

Dimensional Descent

- Chapter 2541: Go to Hell

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This thought snapped Regnier back into focus. He abandoned using Dream Force like the wind. It was causing the Dream Force around him to fall into Leonel's sphere of control; how could a junior possibly pull away a Force he had been using for longer than Leonel had even been born?

However, the instant he did so, Leonel suddenly retreated.

Regnier frowned, wanting to follow. But the moment his thoughts started to move with their normal fluidity, he thought of many things all at once and remembered that there was an even larger threat to his back.

He could only keep Burul at bay when he used his Force like the Wind, but if he used it like the Wind, Leonel would suffocate him.

He had to extricate himself as quickly as possible.

The feeling of danger already enveloped him to his back as he sensed that Burul was already gearing up to attack again. Remembering the power of that heart-shuddering attack, his own almost stopped beating entirely.

It seemed to him that Burul had to be close for it to work out, so he had to keep his distance no matter what.

And that was when it happened.

A beam of blinding light came from Leonel's direction. The feeling and essence of it were exactly the same as what had come from Burul. This time, the speed of thought Regnier had regained was to his detriment.

He could feel every inch of that beam, and each movement, every breath, even the runes that flickered into existence through the air, were exactly the same. He couldn't find even a single exception aside from the fact that it was weaker by a Tier.

'Dammit!'

Regnier lost his cool and switched back to using Dream Force like the Wind. If he didn't, although he was sure he wouldn't die, he would be injured enough that it would affect his clashes with any other Pavilion Heads.

He couldn't allow that.

On the other side, Burul wasn't sure what was happening. His vision had been obstructed by his own attack, and all his Internal Sight picked up was Regnier fighting with... air?

His conclusion was that it must be a creature of high enough level to conceal itself within the Dream Force, and that had to be at least a Tier Eight threat.

He cursed beneath his breath. His net of runes was obviously on cooldown now, not that it would be easy to deal a death blow to a Tier Eight.

What should he do? Wait for Regnier to suffer?

He didn't believe that his trump cards were so much more superior to everyone else's; he wasn't a fool. The Breeze Dream Pavilion had definitely come prepared and there was more to them than just that.

Regardless, he closed in the distance. He had to see the situation for himself.

But when he tried to approach, a blinding light came from the opposing side.

He recognized it immediately; how could he not? Even the aura was identical to the one he had just unleashed, just a bit weaker.

His people? But how could his people hide from his senses?

He braced himself and leapt backward. The line of fire was directly in line with himself, and though the cooldown for the net of runes was only for the single-burst attack, because he had just used it, the flow of strength from the Tier Seven to himself would be somewhat limited for the next few minutes. He didn't want to take any chances.

The situation slowly cleared, and he found Regnier high in the skies, frowning deeply.

His "opponent" wasn't there anymore, having seemingly vanished into thin air.

Regnier's frown deepened by the second and his heart suddenly stopped beating entirely. His own palm slapped to his collarbone, reaching for a necklace that should have been there...

But it was gone!

The kid had stolen it?! How? When?!

Regnier's fury bubbled up. That necklace could only do one thing, and that was to find his people. He didn't think it was a coincidence that Leonel had targeted it.

How had he not noticed the loss of something so important?

From below, Burul watched as the always calm Regnier suddenly put on a fierce expression. Even after years of goading and prodding, Burul had never seen him wear such an expression? What had just happened? And where was the Nomad who just used the net of runes?

Did Regnier kill them?

That was impossible; there wasn't enough time to do that.

The world of Dream Pavilions watched as two powerhouses stood around, baffled about what had just happened.

It was hard to tell what these experts were thinking; they were too good at hiding their thoughts. Regnier had been much like them before this incident caused rage to build up across his face.

"BOY!" Regnier roared.

Burul was even more taken aback. Boy? Who was he talking about?

"You've gone senile, old bastard?" Burul asked with a sneer.

Regnier looked down toward Burul, his green eyes sparking with a furious crimson. But when he remembered something, he actually sneered as well. The contempt in his expression was practically palpable.

"Do you know who that was just now?"

Burul frowned.

"I'm sure you saw them using your little invention, no? You were probably very proud of that. Too bad it landed in the hands of a human brat."

"Impossible!" Burul's voice boomed.

However, Regnier's sneer only deepened.

"I wonder how many of your Nomads he's killed?"

Regnier had no way of knowing if it was more than one or not, but he still made sure to pour salt into the wound, repaying Burul tenfold.

"You son of a bitch!" Burul roared, launching an attack.

"You fucking idiot!" Regnier barked. "We have to go and capture him!"

"Go to hell! You think I'll believe you?!"

Leonel chuckled, twirling a familiar thin-chained necklace on his forefinger. That had worked better than he thought.

Now it was time to hunt some Spirituals.

Chapter 2542: Threat

Leonel's spear flickered, driving through the chest of another Spiritual. Unlike with the Nomads, he let these people live, but it wasn't out of the kindness of his heart.

For one, he had his own bottom line, but deeper than that, as much as he really wanted to offend everyone under the sun, he couldn't do that. He had basically crippled the Gem Dream Pavilion already, and Burul was still on his kill list. If he crippled three Dream Pavilions, those bastards might find a reason to deal with him.

Of course, another reason was that they weren't involved in Clarence's death. However, this wasn't really enough of a reason for Leonel to spare them. The first reasons definitely weighed heavier.

Who knew if they wouldn't have treated Clarence the same way if they had a chance? Plus, it was clear and obvious to him that even if they were benevolent enough to let Clarence live, they still definitely wanted his head.

He wasn't a fan of sparing people who wanted to kill him, but some sacrifices ultimately had to be made. Of course, if they pissed him off enough, he wouldn't mind wiping them off the face of Existence.

But that was unnecessary... for now.

This was the sixth Spiritual that Leonel had killed, and he had already turned his attention toward the seventh. He knew that Burul and Regnier were likely trying their best to find him by now. Although Burul was a hothead that was easy to goad, that sort of provocation wouldn't last forever. He ultimately wasn't a fool.

From the six Spirituals he had "killed," he had managed to gain some more information about their communication method, mostly through the treasures they left behind.

The necklaces worked both ways. That essentially meant that if Regnier managed to find at least one of his Spiritual brethren, then Leonel could be found through their methods.

The drawback was that they wouldn't know exactly who was who and could only do so randomly, with the exception of the King necklace, of course. A necklace that was in Regnier's hands until it fell into Leonel's.

This essentially meant that if Regnier found one of his people, Leonel would definitely be caught, flaw or not.

But this disadvantage also gave Leonel an advantage. That was because as long as Regnier didn't find his people, to the Spirituals, all they knew was that a group of their own was gathering around their leader.

Leonel had already taken advantage of this several times, leading Spirituals right into pre-laid out traps that granted him easy kills on them.

He didn't really need to do this, honestly, as most of them were just Tier Six threats. But he was still Tier Six for now as well; why get into a long, drawn-out battle and risk exposing his location when he could end it swiftly?

That being said, he was inching closer to Tier Seven.

Of his ten rune nets, seven of them were outfitted with Tier Sixes, one of them with a Tier Five, and the final one had a Tier Seven in it.

He liked this configuration for several reasons, but the moment he found a Tier Eight, he would definitely change it around.

However, the necklaces were starting to become a ticking time bomb.

There were only so many mountain ranges and so many places the Spirituals could be. The odds he would run into Regnier were getting higher and higher.

Although Regnier was just Tier Seven the last time Leonel came across him, he knew that the Pavilion Head definitely had some sort of trump card of his own. He couldn't take any of them lightly.

On top of that, he still hadn't heard much of anything about the Owlans. Who knows, maybe he might accidentally run into one of them while thinking he was chasing down a Spiritual.

After all, he wasn't the only one who could kill.

Leonel thought for a moment and made a move to cut his losses.

There were only a dozen Spirituals, including Regnier. He had killed six of them and crippled one of their contingency plans. That was enough for now.

If he could just destroy them, he would. Unfortunately, he didn't have a reliable way of doing so.

These treasures all seemed simple, but they were forged of materials beyond him. The rune nets were just one example, but he had to remember that these were true powerhouses. Even if these were Bronze Grade treasures to them, considering the worlds they came from, it would be almost impossible for Leonel to destroy them.

In that case, Leonel found a random Tier Six and threw the necklaces into its belly before rushing away.

Over two hours later, a figure appeared where Leonel had been, only to find that only a Tier Six creature remained.

The woman looked from the necklace in her hand, then toward the creature, and then smiled.

"It seems like someone else was hunting Spirituals too. They managed to get Regnier? That shouldn't be the case... Regnier is much smarter than Burul, and there doesn't seem anyone else who could do it.

"Was it the Miss? But that's impossible as well. She wouldn't abandon the necklaces. She would welcome them with open arms..."

The only explanation seemed to be the humans, but...

That felt ridiculous as well.

"Hm, if seven Spirituals have been dealt with, I guess that's enough. The miss said to forget all the hunting and just go to the main mountain. I guess I should do that now. I should be able to complete the final breakthrough on my way there..."

The beautiful woman casually threw the necklace in her hand at the creature. She seemed to know that it would have some use, but didn't care to follow through on it at all as though it was meaningless.

And why wouldn't it be? Ultimately, the Owlans would win.

BANG.

The creature exploded.

One would have expected the necklaces Leonel had thought to be indestructible to be left behind, but there was nothing left at all...

The woman didn't even bother to absorb the Dream Force.

If Leonel was there, he would be certain of only one thing...

Tier Eight threat.

Chapter 2543: How?

Leonel didn't regret his decision. Although he didn't know of the appearance of the Owlman woman, he wasn't surprised in the slightest. Right now, because he had chosen the dominant victory route over the speed victory route, this was bound to happen.

But he was ready for it.

By the end of the first day, Leonel finally hit Tier Seven. At this point, the Forgetful Orbs were looking extremely enticing to him, and he had collected 22 of them. This was definitely more than enough to reach the Lower Life State. As for the Middle Life State, he wasn't too sure; it might even be unlikely.

This True Dream Plane was on the lower end, so while it was acceptable for Clarence to want to use it to enter the Life State, anything beyond was asking for too much.

Plus, his Dream Force was actually a second priority to him right now in comparison to reaching Tier Nine. What he wanted most was this victory.

Progressing through the Life State was something everything else found to be such a daunting task, but it was hard for Leonel to feel the same when he had casually accomplished the same after a random bout of meditation.

This wasn't to say that he was arrogant about it, but instead rightfully confident. These orbs were also of great value to his people as well. Since there was no guarantee of reaching the Middle Life State, wouldn't it be better to save them?

With a Forgetful Orb of this tier, he could definitely help several reach the Impetus State and catch up to him quite swiftly.

Who said they could only be used on Dream Force?

Leonel exhaled a breath, putting away his 23rd Forgetful Orb.

The rune nets were good, but they could only be used so much. If he wanted to actually have a chance to absorb the Dream Force the creatures released and improve, he couldn't use the rune nets because the default setting on them was to absorb the creature they attacked.

That restrained what Leonel could do a bit, but this was fine as well.

Now as a Tier Seven, he could do some real damage to a Tier Eight if they weren't properly prepped. He could control a Tier Seven for two and a half minutes, a Tier Eight for over a minute, and a Tier Nine for almost 40 seconds.

He was ready to take some real risks. This was where his plan for domination and his plan for speed deviated the most.

He looked down at his collection. By now, he had all ten run nets filled. One of them still had a Tier Five, one of them had a Tier Six, and the others were all filled with Tier Sevens.

In addition, only two of the Tier Sevens were on cooldown right now, so he basically had access to a full arsenal.

In this time, Leonel had managed to find a Tier Eight, but he didn't attack it immediately like it seemed that he should have.

The deeper he went into these mountains, the more Tier Eights there would be, but the more danger there would be as well. If he really wanted a dominant victory, he couldn't bank on going mountain to mountain like he had before.

