans drifted to their ears and they looked toward one another. Their blood began to boil somewhat before they shook their heads.

"Unbelievable. It's got to be those Lust Demons."

Despite his "harsh" words, one of the Bull Demons was already pitching a tent, and his eyes had already stopped looking off into the distance and were entirely focused on the female Bull Demon by his side.

"Look at me like that again, Larkan, and I'll chop it off."

Oriza pulled a chipped ax from her back and glared at Larkan.

Larkan cleared his throat, it sounding akin to an avalanche. "Those Lust Demons are truly despicable."

The second male Bull Demon fell into a booming laughter as Larkan shifted uncomfortably.

"Let's go over there and deal with that," Oriza snarled. "This matter is too important for them to get swept up in such nonsense."

The group of four moved and they closed the distance quite quickly. But they were a bit stunned by what they saw.

It was a storm of dense black feathers, swirling like a tumultuous storm. The sounds of the moans were just as feverish, but the power coming off of them made their hearts sink.

"Run!" Oriza barked, turning and rushing away at her fastest speed.

She had only just spoken when a few black feathers peeled away from the group and two of them died almost instantly.

Oriza spun back, leaping with all of her strength away from the fierce attacks and swinging down her ax with all her might.

She reacted quickly enough, but she felt the bones in her arms crack and almost shatter entirely.

Listening to the moans fade as she rushed into the distance, she was speechless.

She knew the only reason she hadn't died was that that woman was far too engrossed in her love affair.

Chapter 2400: Web

Oriza took deep breaths, a solemnity painted between her brows. She gripped her ax so hard that blood seeped between her palms, her forearms trembling beneath the pain of her fractures.

There was a ferociousness on her expression that could only be matched by a demon. She abhorred running from battle, but she also wasn't a fool. Whatever that was had been so far beyond her she couldn't even properly understand it.

She had felt only one aura, but there had definitely been two shadows within that storm of feathers. Plus, a demon that powerful stopping in their tracks just to masturbate in this land between worlds was far too ridiculous. Not that two such demons having sex in the middle of this battlefield was any less ridiculous.

'The aura felt demonic... but also not... it definitely wasn't a Lust Demon either, that aura didn't have the effect of Charm Force at all...'

"Who?!"

Oriza's head snapped to the side, and she only relaxed when she saw that it was actually Larkan. He was far more beaten and bloodied than she was, but she still felt that it was a net positive that he had managed to survive as well.

"What was that?" Larkan said between breaths.

Oriza frowned, clearly not having an exact answer. But then her eyes suddenly flashed with light.

"Could it be...?" She mumbled. "We need to report this matter."

"What are you thinking about?"

"The seal. The seal that divided our worlds from theirs and kept those shitty humans, it was located here. It spanned across this entire region and somehow managed to stand strong under the barrage of Anarchic Force."

"And?" Larkan was confused.

"During that time, this place was practically a world of its own, and it's even possible that it formed its own ecosystem."

Larkan frowned. "Would there be enough time for that?"

"For humans, no. But it's been, what? At least three or four generations since the seal first appeared, that's almost 40-50 thousand years. There were definitely some of our kind left behind and trapped here. Those inferior Demons are unlike us. They eat whatever they can get their hands on, improve however they can, they have no bottom line at all.

"If they were stuck in an environment like this one for so long, it wouldn't be surprising if a completely new race of demons was formed-especially since there would also have been other races left behind and trapped here.

"The higher-ups probably didn't care to consider this matter too much because the odds that they could have become a threat in such a short time were miniscule. But obviously, the situation's changed."

Larkan was enlightened.

Inferior demons were none other than the so-called ranked demons that Leonel and Aina had faced during their first stint into the Cataclysm Zone.

Demons were well known for their adaptability and they followed numerous paths, much like the humans and, to a lesser extent, the Nomads.

"... I think it's possible that a new race of Chaos Demons has appeared."

Larkan's eyes opened wide.

"I'm sorry, didn't I already say it!"

"It's not sincere enough, I think you need some more punishment."

Leonel and Aina's voices continued to echo as though nothing at all had happened. They seemed to entirely forget that they were supposed to be on a mission.

Eventually, though, they did stop terrorizing the world with their passion and they stepped out from the tornado of black feathers.

Aina pouted. "I took so much "punishment" because of these two, they better have something interesting on them."

Leonel almost choked on air. He really didn't know how this woman could be such a masochist, it fit with literally no other part of her personality. Even when she said "punishment" just now her eyes lit up with excitement as though she was trying to goad Leonel into doing it again.

In the end, he chuckled to himself.

'Just wait,' he thought to himself. Once he started breaking through the Dimensions again, he'd have far more stamina than she could handle.

The two walked up to the corpses of the Bull Demons, checking them one by one.

There didn't seem to be many interesting things to find. They didn't wear spatial devices, which was odd at first until Leonel concluded that it must be due to the environment. Other than that, there was just the best skin that acted as their skirts, their weapons, and...

"A map?"

Leonel was more shocked that he could memorize it with a glance. It actually took him two scans.

The paper on it was odd and it seemed to obscure his senses. When you looked away, it was easy for you to forget what you had seen. Leonel had to imprint it into his mind using a unique method to make himself remember, but then that formed an odd connection with an ethereal feeling he didn't like, so he wiped his memory a moment afterward.

'What was that?'

Leonel's brows trembled.

He had reacted quickly, but he had a wakeup call in that instant. He couldn't do things as casually as he had once done in the Dimensional Verse. Just now, he could have really put himself and Aina in some serious danger.

"They're mapping out the region, and they feel that it's important enough to protect. If my guess is right, these two maps probably aren't even identical."

Leonel picked up the second map and confirmed his guess. It was likely that the two that had escaped had two more of these maps, and in all likelihood, that wasn't everything.

His Internal Sight was incredibly limited in his in-between world. Though, due to his improvement, it was still in the hundreds of kilometers. He had seen these Bull Demons even before they heard him and Aina.

"They're preparing for battle?" Aina asked. "It makes sense to map out the terrain, but why isn't that our task as well? Why tell us just to kill?"

"The lines on the map, though it's subtle, look like a huge Force Art. Those lines should be a defensive type Force Art, one created to stop the in-flow of demons.

"However, it's fragmented and broken. If I'm correct, this seal was used to hold the demons back and it only recently gave way, allowing the demons to take action.

"If that's true, then whatever terrain is here has likely already been thoroughly understood by the humans and there's no point in sending people in to map something they already understand."

Aina sent a glance at the map and her lips pursed. She had no idea how Leonel had concluded that from all the swirly and squiggly lines. She was familiar with Force Arts as well, but this looked nothing like one. Even so, she trusted Leonel's judgment.

'What a powerful seal...' Leonel thought. '... Why does it look so familiar?'

His eyes widened. These runes, they were the same runes that were on the chains that held down that image of himself in the blood lake!

Sparks of lightning rippled through Leonel's Dreamscape.

He felt the web he was stuck in had suddenly become marginally clearer.

If he had known that the shattering of this seal had coincided with the shattering of the chains within his mind, he would have been even more certain.

Back then, it was precisely because this seal shattered that Leonel and Aina had been saved from the wrath of Aina's "master", the head of the Endless Twilight Pavilion, Pavilion Head Ophelia.