He had to kill over 30 Tier Sevens just to make it here. If he had to kill over 40 Tier Eights, in that time, the odds that he would be found were too high.

The speed route was obvious.

Quickly trap one Tier Eight, then find a Tier Nine, freeze it in place, and then trap it as well. Once he was done with that, abandon all his treasures and the Dream Force he

had accumulated, then fuse with the rune net and rush toward the mountain peak. Like that, he would definitely be the first to reach there.

It was the clear plan, the obvious plan, the plan a Third Dimensional expert like himself should be taking.

He didn't want to.

He would crush everyone who entered with him and he would be the last to remain. Even the Owlans wouldn't be spared.

This would be his statement to the world. In that case, he needed something different.

Leonel's figure flashed, and he suddenly blocked someone's path.

Regnier's pupils constricted. He had been looking for Leonel everywhere, high and low. The last three to four hours had been entirely spent on that pursuit, and his progression had slowed considerably.

He honestly didn't think it was a big deal because around this tier was where everyone slowed down. The last push to Tier Eight and Nine were very difficult.

Of course, the Tiers were Leonel's own self-created system. But everyone had their own divisions in their minds that worked similarly.

Leonel smiled. "Looking for me?"

Regnier had long since regained his calm. He wasn't brash, and that had simply been a momentary lapse. After he escaped Burul's rampage, he had long since returned to his normal baseline.

That was why when he first saw Leonel, his first thought wasn't rage, but rather caution.

How had Leonel found him so easily? How could he always appear without him being any wiser?

All signs pointed to the Life Tablet. But he had to admit that he didn't think that it would truly be this much of an advantage.

He was wrong, of course. He couldn't use Dream Force normally in this world, but that didn't mean Leonel couldn't. What weighed heaviest now was nothing but Leonel's Dream Sovereignty. He could naturally use Dream Force in ways Regnier couldn't fathom as he was stuck using it as a Wind Force.

"You must be wondering how I found you?" Leonel asked with a smile.

Regnier's eyes narrowed.

Leonel shrugged. "You're too predictable. You and Burul both. At this point, I've yet to come across a single Owlman, and that's not because of their low numbers, it's because they're focused on actually winning. Whereas you two are focused on killing me.

"How many humanoids do you think are still around these mountains?"

Chapter 2544: Another Aura

Regnier didn't respond, immediately launching into an assault.

Leonel chuckled and glided backward, slipping out of the grip of Regnier's whirlwind of Dream Force turned Wind Force as though it wasn't there.

"If you want to win, you're going to have to stop disrespecting Dream Force like that. Are you really a Pavilion Head?"

Regnier didn't respond. He could feel that this young man was trying to humiliate him on purpose. He had little care for his face, for his status, and it was annoying, more annoying than anything Burul had ever said to him.

It caused him to use Dream Force as Wind Force for maybe much longer than he should have. Logically, he had already fought Leonel before; he should know that using Dream Force like this in front of him was useless. But the words poked at a clear sore spot, causing the supposedly calm Pavilion Head to feel a bit defiant.

Leonel suddenly stopped running, and his spear flickered through the air. A 200% amplification rolled off of him in waves, suddenly forming organized lines of Spear Force that twisted through the air.

The battle erupted, and in an instant, Regnier's body was filled with bloody wounds.

The Spiritual's eyes widened, but Leonel had already stopped his strikes.

"Is that all you have? Show me something, Spiritual."

Leonel's spear spun in his palms before snapping into place, the blade pointing right at Regnier's nose. A battle intent blazed from Leonel, a swirling mass of golden Dream Force becoming countless arrows fueled by Bow Force in the skies.

Regnier's green irises shimmered. The strength of Leonel's spear was a tier beyond what it had been before. When they first met, they could only leave light scratches, but now...

His breathing became a hint erratic, his azure hair fluttering in the wind.

The Spiritual rushed forward suddenly, his speed even faster than before. A sword appeared in his hands, pulled from his back and shimmering with the markings of a treasure of this world. However, it was clear to Leonel that Sword Force wasn't something the man had comprehended, at least not in the traditional sense.

Sword and spear clashed, a flurry of strikes painting the skies. The clouds split beneath their feet, and the mountains trembled.

Leonel grinned wildly. He could feel that the battle experience of this Spiritual wasn't shallow in the slightest. In fact, it was clearly beyond his own.

But every one of Leonel's spear strikes carried an Artistic Conception, and when that conception was fueled by his Dream Force, they seemed to come to life.

He shifted his stance constantly, going from embodying Swiftiness to Heaviness, then from the light pitter-patter of a light rain to a heavy downpour following a tsunami.

Regnier had never seen a youth with this level of skill with a weapon; it felt truly transcendent.

And then the dance began.

Regnier felt as though he was trapped in a cage. Lines of silvery-gold Spear Force drew meteors across the air, radiating a heartrending might.

The Spiritual's eyes widened as it hit him like a truck.

Leonel didn't just have one Quasi Life State Force, he had two... no, he had three.

His hair stood on end as he watched the Bow Force descend.

How was that possible?!

Regnier hurriedly retreated, the wind enveloping around him. One aspect of his mind turned his attention toward using Dream Force as it was meant to, the wind becoming nothing but a support to increase his retreat.

'Monster,' this was the thought he had.

It was said that the humans were the perfect experimental subjects for the God Beasts because their potential could be branched into an endless number of streams.

Many didn't understand this. After all, weren't the Demons and Nomads the same? Chaos Demons were the embodiment of Chaos itself, capable of starting a completely

new branch or clan of demons all on their own. As for Nomads, they were capable of absorbing all sorts of outside influences and making them their own.

What about the Cloud Race? Wasn't their foundation built upon mimicry in the first place?

Not many understood what made the humans so special. There were countless Demi-God Races that could fall into the same categories; there were even some God Races capable of similar things, though many of them were said to have reached the peak of potential.

There was something special about humans, and that was rooted in how typically un-special they were. Ironically, it was often all the talent other races had that weighed down their potential.

They were the simplest of the humanoid races, the most insignificant...

And that made those that could finally break free of this mold exceptionally dangerous.

Regnier could only see the sharp glimmer in Leonel's eyes. He realized that this boy didn't come here with some special trump card or with a willingness to be subservient and lose either.

He came here to win.

He came here to dominate.

Regnier quickly put up a hand, but his instincts kicked in as the strike was too fast. He subconsciously used muscle memory ingrained into his very bones and used Dream Force like it was the wind.

His palm was torn through by the blade. With a twist, his entire hand came with it.

Pain shuddered through Regnier's body, but he continued his retreat.

Leonel pulled back his spear, a volley of arrows continuing around him. Regnier did a much better job of deflecting these, but the only point of the arrows was to keep him as occupied as possible.

Suddenly, a roar shook Regnier's heart. He turned some of his senses to his back and found a Tier Eight White Stone Elephant to his back.

How had they gotten here? Why had they not run into any other beasts to deviate their path?!

His expression changed again as he sensed another aura.

Burul?!

Chapter 2545: Enjoy

Leonel sneered. What was he confused about? Hadn't he already told him that he and Burul were too predictable?

Their battle had just passed through at least three mountain ranges. Regnier didn't even realize that he had been led here because he hadn't been led at all. In fact, it was more accurate to say that he had been pushed here.

Due to that, he didn't even realize that he had been led by the nose all the while.

This was the very same mountain range he had found the original Tier Eight on. What he didn't expect was that Burul would show up so soon, but this was fine as well.

"BOY!"

Burul's fury was towering. By now, he had scoured every mountain range he could find, even killing a few Spirituals, but he hadn't found even a single Nomad.

It was obvious what happened. Regnier hadn't been lying. Leonel had, indeed, killed his people.

Regnier was a bit taken aback by Burul's level of rage. He was a hothead, but not to this extent. He was still scheming and intelligent, he knew where to pick his spots.

Back then, Regnier had only exaggerated Leonel's feats a little. After all, he could only confirm that one rune net had been stolen, and he wasn't even sure if one had to be killed first to have it snatched. Hadn't Leonel taken his necklace without him dying?

But this...

Regnier didn't have the right to be distracted. The flurry of strikes from Leonel was absolutely relentless. Burul was coming in from the side and the Spiritual Pavilion Head was immediately on guard against him; although Burul seemed to be focused on Leonel, who knew what this conniving bastard might do? Then there was the Tier Eight threat to worry about on top of that.

Regnier felt like he was being overloaded with sensory information and the grin on Leonel's face was only becoming brighter.

"DIE!" Burul swept in from Leonel's side, a Palm Force capable of shaking the mountain descending.

Leonel pulled back his spear. Spinning it in his hands, several scythe-like blades formed and shot in the direction of the two Pavilion Heads.

Leonel's Spear Force and Bow Force were beyond that of Burul's Palm Force. He shredded the latter apart as though it didn't even exist.

"Your comprehension of Weapon Forces is weak, old sack of shit."

"What did you just say to me?!"

"I don't like repeating myself for the mentally disabled."

To an outside observer, their conversation would have only been funny due to the facial expressions. As Dream Force experts, it didn't matter what language the other was using, they could immediately translate it.

Regnier's language was particularly harsh and grating on the ears. It wasn't as bold as the Pluto Race's language, and was instead filled with endless hacking, wheezing and snorting.

It only made Leonel want to make fun of him all the more.

ROAR!

The Tier Eight had had enough of the encroachment on its territory.

Burul and Regnier were already on guard against one another, and only sought to put more distance between them when this happened. But Leonel only sneered.

In one movement he dispersed his rain of arrows into the surroundings, enveloping their retreat routes. At the same time, he took subtle control of the Tier Eight.

Gem Force sprouted and formed mountains that blocked their retreat. Once appeared behind Leonel as well, though this was purely for show.

Burul and Regnier were forced to stop their retreat and Leonel's smile suddenly vanished as he relinquished his control over the elephant.

An all out battle Royale ensued. Burul and Regnier tried to focus their attacks on Leonel, but it was hard for them to do so when such a powerful creature wanted them all dead. In the end, the trio was even somewhat forced to band together to stop the elephant from killing them off one by one.

Leonel knew that these two would prefer to get a distance, but if he allowed that, this battle would drag on forever. The reason he had taken this risk was because he wanted to end it right here and right now, and he would do exactly that.

Burul's expression flickered as he felt that this was a great opportunity. These two were basically fighting with him, but only he had the ability to deal a sure kill strike on a Tier Eight. With three fighting at once, that opportunity would come much sooner than he thought.

'No, the kid might have captured a powerful enough creature to deal a fatal blow to the beast as well. He definitely has a Dream Net as well. I'll need to react faster than him.'

From time to time, he would launch a sudden attack on Leonel, really wanting to kill this kid. But he had already become half-hearted about it. The only purpose of these strikes was to keep up his facade as a madman and to make sure Leonel kept some distance away so that the coming opportunity would be his.

Suddenly, his gaze sharpened. 'There!'

Leonel's spear struck down, slapping the elephant's trunk into the ground. At the same time, Regnier's hurricane-force wind knocked into its side, knocking the creature almost off balance.

As it was trying to regain itself, Burul's forehead erupted.

Burul saw Leonel taking out a Dream Net, but his sneer deepened. That was absolutely perfect, he would be first.

BANG!

Burul froze, looking down to find that his legs and torso had been separated from one another.

The White Stone Elephant died at the same time, Burul's beam tearing through it.

Leonel didn't even give Burul a glance as his entire focus was given to Regnier instantaneously. He had already brought out another Dream Net, ready to use it on the Spiritual.

Regnier's eyes widened at the sudden change, but he quickly calmed down. If he would have to take that step here, then he would just have to do so.

He clicked a button on an inconspicuous belt he wore on his waist. It lashed out, wrapping quickly around his wrist and forearm before forming a shield.

Regnier had already seen through everything. That Dream Net Leonel had just used was only enough to kill Burul because the latter fell back down to Tier Four as his activated Dream Net was in the process of assimilating the Tier Eight.

The only reason he had brought out the shield was in case Leonel managed to get his hands on the Dream Net that was currently falling through the skies... but how could he allow that?

The shield sent a pulse of Dream Force right at Leonel that caused his eyes to widen. That concentrated blast of Dream Force was on the level of a Tier Eight!

Seeing Leonel's first change in expression, Regnier couldn't help but sneer. He had to thank this brat for both killing Burul for him and handing this treasure to him at the same time.

Regnier shot for the falling Dream Net that had now lost its owner. But as he was about to grab it, a sense of danger overwhelmed his senses.

He looked back to find that Leonel's shock had been turned into a sneer.

BANG!

A blinding light enveloped Regnier.

Why had he kept a Tier Five Dream Net on him all this while? It was precisely for this moment.

A Tier Five was enough to kill a Tier Six. For an existence like Burul who had fallen back to Tier Four, it was even overkill. To Regnier, though, it was fodder to underestimate Leonel.

He thought that a Tier Eight's blast would be enough to push Leonel back, not realizing that the Tier Seven Dream Net Leonel had was a half step above in strength, capable of one shooting a Tier Eight beast under the right circumstances.

Leonel landed on the ground, the Tier Eight Dream Net fell into his palm as the last wisps of Regnier's consciousness began to return to his body. The Spiritual looked deep at Leonel, his green eyes turning no small hint of crimson.

Leonel, though, had already stopped paying attention to him. Waving a hand, Burul shot into his hands before he could dissipate completely.

He held the battered man by his neck, looking right into his eyes.

"You..."

"I think you've done enough talking for a lifetime," Leonel said calmly. "Enjoy the afterlife."

His hands squeezed down.

Burul, Pavilion Head of the Gem Dream Pavilion, had fallen.

Chapter 2546: Boom.

Leonel exhaled a breath, shaking his head as he tossed around the Dream Net in his palms. It would take an hour for it to come down from its cooldown, and then he would need to find a Tier Nine creature to take down to maximize it.

His mind had already moved on from this situation and he was already thinking about how to deal with what was next. The fact he had just dealt with two Pavilion Heads, thoroughly killing one of them, didn't seem to fill him with any sort of pride at all. It just felt... Natural.

This time, it wasn't a confidence that came from some mysterious force from the future, but rather one that was all his own. These were victories that he had claimed for himself and they weren't tainted by things that hadn't happened yet or might not happen at all for that matter.

He was the perfect image of calm and collected.

'The Owlans...'

Leonel's gaze narrowed. This would be an extremely troublesome matter. He only needed one thing to confirm this for him: the fact they had dared to enter with only three people.

In truth, it wasn't as though you could come in with an unlimited number. After a certain cap, you'd have to pay extra Contribution Points for the right of entry. That was variable depending on how many Contribution Points the Challenge triggerers used and what tier of True Dream Plane was going to be opened.

Obviously, this time, the limit was around a dozen or so, which was why the numbers of Spirituals and Nomads had been so close this time around.

It made sense that Clarence and Leonel had entered on their own, there was no one else who had the guts to come. But the Owlans definitely had more people...

So why three?

There were only really two explanations that Leonel could think of. The first was that they were extremely confident in their victory.

Neither Regnier nor Burul, or any of their people for that matter, seemed surprised by the choice of the Owlans, and they even clearly treated them with a healthy dose of respect on top of that.

The second possibility was that they had a special treasure not much unlike Regnier's shield or Burul's Dream Net.

It might even very well be both.

Leonel had pretty much run into everyone by this point... except them. And he felt that that wasn't a coincidence. If they were as confident as they portrayed themselves to be, they were probably waiting at the base of the final mountain, ready to take his head. In that case, the only reason they wouldn't have just gone up to claim first place for themselves was because of the Life Tablet in his mind.

Leonel looked up into the skies. 'The last challenge, huh?'

He stretched out his back and looked at the belt-turned-shield that Regnier had hidden for so long. Leonel was curious why he would do so. If it was used as a normal weapon or accessory to combat, what was the need to hide it? It wasn't like it was a great trump card like the Dream Net, right?

These were Leonel's initial thoughts, and even after inspecting it for a while, he still felt that it was the same.

Even so, he wasn't convinced. Regnier couldn't be that much of a fool. After seeing the trump card of the Nomads, there would be no reason for him to hide this thing if this was all there was to it.

But then again... if this wasn't all there was to it, then what was Regnier's excuse for not using it when his life was on the line just now?

'My plan was pretty good, if I do say so myself,' Leonel tooted his own horn a bit, 'so it's possible that he just couldn't react... It's also possible that he planned to use whatever that true trump card was only after securing the Tier Eight rune net. After all, just because he had the rune net in his possession, didn't mean that he'd know how to use it. So he would still have to deal with me at the end of the day the normal way...'

Leonel felt that this was closer to the truth. During their one on one fight, Regnier had been firmly on the losing end and had only survived for so long because Leonel needed bait for Burul. Under such circumstances, stealing a weapon he didn't know how to use wouldn't help Regnier in the slightest. He would need something else to deal with Leonel.

Taking another step back, the fact Regnier used that pulse attack would also lull Leonel into a false sense of security, not much unlike what Leonel had done to Regnier.

Even now, didn't he still mostly assume that there was nothing else special about the shield? What if Regnier suddenly burst out with a counterattack he wasn't expecting?

Of course, that wouldn't work Leonel considering he had already deduced that there had to be something else hidden within it. But the point was still a valid one.

Leonel sighed. He felt like a broken record, but these Force Arts were really too complex. At least with King's formation, if he had enough time he might have been able to find something to take advantage of. But here?

'Then we'll just have to do it the crude way. Pour Force into it and hope something that doesn't kill you happens.'

Leonel strapped the shield to his left arm and then began to pour his Dream Force in slowly.

He came across the first bottleneck and pushed through.

A pulse echoed. It was much weaker than the Tier Eight strike that Regnier had unleashed earlier, but Leonel didn't mind that. He was looking for something else.

He eventually came across a second bottleneck and his frown deepened. At his slow pace, this one was much harder to pass through.

BOOM.

The belt wrapped around Leonel's forearm suddenly shot into his chest, ripping a hole through his heart.

Chapter 2547: Time

Leonel coughed up a mouthful of blood, his pupils constricting. He felt that he was on the verge of dying. His Dream Force was quickly dissipating, and though he wouldn't die a true death, he would lose without having even ascended the mountain, and that would be a different form of death. Even if he didn't die immediately, the Human Race would certainly be finished.

However, Leonel managed to maintain his tranquility.

His first thought was that he had accidentally triggered something he shouldn't have, maybe a failsafe of sorts. When you were using a treasure like this and using trial and error instead of raw comprehension, it was inevitable that you might accidentally stumble into such a thing.

However, after seeing that the shield wasn't actually trying to kill him, Leonel's eyes narrowed.

He paid close attention to what was really happening, and when he figured it out, his eyes widened.

He retrieved his Dream Force and coughed up another mouthful of blood as the belt was ripped out of his chest.

His Dream Force was still quickly dissipating, but he used the Life Tablet to keep it intact. Then, he rushed down the mountain, looking for a target. When he found a Tier Six, he swiftly killed it then continued to find another, and then another.

Eventually, his Dream Force finally stabilized.

He took deep heaving breaths. That was really close. If not for the Life Tablet, it would have all been over because of his recklessness.

He didn't usually think of himself as a reckless person, but he couldn't really describe what had just happened as anything but reckless. He had made a mistake and it had almost cost him.

But this mistake hadn't come without its benefits.

'What an interesting treasure...' Leonel muttered to himself, turning the shield over.

The basic ability of the Shield was pretty simple: pour Dream Force in and get a pulse of it out the other direction in return. The more you poured in, the greater the output.

At the apex, Leonel could release a blast at Tier Eight just like Regnier could, but his understanding of the treasure was limited, so he could only do it once every ten seconds. In addition, if he was correct, even if he reached Tier Nine, Tier Nine would still be the best the shield could do, though he would be able to conjure it faster.

This made sense because this ability wasn't the main ability of the shield at all, it was just the cover used to hide its true ability, and that ability was obviously related to the hole that had just been a part of his chest.

There was a purpose behind that action just now that went beyond just a failsafe against those that didn't know how to use it.

The shield's wraps put him in a near-death state so that he would be on the verge of returning to his body on purpose. That way, the connection between him and his real body would suddenly firm up.

The benefit of this was obvious: it would have allowed Regnier to use his real abilities for just a short time.

The problem, though, was obvious. The moment you activated this function, you would be on a ticking timer. And since you would have to be in a near-death state to make it work, the time was most definitely not long. If you could get a few seconds out of it, it would already be excellent.

Leonel, however, had an advantage Regnier didn't... and that was the life tablet.

According to that first experience, Leonel felt that he could last about three minutes total... if his Dream Force was endless. Unfortunately, making use of the Life Tablet wasn't exactly all sunshine and rainbows.

Without an endless supply of Dream Force, he could only last for a little over a minute. And, after that minute was up, he would obviously need a large amount of Dream Force to stabilize his body again to stop himself from dying.

To make matters worse, this minute of time would be even smaller if he used his Dream Force to do anything else, like controlling a beast or anything of the like.

Luckily, the Dream Force he was referring to here was that of his real body, which was separate from the Dream Force this avatar was using. But it was still something to note regardless.

Leonel flipped the shield in his hands and it returned to the form of a belt that wrapped around his arm. Thoughts swirled in his head.

'Reach Tier Eight.'

So that was what Leonel did. He ignored everything else and began hunting Tier Eights. He was much more cautious, knowing that the Owlans were likely nearby.

But to his surprise, or maybe his expectations... they never appeared before him.

The more Leonel killed, the deeper his sneer became. This sneer didn't appear on his face, but the contempt in his heart was rolling like waves.

He knew why the Owlans were doing this; they were arrogant. They probably weren't waiting for him in specific; they were waiting for whoever it was killed him in the end.

Ultimately, there was only one way out of this place, and it was up that mountain.

They would sit there, prim and proper, beautiful and unblemished, ready for their rewards to be delivered to their laps.

However, he would make them regret that choice. Maybe if they pressed him, tried to suffocate his advantage, they'd have a chance to win. In fact, the reason Leonel had originally chosen the speed win aspect of things was that he felt that too many people would be hunting him.

But if they wanted to shoot themselves in the foot, he wouldn't stop them. They were just laying out the path for his dominant victory.

All of the Pavilion Heads would fall into his hands.

Leonel's aura flourished, and he entered Tier Eight.

'It's time.'

He quickly found a secluded region, ready to break into the Life State for the second time.

Chapter 2548: [Bonus] Oh...

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 1/6]

Leonel looked at his haul. He had over 50 Forgetful Orbs now. He felt that he would at most need 20 to reach the Life State, and that was if things went horribly. He should be guaranteed to succeed now.

He crushed the first one, and that familiar feeling of forgetfulness came back. It was like that moment just after you woke up in a new place... what was familiar had suddenly been replaced by something else, and you lay there confused for a moment, wondering what had happened to the world around you.

Even so, the confusion wasn't deep enough that you felt fear or trepidation. You were sure that there was a reason you were in this unfamiliar world, a reason for these soft bed sheets that were just a tad different from what you were used to... a reason why you were staring at a door when usually you would be staring at a window... why the shading and lighting wasn't exactly what you were used to despite the fact your internal clock told you that you should have woken up at around the same time.

Leonel basked in that feeling, and then he caught onto something new. It was actually a hint of fear.

This fear didn't come from his situation, but rather that feeling of loss that came with much of the context of his Dream Force being stripped from him.

His Dream Force wasn't just an external Force; it was him, and its rise in strength was the anchor that allowed him to find himself... his true self.

To him, Dream Force wasn't just a means to an end; it was the ends, and the context around how he had reached this stage wasn't just a casual enlightenment here and there... it was him, his true self.

Every step he had taken carried with it the weight of the person he was now, and there was a certain beauty to that. But it was likewise the reason he suddenly felt a hint of fear using this Forgetful Orb.

What if he couldn't bring it back? What if it would be lost to him forever if he took one too many? What if he would lose a piece or twist one far beyond recognition that he would lose a part of himself?

That uncomfortable feeling sunk in heavily and it was hidden deep within the core of himself.

Did everyone that comprehended a Dream Sovereignty feel that tranquility he had?

It was a sudden and random thought, one unlike the fear-laced ones he had had until this point. But after some thought, he didn't feel that they were as disconnected as he had originally assumed.

Wasn't that tranquility part of how he had found his true self? How he had purged the influence of the Demoness and become Leonel Morales, the real Leonel Morales?

Why was tranquility such a huge piece of his Sovereignty? It was because that was the first feeling he had back then, but was that all there was to it?

Maybe you could use several words to describe it. Tranquility, confidence, peace...

Then he remembered something else. The first few times he had used the Forgetful Orb, this being the fourth time overall and the first of this sitting, his Sovereignty had become an anchor... why did it feel different this time?

This fear wasn't there before, or maybe he hadn't noticed it? No, it definitely wasn't there; he had dug up as much as he could, he was certain, but he had barely gone far when he sensed the fear this time.

Leonel seemed to finally understand.

His Sovereignty was slipping away? It was being tested? Maybe it was being refined? Whatever it was, he could feel it getting further and further away. If it was the first thing, he already felt close to it slipping free of his hands. If it was the latter two, whatever was happening was failing.

Leonel could feel it quite clearly. It seemed the fear wasn't coming from his Dream Force itself, but rather it losing its anchor.

Considering everything, it made sense. It would likely only come with increasing difficulty to keep moving up like this. He already had one Sovereignty attached to a Life State Force, and two more a half-step away.

That made him take a step back again.

What was the difference between Destruction Sovereignty and Dream Sovereignty? Was there a dividing line between them?

He had just described his Destruction Sovereignty as something attached to his Scarlet Star Force, connected, but still ultimately separate.

However, could he describe his Dream Force in that way? How many other Sovereignties were like his Destruction Sovereignty?

Shadow Sovereignty seemed to fall into that category, but was it really separate? Or was it just another name for darkness? He didn't feel that it was the same thing?

Going through the list of Sovereignties, Destruction Sovereignty seemed to be the only one like that... Was that why he had felt less resistance when he raised himself to the Life State the first time?

Or maybe... what if it was related to El'Rion's warning again.

An Innate Node was probably a shortcut to grasping a Sovereignty, though that was oversimplifying it. Regardless, the reason he had wanted to find a Vital Star Force Innate Node in the first place was that he could access a hint of the Life State with it as well, that way he could save Aina right away instead of waiting.

The understanding settled in for Leonel. So it was because Existence tended to set up barriers when one was trying to enter the Life State more than once, those barriers were even more stringent when you were trying to keep your Sovereignty at the same time.

'Oh... so that's why...'

When Leonel understood the reason for the fear, and grasped that it wasn't something coming from himself, he smiled.

'In that case, piss off.'

If this mysterious force wanted to use fear to stall him, it was going to have to do a better job than that.

His Dream Force was his sense of self, it couldn't be so casually swayed, not now, and hopefully never again.

Chapter 2549: [Bonus] Break

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 2/6]

Leonel felt his strength soaring by leaps and bounds, large amounts of Dream Force gathering around him as though it had a mind of its own. Akin to Mother Nature amidst a flock of birds, the plumes of golden and silver clouds gathered around him.

His crown glowed stronger, the robes that were draped over his shoulders becoming more prominent and detailed.

The strength of a Tier Nine flooded through him.

Leonel had thought that it might take 20 to breakthrough, but he hadn't thought that he would succeed after just a single one.

Still, he felt that there was a hint of serendipity involved. That was the result of a sudden rush of insight coming together with a helpful outside sort.

The moment he felt his Sovereignty slipping away, he actually felt that he could break through. But that odd fear had helped him back, making him wonder just what was happening and why exactly it was happening.

If he had broken through back then, due to the fear, he might have let his Sovereignty slip away, and unlike his Weapon Forces, he wasn't nearly as confident in getting his Dream Force Sovereignty back if it were to slip away. It was something that he could feel consciously... as though Weapon Forces were in a separate category of their own.

And that made sense. If it had been any other Force type, would the Godlens have been able to form a quasi-true version of it?

When Leonel really thought about it, he didn't think that it was possible for any other kind of Sovereignty. There was something special about Weapon Forces, and that was probably how flexible it was. Two Spear Sovereigns might have two completely different interpretations of it and paths they could take.

For Leonel, whether it was his Spear Sovereignty or his Bow Sovereignty, it was based in creation. He understood that quite clearly now, which was why his Bow Sovereignty had broken back through so clearly the moment he entered the True Dream Plane.

Because Leonel had built his foundation on his grandfather's way of the spear, everything about his own way of the spear now was rooted in Artistic Conceptions and exuded the power of words, images, phrases, feelings, and everything beyond.

This was why his Spear Dance evoked so many feelings of awe in people who saw it, some who weren't familiar with the spear might even believe that he was the best master of the spear they had ever seen.

While that might not necessarily be untrue, it was just the nature of his spear to pull out the emotions of others, because what they were watching wasn't his spear, but rather the feelings it was channeling... whether that be a word, a powerful phrase, a meteor falling from the skies, or even an endless plane of ice in all its finality.

It could be said, at the same time, that the flexibility of his Dream Force had also given him quite a bit of luck in breaking through.

The moment he realized where that fear was coming from, he was able to shatter it with a thought because he also knew where his Dream Force Sovereignty came from.

It was Tranquility, but now that by itself. It was rather that the root of his Tranquility came from a confidence in himself, one built on the certainty that so long as he had a chance, he could break free of any trouble and come out on top in the end.

In a lot of ways, it was the truest form of Sovereignty there was, and it was likely this was the very same form of it that his future self had comprehended. That was the reason it had reverberated back through the walls of time, impacting even his current self.

That was both warming and yet concerning.

If he was taking the same path he already had once before, could he be certain that anything would change at all? Wouldn't he end up in the same rut?

Leonel stared out into space for a long while, trying to grapple with that question.

When even becoming the most powerful person to ever exist wasn't enough for a happy ending, what should you do, then?

Leonel's thoughts flickered toward Aina and his mother, then his brothers, what was left of the Morales family, even Noah, his grandfather and his grandmother.

Would he have to watch them all die again?

He really wanted to say no, absolutely not, that confident surge from his Dream Force Sovereignty shining like a bright beacon...

But he ignored it.

It had been there before, and it had been able to change nothing. What good was a steady rain of confidence if it couldn't change anything?

He suddenly remembered a class he had had back in the Royal Blue Academy, a random one on psychology. It described stress as an evolutionary necessity, it was related to fight or flight and it put a person in a state to take swift and immediate action.

His Sovereignty was so natural and soothing, it came to him instantaneously. It was as natural as breathing to him.

When he met a stressor, he reacted with confidence to deal with the situation.

If he took another step back, what had triggered his stepping into Dream Sovereignty in the first place? Wasn't it Mo"Lexi's name and that land of carnage? The stress she placed on everyone back then was so great that many of them directly died, their hearts and minds unable to take it...

And yet he had shrugged it off like it didn't matter.

He looked down at his hands, really trying to understand himself. He was good at reading the emotions of others and even deducing why they might feel that way, but did he really understand why...

'Is my Dream Sovereignty not really the core of my being? Is it influencing me as well? I don't think I want it...'

Leonel felt something break inside of him.

Chapter 2550: [Bonus] Respect and Persistence

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 3/6]

Leonel continued to sit there, staring into space. He didn't really feel depressed; he just felt a bit empty. And then, the anxiety came.

What was he doing? Facing off against Ninth Dimensional experts like he was on the same playing field as them? Was he insane?

These weren't even normal Ninth Dimensional experts either; these were Ninth Dimensional experts that could take someone like Clarence and turn him into a prop-up toy to be skewered and humiliated before the masses.

The moment Leonel had this thought, he felt disgust. This wasn't him. But why did the lines feel so blurred?

The immediate assumption was that his Dream Force was turning him into someone he was not, but this was clearly not the case. He wanted to be confident; he wanted to face off against enemies who scorned him and make them eat their words. That sort of anxiety wasn't something he would have normally.

Even when the influence of his future self was muted, and he had yet to enter the Dimensional Verse, he had always been the same. He hated to lose; he was willing to suffer for a victory, and he hated the idea of others controlling him.

He didn't even necessarily hate football back then; he loved the sport, even if he might have lied to himself and others in saying that he didn't.

He loved the control it gave him, that feeling of combat and war...

He suddenly remembered the first time he had stepped onto a real battlefield, back in the Camelot Zone. He had felt his blood boiling and the excitement spilled over into his actions. He had rushed headfirst into that army of Demons as though they weren't fantastical creatures he had never laid eyes on before.

He had loved every second of it.

That was true... that was another aspect of himself... he loved battle...

No, what he loved was competition. The more thrilling it was, the better.

Maybe that was also why he carelessly threw his life around back then, to the point that his future wife had had enough of him.

It was clear that though he was someone with feelings, it wasn't to the point he'd have a bleeding heart for strangers.

No, he just loved it. He loved being thrust into unbeatable odds and then inevitably coming out on top.

He was an adrenaline junky.

It made sense, but he had somewhat shot himself in the foot. He loved the adrenaline, but if he was always calm, where was the adrenaline coming from?

So he continuously did things that could only be considered stupid and more stupid, throwing himself at enemies he couldn't hope to defeat in the hopes that one of them would make him feel something...

They never did.

A grin spread across Leonel's face. He was staring into space, and yet a wild, shit-eating grin was on his face.

It was interesting. If he was never aware of his future self, would he have ever gone down this line of thought? If he wasn't so obsessed with not repeating those mistakes, could he have?

The answer was obviously no. And why would he? His mind was filled with confidence in who he was and what his path was; why would he second guess it? Maybe the only person that could have corrected his path somewhat was his father, but he had already long since passed away.

Then there was that other man, the man he had only called master in his final breath. But if it took him so long to acknowledge him, could it have shaken him free of that path?

The Leonel of today wasn't aware of the story between Wise Star Order and his future self, but what he did know was that he had a streak of completely ignoring his mentors aside from his father.

When Old Hutch told him about how he should use his spear, he completely brushed it off. It wasn't until years later that he took bits and pieces of those teachings and finally gave his spear a life of its own. But how long had that taken him?

Something like his Dream Force was even more unruly to outside change...

Unless he wanted to change himself.

The crown above his head vanished, and the robes that had adorned him likewise faded into wisps of smoke.

It was likely that by now, those watching were madly cackling at his misfortune, but Leonel didn't seem to notice at all, his mind focused on other things.

He no longer felt calm; his heart was racing, and his skin was slightly flushed. His mind was filled with thoughts of the Owlans, how powerful they were, how difficult the coming battle would be, how unprepared he was...

Hints of red began to appear in his irises as he continued to stare forward.

He basked in that feeling of anxiety, of sweaty palms, of an agitation deep within him.

He felt that potential hidden so deeply within his body was being pulled out one after another, potential that even his Control Ability Index hadn't been able to sense before.

And why would it? It was fueled by his Dream Force, and it felt that he had everything in hand, so why even bother?

He didn't just want his Dream Force to be based on confidence and tranquility. Peace wouldn't give him the pressure he needed to improve.

He had almost died at the hands of that shield, and yet other than a slight skip of his heart, he never really felt the weight of it, as though he had already had everything in hand...

But he knew the truth. That had never been the case; so many things were out of his control...

And he wanted to feel that.

He didn't need confidence; he needed bravery; he needed...

Respect and Persistence.

The images of his father's face made Leonel's eyes involuntarily water, the agitation in his heart growing.

He needed to Respect his enemies.

He needed the Persistence to drive his spear through them anyway.

The world suddenly lost its color.

Chapter 2551: [Bonus] A Shame

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 4/6]

Leonel's crown returned even larger than before. The surrounding Dream Force swirled so violently that the mountain range he was within, and the surrounding mountain ranges, all trembled, being stripped of their Dream Force one valiant step after another.

It all gathered into his robes. If the current version and the one of the past were to be compared, it would be akin to a rough drawing versus something an artist had spent countless, grueling weeks on.

His underlying power increased from Tier Eight to Tier Nine once again, but it felt like something faintly beyond that.

Tier Nine was just a casual name that Leonel had given to the strength that would be needed to climb up the main mountain, but that didn't mean that it was the ultimate strength one could have in this world, though it was very difficult to scale beyond it due to the nature of improvement. You'd probably have to swallow hundreds of Tier Nine threats to go beyond that level.

Leonel didn't feel that he had stepped beyond Tier Nine, but at the very least, he didn't feel like a normal Tier Nine either.

He stood to his feet. His eyes didn't carry a familiar coolness or calmness. Instead, there was a hint of vibrancy, as though he felt...

Alive.

He landed.

By this point, his robes were so long that they fell like a waterfall to his back, blending into the puffs of clouds. His violet hair seemed to be dancing between corporeal and incorporeal, moving back and forth between the two as though it was both a wispy fog and strong filaments of amethyst light.

A fire was lit in his eyes, and his irises really looked as though they had lost their usual form, flickering like flames instead.

Before him, three women stood. If he hadn't known they were called the Owlans, he would have thought they were an Angel Race. In fact, they looked as though they could have been a trio of three perfect sisters.

One wore a gown of blue, the one on the right wearing one of violet. As for the one in the middle of them, she wore a dress of silver and gold. Compared to the open wings of the two to her left and right, she was far more reserved, her wings tucked nice and neatly, almost accentuating her slender figure.

The three of them didn't seem surprised by Leonel's arrival. Well, the one in the middle wasn't. Leonel could sense the narrowed eyes of the two beside her. Clearly, he had been right about what they were expecting.

These women didn't care who eventually made it here; they were just prepared to deal with them. It was even likely that they had come here immediately.

"You aren't going to run?" The one in the middle asked.

Her smile was so pleasing to the eye, her tone was even more so, and yet her words didn't seem to match that tone. It was as though condescension was needed into her very bones.

She didn't quite look like she was trying to look down on Leonel; it was just something that she did naturally and without even the slightest care in the world. If Leonel brought it up, she might even apologize; that was the sort of impression he got from this woman.

And it was annoying.

"This is good, though," the woman continued even without a reply. "My name is Minerva."

Leonel still didn't say anything. Though he found it weird that this woman would have the same name as the race she descended from, it was in line with her arrogant character. It only felt natural at this point.

"I sensed something on you earlier, and now that you're here, I feel it even more clearly. You have a treasure of the Minerva Race, no?"

"Honestly, I don't think there's really a need to fight you. My Pavilion does not want your Life Tablet because we are in our own precarious situation. That treasure of yours, though, is something that we cannot do without.

"You might be able to guess that the Minerva Race is very near and dear to us. Though being related to them has caused us no shortage of problems, they are our Ancestors, after all. We cannot abandon them."

Leonel's eyes narrowed. They were obviously talking about the Segmented Cube. He had no idea how they would know about that; it wasn't like he could take the Segmented Cube in with him.

Plus... The Segmented Cube wasn't just the Segmented Cube; it was Anastasia, someone who had been by his father's side for much of his life, and then had been by his own for closing in on a decade now.

This wasn't someone he would casually hand over to another, and she wasn't a "something".

In fact, the last people that Leonel would give Anastasia to would be these Owlans. Their Ancestors ruined Anastasia's life, taking her from her home, and then stripping her of the flexibility of her mind all so that they could have their perfect little treasure.

They were disgusting.

Leonel had been quite calm when he came here. Other than the fiery will for battle, his mind had a level of unprecedented clarity right now.

"No."

Leonel's reply was simple. He didn't embellish it at all, but the Dream Force in his surroundings reacted to him on his own, causing his voice to echo with a boom.

"Oh..." Minerva looked disappointed. It really didn't look like an act. Most would feel the need to protect her if they ever saw this sort of expression. "... I thought that we could be friends. Seraphina, you do it."

The blue dress-wearing Owlman took a step and suddenly vanished.

No data found.

- Chapter 2552: [Bonus] Enough?

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 5/6]

A tiny fist appeared before Leonel's chest in a flash, and he didn't even seem capable of reacting in time.

The fist collided, that slender form packing the strength of a meteor's explosion. It didn't even seem certain that Seraphina's strong suit was the fist, but it didn't seem to matter...

Until she realized that Leonel hadn't moved.

"Don't use Dream Force like that," Leonel said lightly, "you'll only embarrass yourself."

Seraphina blinked and then suddenly smiled a beautiful smile. "You're saying such harsh words to a beauty, don't you feel bad?"

"You're not nearly as beautiful as my wife. You'd be better off being a vulture with those wings of yours."

Seraphina was stunned into silence. She had never heard anyone talk to her like that before; she didn't even know how to react...

Until the rage came.

Her white-gold arcs gained a tinge of pink as her anger flared up. She stopped using Dream Force like Fist Force; she hadn't even comprehended Fist Force in the past, she just thought that it would be more than enough to deal with Leonel.

Her wings spread out. As though embroidered in golden leaf metals, they shimmered, slashing down with menace and murderous intent.

Leonel's spear, still aimed toward the ground, suddenly flickered.

BANG! BANG!

Seraphina's two wings were deflected as a Shield suddenly appeared on Leonel's left arm. It swung down with its own undisguised menace, bashing against Seraphina's head and distorting her beautiful face into an assortment of flying teeth, blood, and a severely broken nose.

She shot backward, barely stabilizing herself after 20 or so meters due to her flapping wings.

Leonel stood in the same place, his irises still flickering like flames.

He raised his spear, pointing it at the three women.

"There's no one else coming. I've already killed them all. It'll probably be best if the three of you acted together."

Seraphina's eyes blazed with rage, and the beauty actually snarled.

"Seraphina."

The voice was like an ice-cold plunge. Seraphina felt her soul rip out of her body, only to be deposited right back.

She took a shuddering breath and looked back toward Minerva, her eyes flickering with a hint of fear.

Minerva smiled. "Your use of Dream Force is not bad. Successfully attacking the mind of an Owlman without her even noticing is without a doubt a feat to be proud of."

Another condescending statement rolled off her tongue as though it was nothing. She was truly an annoyance.

"But there is also no need to lie. How can any wife of yours be more beautiful than an Owlman? Those of my Race would never marry a human; our bloodlines have unfortunately been too diluted already to take the risk."

She sighed, her tone light and full of air along with even a hint of cheer.

Leonel didn't respond immediately, looking at the woman. It was a dense sort of silence, only somewhat buffeted by the rolling winds and heavy breathing of Seraphina.

"Is that long enough?" Leonel suddenly said.

Minerva's eyes narrowed only for a moment before they went back to normal, her cheery self returning.

"I just wanted to make sure you know that I was going to shred you to pieces now not because your Dream Force is something impressive, but because there are just some things you don't say."

Leonel's spear remained steady, pointing right at Minerva's perfect nose.

"The Minerva Race was made up of nothing but hacks and wackjobs with delusions of grandeur and God Complexes. It seems that while you didn't gain their strength, you certainly gained their unwarranted arrogance.

"Oh, and I meant what I said. My wife is much more beautiful than you."

Leonel vanished, appearing before Seraphina so fast that she accidentally inhaled some of the blood that was pooling into her mouth.

Her wings flapped hard, doing double duty, both helping her escape and slowing Leonel's approach.

But under Leonel's control, the Dream Force separated and became his speed instead. He closed the distance even faster, his spear appearing before her throat.

Seraphina's eyes widened, not understanding how this could be happening. She had entered Tier Nine as well, so why was it that she felt so outmatched right now?

Unfortunately for her, her Ninth Dimensional strength was meaningless here. The only thing that mattered was her Dream Force.

In the past, Leonel had been lagging quite far behind. But now, he had not only affirmed his Sovereignty, but he was in the Life State as well.

Even if Seraphina had a Middle Life State Dream Force, she was absolutely no match for him without a Sovereignty of her own.

If she tried to use Dream Force as another Force, it would be stripped of her control entirely. If she tried to use Dream Force as Dream Force, she would be outmatched in terms of both ingenuity and raw power.

Leonel's spear flickered, drawing a line of silver across the air and swiping at Seraphina's throat.

Just when he was about to succeed, he sensed danger. The violet dress-wearing Owlman, Octavia, appeared on his right side, the side opposite to his shield. He had to admit that it was a clever choice...

Though a predictable one.

A Dream Net appeared, and a Tier Nine creature's strength was unleashed like the roar of a dragon.

Leonel didn't even look at her, his spear flicking upward and taking Seraphina's head.

The momentum of his body carried him forward, and as though he wasn't satisfied, a blooming Dream Force took shape as he shield-bashed Seraphina's body, blowing it to pieces.

At the same time, Octavia was forced to wrap her body in her wings, pushing forth with a large amount of Dream Force to protect herself, but that didn't stop her from being sent flying into the distance, covering several kilometers before she could finally stop.

Leonel landed on the ground, his battle intent still flaring.

He hardly paused for a moment before he exploded toward Minerva.

- Chapter 2553: [Bonus] Far More

Chapter 2553: [Bonus] Far More

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Mr. Mostert <3 6/6]

The world resonated with Leonel, his movements quicker, faster, and more agile than anything he had ever experienced before. He imagined that if he could see a future projection of what it would be like for him to enter the Ninth Dimension, it would feel exactly like this one.

Minerva's expression still remained calm. She didn't seem to react to Seraphina's death either, or Octavia's somewhat unknown fate for that matter.

When it seemed that she had run out of time to react properly, her palms suddenly moved.

Leonel felt a large gathering of Dream Force being stripped from his control. She had only moved so casually, and yet there was a huge war that erupted between them, each one fighting for supremacy over the space.

And Leonel felt like he was losing.

BANG!

Leonel's momentum stopped, and he was forced to take a heavy step back beneath Minerva's strength. She was a true powerhouse, there was no doubt about it. At the very least, she was somewhat worthy of her arrogance. If she had access to her full array of skills, Leonel wouldn't last even a single glance from her.

Leonel grinned. He could feel his heart pumping, and he felt more alive now than he ever had before.

The dichotomy between his pumping blood and his calm mind became like the push and pull of a steady bass drum and a heart-stopping melody. They played off one another to absolute perfection, and when Leonel moved again, his spear truly danced.

The flurry of strikes was met by Minerva's nonchalant palms. She seemed to move just once for every ten attempts Leonel made, and her feet didn't even shift the slightest inch, yet she weathered the storm all while pushing Leonel back.

But at that moment, she frowned.

The gathering streams of starlight around Leonel felt like he was gathering something up. She couldn't quite understand what it was, but she actually felt something in her heart stir.

Worry? That was ridiculous.

Her palm pushed forward with far more force, and she expected that Leonel would at least be blown off balance, but instead, Leonel's shield suddenly lit up, erupting with Tier Nine strength suddenly and forcefully.

If it was just this, it wouldn't have been a problem, but Leonel had angled the shield, applying pressure in an unexpected way. It turned Minerva's strike into a glancing blow, and Leonel's spear dance didn't pause for even a moment.

In that instant, there was an eruption from the distance, and Octavia stood out from the rubble. She looked a bit disheveled, but other than some blood at the corner of her lips, she seemed to be perfectly fine.

Seeing her Mistress fighting with Leonel, she hesitated for a moment. On the one hand, she knew Minerva's temper, and she wouldn't like interference in her battle. But could she really stand to the side without doing anything?

Without a choice, Octavia burst forward. It would be better to be scolded than to look like she was slacking.

Leonel's spear didn't pause, but he noticed Octavia's approach instantly. With calm movements, he continued to grace the skies with his blade, his movements flowing from one to another. As the momentum increased, Minerva found that she couldn't withstand

them as casually as she had before. At the same time, her control over the Dream Force in the area was being stripped away.

Octavia swept in just in time, this time fully prepared and attacking Leonel's back.

Leonel sneered. "What a cowardly race."

Octavia felt her heart skip a beat. There was nothing Minerva hated more than someone insulting her race. What she hated even more was one of them giving an outsider a reason to do this.

Leonel was obviously targeting a weak spot on purpose, and unfortunately for them, it worked.

A Dream Net appeared behind Leonel, and it roared with life. That slightest of hesitations sent Octavia flying once again.

Leonel's wild grin bloomed, his spear strikes becoming faster as he suppressed Minerva from all sides. A beautiful formation formed beneath him, complex Runes formed of Spear Force shimmering with life.

"Enough," Minerva said, her folded wings finally spreading out.

In that moment, a strong wave of Dream Force descended, and runes began to glow on Minerva's wings.

It was the natural ability of the Minerva Race and the Owlman Race, for that matter, to form a world around their wings. This world gave them unprecedented control over Forces of all types.

The problem was that this was the True Dream Plane. No one should be able to bring outside abilities in.

And yet it was happening here.

Leonel felt that his Forces were being stripped from him. His Sovereignty seemed useless in front of an ability Minerva was simply born with.

His Spear Force was the first to go, and his Spear Dance seemed moments away from being nothing but bluster.

This was the difference between Races, a huge, unfathomable gap. She didn't have to train a single day in her life to grasp this ability, and the treasure she used to bring it into this world was probably something handed to her on a silver platter.

That anxiety was boiling through Leonel's veins again. He could feel every inch of this moment as his mind stretched every second into what felt like hours.

BOOM.

In the instant before all of his Forces were stripped from him, the Shield's straps pierced right into his heart.

The Spear Dance he was completing here was nothing but a cover. In fact, his real body had already completed it. It could even be said that he was making an attempt to layer two Spear Dances into one.

The first spear dance suddenly resonated with the second, the two solidifying one another and resisting Minerva for a moment.

If Minerva hadn't been so arrogant, she would have noticed that something was wrong almost immediately. If she hadn't been so arrogant, she would have likely been able to react.

But her mind had been influenced by Leonel on her watch.

Leonel's spear gained a hint of something different.

Universal Force descended.

[Domain] activated.

[Universe] activated.

[Finality] activated.

Scarlet Star Force bloomed.

A spear blade tore right through Minerva's chest.

She was still standing there arrogantly, her arms crossed over her chest and her wings spread out wide. She seemed to think that she had already won.

When she looked down slowly to find flames dancing in the new hole that went through her, her eyes could only widen in shock.

"Like I said. My wife is definitely far more beautiful," Leonel spoke, blood leaking from his lips.

He didn't even watch as Minerva fell. He turned and dashed toward Octavia, rushing at his fastest speed as he could feel death closing in.

He had to be fast.

Chapter 2554: World Stage

Leonel felt a ticking timer in his mind. While he could rush off to capture some beasts to stabilize his situation, if he did that right now, it could give Octavia the chance to rush up the mountain. At that point, all this would be for naught.

Although it would be cowardly for her to do so, and clearly a slap to the faces of the Owlman Race as a whole, a win was a win. Leonel didn't want second place after everything he had been through.

His speed was fast, faster than anything he had displayed until now.

He appeared around Octavia in an instant just as the latter was stuck in a daze. She had just seen Minerva lose for the first time in her entire life. When she thought about what would likely happen when they returned, her heart shuddered.

When her gaze landed on Leonel, she analyzed the situation quite quickly. Unlike Leonel, these Ninth Dimensional experts were extremely experienced. The instant she saw the hole through Leonel's chest, she spent an extra second to observe the runes on the shield, and her pupils constricted with understanding.

Seeing this, Leonel understood immediately why Regnier had really hidden the Shield for so long. He was still stuck in the mindset that he was the best Crafter around, so much so that he didn't consider the fact just because he couldn't see through something with a glance, it didn't mean that others couldn't if they paid a little extra attention.

If the Owlmen weren't so arrogant, they would have paid closer attention to his Shield and might have been prepared for him to trigger this trump card.

Leonel internalized this mistake deeply. He knew that this was because of the path of confidence his Dream Force had taken before; he still believed himself to be the best in everything, and it had been a detriment instead.

He didn't suffer for it this time, but who knew when he would in the future?

He wouldn't allow it to happen again.

His gaze blazed as he felt Octavia's intention to retreat. She obviously planned to wait out the duration until he fell dead. And unfortunately, Leonel wasn't immediately prepared for this outcome.

However, he reacted quickly. His heart thumped in his chest, feeling his body and mind being brought to their absolute limit.

Dream Nets suddenly appeared all around him, six in total, completely surrounding him and Octavia.

Octavia's eyes widened. What was he doing?! If he released these, he would do too-!

BOOM!

Six beams of thick golden lines, all of them forming an encirclement around Octavia, roared to life, swallowing them up completely.

After seeing Minerva's abilities, Leonel understood how Octavia had managed to survive two near point-blank blasts of the Dream Net. Minerva had the ability to completely nerf another's Dream Force in a wide range, but Octavia and Seraphina could only negate Force that directly touched their wings. Due to this, the defensive and attacking abilities of their wings were absolutely frightening. It could even be said that Leonel was lucky to have only clashed with Seraphina's wings a single time and that he had done so with an actual weapon instead of just his Forces.

But this was also why he had no choice but to attack Octavia from all sides even though he would get caught up in the blast.

Although Octavia was the one surrounded by the Dream Net, there were three of them facing in Leonel's direction, and there was no way Octavia would block them for him. He would definitely have to deal with the blast as well.

He roared as the blast radius rocked the world enveloping both himself and Octavia.

Leonel pushed himself to the limit, trying to split the wild raging energies. His mind was unprecedentedly focused as his body was pushed to the brink.

"All tides split beneath my blade."

His gaze sharpened, his violet irises flickering like dancing amethyst flames.

His spear blade expanded, and the crown above his head shimmered.

The world bent to his will, and he could feel King Alexandre's Ability Index more clearly now than he ever had before.

In the past, he was arrogant, his Dream Force shunning the world because it was confident in itself. But now, he could really feel the world. He had opened himself up, and the world had likewise embraced him as a result.

When he spoke, it listened... and in that moment, his Dream Force and Spear Force seemed to truly become one existence, causing their strength to explode forth with a majesty even beyond the spear strike that eliminated Minerva.

The world split in two.

Leonel stood there, huffing deep breaths as he stared at Octavia's frozen figure. She shuddered for a moment, and then fell into two pieces. Her wings simply couldn't protect her from all sides. When she wrapped them around herself, it would reveal the space between her shoulder blades. She could only blame herself for trying to run away earlier.

He met her gaze in those last moments before they disappeared and grinned.

His laughter boomed into the skies, large amounts of Dream Force shooting forward from the surroundings and pooling into his battle.

This felt good. It felt better than any victory.

His blood pumped through his veins as though gasoline lit ablaze. Every reverberating thump echoed through the skies, his vitality rushing into the surroundings in waves.

As he laughed, the True Dream Plane seemed to resonate with him, shimmering and shining beneath his jubilation as though it, too, was happy for him.

A dominant victory, a truly dominant victory. If there was one part of him that hadn't changed at all, it was the love of this sweet taste. He almost forgot that there was a hole in his chest at all as he basked in the light.

It only made it feel all the better that it was his dad's spear that guided him.

"Take this as the return of the Human Race to the world stage!"

Chapter 2555: Top 100

Leonel rushed to capture some creatures to stabilize his situation, and once he was done, he didn't rush up the mountain yet. Instead, he went to every mountain he missed, plucking away every Forgetful Orb that he could find.

Between the ones he took away from the corpses of Deputy Pavilion and Pavilion Heads, and the mountain ranges he had yet to visit, he gathered over 300 of them. This number was a huge boon to him. He could help a large number of people progress through the Impetus State.

Aina didn't really need it. Just with her Soul Clairvoyance alone, she could probably walk through the Impetus State blind and with her limbs bound. The real question was the others. Leonel was worried about how long they might take to catch up.

He gave them as much help as he could, and it wasn't like they were slow compared to everyone else, but it just wasn't enough.

He didn't have the time to allow them to slowly grow. They needed strength now, and this was the only way to ensure that it could happen. He almost wished the True Dream Plane was harder so that he'd be able to gather more.

However, he pushed down this thought. This was too dangerous. If Minerva had a different sort of temperament, or he didn't succeed in his breakthrough, or any number of other little things didn't go just right, he wouldn't have been able to succeed like this.

When Leonel was finally done, he met the tall mountain with a smile on his face. Then, he began to walk up it.

The pressure of the Dream Force washed over him. It felt not too dissimilar to the stairs he had to walk up to reach the Life Tablet, but this time, it didn't seem to care that he was a Sovereign.

Usually, this mountain was meant to be walked up in a tandem. This was a race to the end, not a fight to the death. However, Leonel, though not the first to do so, was a minority in what he was doing now. Taking on the pressure of the mountain alone was something only some had managed to do.

Of course, this number wasn't exaggeratedly small, especially since this was among the weaker True Dream Planes.

Even so, Leonel did so with a smile, basking in the waves of pressure. It almost felt like a massage for his mind.

He paid attention to the different quirks of the Dream Force, and he seemed to be able to feel the subtle differences as he progressed. It somehow felt to have character, and yet completely free from restrictions at the same time. It was a peaceful time.

He didn't even notice when he had already walked to the top of the mountain. If it wasn't for the fact that there was simply nowhere else to go, he might have just continued walking without a care.

Before him, there was an extremely large orb. It didn't look like a Forgetful Orb, though they shared a similar shape. Instead, it looked like it contained countless fluttering golden runes inside, each one shaped into a flying butterfly.

The movement of the runes was erratic and difficult to grasp, but it was beautiful nonetheless and had a weird sort of... order to it.

It was the same feeling he got from the Dream Force around him, having endless potential, and yet didn't feel flippant or unorganized either.

He reached forward and touched the orb. The treasure seemed to sense that Leonel was the only one left, and the world rumbled.

At that moment, the Vast Dream Pavilion suddenly moved. From the 9999th spot it shared along with the three other Dream Pavilions that had entered along with him, it shot upward blazing back into the top 1000 and appearing near the top 100 in an instant.

The stele trembled and then, under everyone's astonished gazes, the Vast Dream Pavilion moved up one more spot, firmly taking 100th place while the former 100th placed Dream Pavilion, the Rushing Stream Dream Pavilion, fell to 101st.

The gap between 123rd and 100th was indeed so wide, but no one thought that the Vast Dream Pavilion would take such a commanding victory. Even if Leonel had been first, if there had been a second, third, and fourth place, the Challenge points would have been distributed in a Tier system. Fourth place would probably still fall out of the top 1000, but it wouldn't be a problem for the rest to remain.

In that case, Leonel would have at best moved up five to ten spots. But this time...

This was a huge deal. The divisions in the rankings were as follows. There was a dividing Tier for every 1000 spots where both the strength and Contribution Points leapt forward considerably. Then, there was the 100-999 Tier. Following this, there was an enormous chasm and then came the top 100.

There were special benefits provided to the top 100, and there was a further large leap for every ten spots you moved up.

Even so, there was no doubt that the top 100 was made up of true powerhouses...

Because this was the stage where Creation State experts began to appear.

There was no doubt that Leonel had truly poked a hornet's nest this time. But he wasn't thinking about any of this right now as he had been ushered into a world that felt eerily similar to the world of rewards he used to enter after clearing Zones back in the Dimensional Verse.

Clarence had said that the Dream Pavilion had a great number of Contribution Points that they couldn't even use because the higher-ups kept making new rules about who could trade for what in a deliberate attempt to suppress them.

But following a Challenge Victory, depending on the Tier of True Dream Plane, and the thoroughness of victory, there was a whole world of things opened up to Leonel that the higher-ups couldn't stop him from taking at all.

Leonel grinned.

Chapter 2556: [Bonus] Anything

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Fire2112 (aka Firemonster) <3 1/6]

Leonel knew that this was his one chance, but he was also limited in what he could take. The rules were overly complex for seemingly no reason, but it seemed to be that this was how Dream Force users liked to operate.

He was beginning to understand that certain groups of people had certain personalities not decided by their race, but rather what Forces they chose to use. In an irony of ironies, it could be said that his thoughts about how Light Force and Dark Force weren't necessarily good or evil were somewhat incorrect, though not entirely so.

Clearly, by the personal choice he had made with his Dream Force, it was possible to deviate that path somewhat using Sovereignty. But, just as obviously, not everyone could grasp Sovereignty.

This was all to say that the rules of the Dream Pavilions were overly verbose and filled with caveats and sub-sections for sub-sections. The rules themselves would take a lifetime for a mortal to read, and they might not even make it part of the way through.

Even for the current Leonel, it was impossible for him to grasp them all. Much like a lawyer, he could only focus on certain sub-sections of the rules at a time. But also much like a lawyer, he wasn't very worried about this.

Let alone Leonel, most members of the Dream Pavilion were just as obtuse about the scale and scope of the rules; they could only pick and choose their spots as well. That meant that it would be harder to take advantage of Leonel, especially since he had a database of the rules in his mind right this moment, something the others couldn't boast.

If the time came where he had to defend himself based on some arbitrary rule, he was sure he could do it. Though it made him feel uncomfortable that he wouldn't likely be able to prepare for it ahead of time, at this point he didn't really have much of a choice.

The question was, with this one loophole he had left to take advantage of...

What should he do with it?

Should he trade for a large-scale protective formation like the one that had protected the Human Race all this time? They would really need it soon, not just because of the Demons but the pressure they might face later.

He wasn't unaware of the number of people he offended. He would have just killed them directly... if that would have changed anything.

Slaughtering the entire Nomad Pavilion was fine because they had acted first, but the others would be troublesome. Even if a child could tell they had come in with the intentions to kill him, plausible deniability was a powerful tool in the world of legalese.

Plus, killing them wouldn't really change much. He was just one person, and they had entire powers backing them.

Every Dream Pavilion wasn't just a power locked away in the vacuum. Much like the Vast Dream Pavilion, there were entire networks of organizations and powers that relied on them as well.

Sending a message to the Nomads was fine since he was firmly in the right, but if he did the same with everyone, the problem would eventually become much too large to deal with.

As much as he wanted to be willful and arrogant, this wasn't the time.

He had already made his decision quite clearly when he deviated from the original path of his Dream Force Sovereignty; he wanted something more.

He wanted as many people to survive as possible. This wasn't just about him.

'A large-scale formation...? Or maybe something to help raise the strength of everyone else as quickly as possible? Or maybe I should maximize my strength instead; me and Aina are probably the strongest cards the Human Race has to play right now...' Leonel mulled over a ton of thoughts, so much so that he almost didn't notice when someone appeared behind a floating counter of glass, the latter of which seemed to have only just appeared as well.

Leonel's eyes landed on the Spiritual Race lady. He wanted to describe her as beautiful, but at this point, it felt like every powerful woman he came across these days could be described as such. Maybe he should update his standards.

He laughed to himself. If he adjusted everyone based on Aina, would he start calling every woman he came across ugly now?

Jokes aside, the woman, even on that scale, would be considered average.

Leonel was quite biased when it came to Aina, but the objective truth was that she was a woman with beauty beyond compare, especially after her brush with death. Her body had been entirely reformed, and she seemed to have taken the opportunity to refine everything to perfection.

Honestly, he didn't think that Aina had done it on purpose, though it was possible. It was just that her Body Clairvoyance had reached an entirely new level, and she couldn't help edging toward perfection even if she didn't consciously want to.

So for this woman to be average on such a scale, that was certainly saying something.

Her hair was actually a rainbow of colors, looking more like motes of light than filaments of hair. Her nose was small and pointed, much like her ears. She had rosy cheeks and freckles that added to her charm. She was the type of woman one wanted to protect.

'Pointed ears?' Leonel blinked. He knew that this was a Spiritual, but why'd she look like an elf from those tales of Earth?

Leonel's mind shifted, and he found some information.

'Pure-blooded Spirituals? What does that even mean? How can you be pure-blooded anything when you're born a soul?'

Leonel looked toward the woman again, his mind drifting through the information he had just read. These Pure-Blooded Spirituals were apparently as close you could get to being a Demi-God without actually descending from a God.

"Hello," she finally spoke in a sweet tone. "Please tell me what you would like to exchange from. With your performance, you can have anything."

Leonel frowned when he heard the suggestion in her last words.

Chapter 2557: [Bonus] Honey Trap

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Fire2112 (aka Firemonster) <3 2/6]

'A honey trap?' Leonel almost wanted to laugh. Truthfully, sending a Pure-Blooded Spiritual was quite "sincere" of them. Most of these people thought that humans were scourges to Existence itself, trying to lure him with a Pure-Blooded Spiritual meant that at least some of them weren't so set in their ways.

A Pure-Blooded Spiritual couldn't be created in the traditional sense. In fact, a Pure-Blooded Spiritual could be born even from a pair of parents without the Pure-Blooded

title. In this way, they were completely analogous to the Chaos Demons, and they were creatures on the same exact level.

With that sort of comparison, one could imagine how highly regarded they were. Regnier was probably seething that his people were actually trying to do this after he was so publicly destroyed.

Unfortunately, even if this woman was more beautiful -which she wasn't-it wouldn't be able to change even a single thing.

Of course, Leonel was likewise reading a lot into the simple action. The words were benign enough, and the woman was dressed quite conservatively, not even her shoulders were exposed, and her sleeves even covered much of the back of her hand.

It was just that Leonel's Dream Force was on a completely different level now than it had been in the past, and they had sent a girl that was of the junior generation for obvious reasons. From his probes, she was only the Seventh Dimension and hadn't even formed a Life State Force yet.

How could she hide her intentions from him?

Since the girl wasn't too overt with it, Leonel felt that there was no reason to be too rude to her, but he also didn't play into it.

He had some sympathy for the girl because it was doubtful that this was her choice, but at the same time, it was obvious whose feelings he'd choose between a stranger's and Aina's. He would rather be a little colder to draw a clear line, than to harm Aina, even superficially.

Plus, these people were idiots. Had they not clearly heard him insult several Demi-God women for the sake of his Aina? What was sending a Pure-Blooded Spiritual going to do? Then again, maybe this was the highest rank of people willing to lower themselves like this.

Either way, to the girl's words, he only nodded and went back to his thoughts.

The girl maintained a polite, though a hint of relief and disappointment flashed in her eyes. They were the same rainbow color as her hair, changing colors and moving like the clouds.

In the end, Leonel sighed to himself.

'If I don't trade for it here, where else would I trade for it? There's no way I'd be able to find it in the Human Bubbles, and if I venture elsewhere, I might die before I know what was happening...'

"I've made my decision. Please exchange a mature Ninth Dimensional Evolution Ore Mine for me."

The young woman's eyes flickered with a hint of surprise. This wasn't a low-cost exchange, certainly not. There were probably only a few thousand such deposits in the whole of Existence. There was no doubt that this was a valuable exchange...

It just wasn't as valuable as they were probably thinking. It made her curious about what Leonel was trying to do with this mine, but it wasn't really her place to ask. She wasn't even really supposed to be here; her Pavilion had pulled some strings and caused this to happen.

After fumbling around a bit because she was clearly unfamiliar with using these controls, she eventually found what Leonel wanted and exchanged it for him. Soon, Leonel had an orb with a world inside of it and was ready to leave.

The girl gathered up her courage, speaking before Leonel left. It seemed that she had to say these words, or else her elders would scold her for not trying hard enough.

"My name is Lyra Emberheart; it's nice to meet you. I hope to see you at the gathering."

Leonel planned to give the young woman a glance before he left without a word, but the mention of a gathering caught his attention.

He went through his information and he frowned.

This gathering was known as the Gathering of Kingdoms. It was a weird name considering only a small fraction of those participating could actually be considered as such, but it was one steeped in tradition so no one changed it.

The first Gathering of Kingdoms had been held by the God Beasts many years ago, and their purpose was for the sake of finding the subjects they wanted to take in to pass on their bloodlines to other creatures. This had, of course, created the Northern Star Lineage Factors.

These days, it was a method of balancing power. The so-called "Kingdoms" were being powers not ruled by Gods or Demi-Gods.

Everyone knew that Existence was running on a finite clock and many were taking steps to try and manage that.

To take a complicated list of rules and make them simple, the harsh truth was: those that lost this gathering had their Bubbles destroyed and turned into energy that dispersed into the wider world. This chance would also give those beneath Demi-Gods to forge Demi-God-level Worlds, and thus evolve their race.

Essentially, the largest hurdle to a Race becoming one of the Gods could be boiled down to the environment. God Bubbles were simply on a completely different level.

Of course, this wasn't the only thing that was needed, and there were a few powers with Demi-God worlds that weren't ruled by Demi-Gods at all. That said... all Demi-Gods were created from Demi-God Worlds even if not all Demi-God Worlds had Demi-Gods.

All of this said, the Human Race was actually immune. The Dream Pavilion was like a badge of protection, and they didn't need to partake in this... culling. It could be said that this was the only reason they had survived for so long.

However...

Leonel's eyes narrowed as he vanished without a word.

Chapter 2558: [Bonus] Fallen

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Fire2112 (aka Firemonster) <3 3/6]

Lyra sighed when Leonel vanished. She was a noble Pure Blood, and when had she fallen to trying to seduce a man into her bed? Those noble ladies who spent most of their time gossiping and spreading rumors would probably get a kick out of this. Former "Pure Blood" throws herself like a dog in heat at a human of all people.

Lyra didn't really look down on humans, but that didn't mean she had tender feelings toward them either. She was like most people; she took a moderate position while a minority with heavily skewed beliefs took the reins. But often, due to this, her inaction was seen as a tacit acceptance of all that was happening.

That was just the way of the world, and she didn't have enough of a bleeding heart to make her life uncomfortable for the sake of a Race that wasn't her own.

It was just ironic that things had somehow ended up like this anyway.

It seemed that talent was talent, no matter what you look like. And for the Pure-Blooded Spirituals who had been "just a step away" from Demi-Godhood for who knew how many generations now, this seemed like a good gamble to take.

Still, throwing her at a man with a wife was really too crude.

She knew the real reason why they did it.

In Leonel's opinion, throwing her at him when he had just insulted an Owlman's beauty to her face was foolish. But there was another way to look at it as well.

If the man who rejected the Owlans, a race of beings known for their beauty even more so than the Spirituals themselves, how much would that elevate the status of Lyra and her people?

'Not just one Life State... but two... And he disregarded his Sovereignty and reformed another one as though it was a casual matter... The Life Tablet definitely can't do that...'

A genius.

That was the only way to describe him. It was simple and yet it held an infinite weight simply due to that simplicity.

She shook her head. She couldn't stay here forever; she would eventually have to return, and once she did, she would have to face those questions.

One way or another, even if Leonel didn't want to give up his wife, he would have to. He was extremely talented now, but he was weak. A genius was only worth something if they could grow up, and there were quite a few now invested in making sure he couldn't grow up unless he was tied to one of them.

Even for the Pure-Blooded Spirituals, jumping out like this was a huge risk. It was just that they believed they had enough foundation to weather the storm that might come with it, and they had also calculated that the Gods would be unlikely to care enough to take personal action.

But if Leonel was alone...?

Death was the only path that remained.

Leonel's eyes cleared, and he appeared in a familiar courtroom. Several gazes filled with rage landed on him, but he didn't seem to sense them at all as he turned to his side.

There, seated in meditation, Clarence's corpse sat. He was rigid and unmoved, but it was clear he didn't have the slightest breath of life left.

All this considered, this could be both the worst and best way for a Ninth Dimensional existence to die.

It was the best because his intact body made it so his Forces had an obvious place to congregate. Unlike with the death of Xagu, Clarence didn't need an external treasure to act as his anchor.

In organizations like the Sun and Moon Demon Empire, their experts left behind items with portions of their soul attached to it. That way, even if their bodies were completely destroyed, they would reform back in their home lands.

However, this process was longer and more arduous.

On the other hand... Clarence's soul had been completely shattered to pieces; if the Dream Force came back together, it would be in an unrecognizable blob. Even if he came back to life, he wouldn't even be the same person... just a new soul in the same body.

Leonel took a breath then exhaled. He looked up, and only managed to feel a slight hint of satisfaction from the fact the Nomads were in the same state. That was exactly what they deserved.

His gaze swept over the Owlans and the Spirituals. Obviously by now, Regnier had found out that most of his people had been killed by Leonel as well, and looking at the state of the Nomads, only one thing could have happened.

Regnier, though, could have never imagined that Leonel would defeat even Minerva.

Leonel was about to make a snarky comment about enjoying 9999th place before leaving with Clarence's corpse, but at that moment a shuddering might descended.

He didn't seem surprised by this at all. In fact, he had expected it. Well, he might not have expected them to be so eager, but who knew. Maybe Gods knew how to act on an opportunity too.

This time, though, it wasn't the Gods at all.

The Pure Bloods were relying on the indifference of the Gods, so would they really be so involved in this matter?

But that was a confusing statement to make. If not the Gods changing around these rules so often, then who?

The truth was that the so-called "higher ups" were just various Dream Pavilions dotted across the top 100. Unlike the Gods who treated the Dream Pavilions as just a matter of status, this was a matter of life and death for many of them.

As a result, the weight something like the Life Tablet could hold was inconceivable.

According to the rules, only 50% of the top 100 needed to agree to something, while the top three had veto powers. Unfortunately, the Gods didn't care enough to use these veto powers for the sake of the humans.

And that was when the ruling was passed down.

There were two subjects, but only one really caught Leonel's attention.

[Rule Revision: The existence of a Dream Pavilion can no longer provide immunity to participation in the Gathering of the Kingdoms]

Chapter 2559: [Bonus] A Different Sort of Death

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Fire2112 (aka Firemonster) <3 4/6]

Leonel's sneering grin practically split his face. In fact, he even began to laugh.

Most couldn't even react to these two messages quickly enough, but he was practically splitting his gut laughing.

How could he not find it funny?

He had spent a long time at the bottom of the Dimensional Verse, but when he finally broke free of most of his constraints, did he spend his time bullying the weak? Did he go back to those organizations that used to bully the Valiant Heart Zone and teach them a lesson? Did he go and destroy those planets that had attacked Earth in their time of vulnerability?

Even when he took out his rage on the common people of those that had led their armies into the Human Domain, although it wasn't something he was proud of, he had still killed them all straightforwardly with a single snap of his fingers.

But what was this?

50%. Half of the top 100, over 90% of which was made up by Demi-Gods or Gods, had come together in a collective effort to do all of this, and for what, exactly? For a fleeting chance at the Life Tablet?

Why were they sinking so low? Wasn't it just because they couldn't lay hands on it themselves?

On the one hand, they were afraid of upsetting various God Factions.

Like El'Rion had said, there were many of them. Passivism was apparently the majority; they wanted to leave the humans be and let them whittle their way out of existence on their own. There was a small contingent that wanted humans wiped out entirely, but again, they were a small minority.

But considering the culling of the Gathering of Kingdoms existed, then even if it was small, didn't it have a clear influence as well? How was destroying worlds for the sake of slowing the end of Existence considered "passive", otherwise?

So he found it all hilarious, so hilarious he couldn't stop laughing.

Powerful Races with hopes of becoming Demi-Gods, Demi-Gods themselves, and Gods even above them, meandering through time and hoping to extend their existences just a little bit longer, and their almighty plan to do so was bullying a Race some of them could probably wipe to extinction with a single finger.

"Fucking cowards."

These were the only words Leonel said before he vanished. No one heard him, but they didn't need to.

Playing games? That was what he was best at. If they wanted to string this along, he'd let them. In fact, soon there'd come a day where they'd find that they ran out of rope. One end would be a noose and the other end would be in Leonel's hands.

He'd enjoy that day when it came.

Leonel stepped out from the portal, standing high above the Dream Pavilion. He took a breath.

Compared to the True Dream Pavilion, and wherever that courtroom had been, the air here felt so much more bland. He couldn't even enjoy a breath the normal way. Everyone was like a reminder of how much further he had to go.

There was no one here to greet him. In fact, it didn't seem like anyone was here in the Dream Pavilion at all.

And why would they be?

Most of them thought that it was over the moment they stepped in. They probably stuffed their pockets with everything they could take and hightailed it out of here. If they stayed for too long, when the Pavilion was taken away, wouldn't they be implicated?

According to the rules, a Pavilion needed a Pavilion Head, three Deputies, and at least one disciple in order to be considered in working order.

Even dead, Clarence still counted as one. But much like the Pavilion Head position, there was a cutoff for Deputies as well, and that was the Impetus State.

From this, one could see why Leonel would be so soft with these people. Under usual circumstances, he would just kill them or directly kick them out.

But for now, they were a good cover... Until he could find two more Deputies and a worthy disciple to take in.

Luckily, Leonel already had two Deputies in mind. He wasn't so helpless anymore, not with so many Forgetful Orbs in his possession.

The only trouble was that Forgetful Orbs were only as good as the level you had originally reached. On the one hand, you needed more the stronger your Force Manipulation was, but on the other, too little Force Manipulation would hamper you.

The first person he thought of, Goggles, had just started training his Dream Force. If he had reached the Unfolded States already, Leonel would be greatly impressed.

The second person, though, Eamon... he was sharp and intelligent. He was a bit cowardly, but that was more a product of his upbringing than anything. He was certain if he gave Eamon a Forgetful Orb, he'd be able to reach the Impetus State.

Leonel thought about Aina. Her Soul Clairvoyance was a clearly broken ability, but it was hard to tell if she had natural affinity with Dream Force or not, or if she could just cheat her way into gaining it.

Quite frankly, Leonel never asked Aina about the full extent of her abilities. He didn't usually find it necessary, and though they were always together, when they really had time to talk, they'd prefer to relax over anything else.

He felt that he should probably ask now.

'Hm, that's right. I do have two captives...'

Leonel sent his senses out and he found Khelgis and Adru, the pair of Sun and Moon Demons, still stuck in meditation. They weren't even chained because it was unnecessary. Stuck in this environment, they couldn't focus on anything other than protecting their mind, or else they would falter.

Obviously, their Dream Force affinity wasn't up to snuff. So the idea of using them as convenient prisoners went out the window as well.

Leonel sighed, looking into the skies.

He had just completed a feat no human had in countless generations, and yet there was a single human here to congratulate him.

It was kind of sad. It felt that the race might as well have been wiped out already; what was the difference between this and death anyway?

Chapter 2560: [Bonus] Aina...?

[Bonus chapter courtesy of Fire2112 (aka Firemonster) <3 5/6]

Leonel had a lot of work to do and a lot of things on his mind. Usually, he would probably go tick off those boxes one by one. One would think that a tranquil confidence would make you ignore much of everything, and sometimes it worked like that for Leonel... and at other times, it made him somewhat of a stoic workaholic.

His laziness often came into play when he didn't have direction. But when he did, he could likewise easily lose himself until he grasped something entirely.

At a time like this, where he could so clearly see the list before him...

Give Forgetful Orbs to Eamon and Goggles...Check on his brothers...Break into the Fourth Dimension with his newfound Evolution Ores...Finish up the last of his father's lessons on Crafting and finally comprehend this world a bit more...

... he would usually jump right into that list of things, maybe losing himself for months as though he hadn't just come out of a true instance of life and death.

It was an unhealthy sort of expression of focus, the kind that he didn't really want in his life anymore.

There was no "end goal" here. It constantly felt that with every step he took, another domino would fall and another challenge would rear its ugly head.

It was the Humans, then it was the Demons, then it was the other Races, then it was the Demi-Gods, then it was the Gods, then it was the God Beasts, then it was Existence itself literally blinking like a ticking time bomb.

When would it stop?

The answer was that it probably never would. In that meandering sort of tranquility, he laser-focused on one task after another, not minding how long they went for or even how difficult they were. He just needed that next high, that next victory...

But then what kind of life would he be living? If the end goal was the end of Existence itself, if it was so likely that he would ultimately fail in the end, then what was he wasting his time doing?

That was the thing about endless confidence. It was great... until it wasn't. But he would never know about when that other shoe would drop; he could never have any way of knowing because he'd be confident right up until the end.

But when you could shed that and really live, really feel everything you should be feeling...

You could stop and smell the roses a bit.

He had lost his father, and his hopes of bringing him back one day hadn't vanished. But he also had others here by his side.

Leonel appeared near Aina's training region. She was in a deep state of meditation, and usually, he would use this as an excuse to leave and go disappear for another few weeks before he remembered to check up on her again.

But this time he just stood there, looking at her back view.

The scenery was beautiful. Not because of Aina, though that added some bias to it. But rather because of the soft grass, the wildflowers, the small lake of Cleansing Waters that emitted the fragrance of fresh water into the air.

It smelled almost like it was about to rain, and yet not.

It must have been at least an hour later but Aina suddenly opened her eyes. She turned back toward Leonel, a hint of confusion in her gaze.

She had sensed him the first time he arrived, but it seemed that she had also gotten used to him leaving while she was in the middle of training. So, she subconsciously tuned him out.

For the next hour, she hadn't even noticed his presence at all because he hadn't moved an inch. It was only when she was rounding up a series of breakthroughs that she realized he was actually still there.

She looked at him deeply for a while.

This man had gone off to do something dangerous again then came back with a smile on his face as though nothing at all had happened. She probably couldn't have even imagined how dangerous it had been, and yet he had proved her right.

"Well, don't you look nice?" Leonel said with a smile.

Aina looked down at herself. Her clothing was pretty simple nowadays, she just wore one of Leonel's oversized white t-shirts and alternated between a choice of shorts or leggings. She still very much preferred Earth's style of dress, and she wasn't the biggest fan of formal dressing. Why the people of these Bubbles didn't know what "casual clothes" were, was beyond her.

But that was why it was up to Leonel's mom to force him to wear something more prim and proper because Aina certainly wouldn't do it.

Except for that time they entered the Heir Wars together. She had to admit that that was nice.

"You know, if you're going to compliment a woman, you should at least be a little clever about it. Pick something that makes sense," Aina suddenly said.

"My wife is trying to train me on how to pick up other women?" Leonel asked in mock shock.

"You wouldn't dare." Aina's gaze narrowed with a dangerous light.

Leonel put up his hands. "Never."

Aina smiled. "Why are you standing so far away? Come over here."

Leonel strolled forward, plopping down and laying his head on her smooth thighs. It seemed that Aina had chosen a shorts option today, and he very much approved.

Aina smiled and didn't seem to mind.

"You look like you have a lot on your mind."

"The exact opposite," Leonel said with a grin.

"Is that so?"

"Definitely. Years ago I told you that if the choice was between the world and you, I would choose you.

"Today, I mean it even more.

"What do you say, Aina? Will you marry me?"