

Descent 1151

Chapter 1151 I'd Advise

Orinik's expression didn't change when he saw this, but he inwardly sneered.

Orinik wasn't the kind of person to actively condescend. Or, it was more accurate to say that most who went to the Void Palace had had their arrogance beat out of them long ago. The focus of the Void Palace was presenting a single shield to the outside world. There was no individuality, no room for self esteem and pride, there was only the task at hand and your role in said task.

Despite its name and despite the prestige that came with being a part of them, the Void Palace, was essentially the Military. Nothing more, nothing less.

To see all of these people being so excited already filled Orinik with one layer of disgust, as he too had once been one of them. But, seeing them actually pine over a reward as exclusive as the Amethyst Token was enough for him to want to vomit.

Did they have any idea what kind of monsters had the right to grasp such a Token?

Even if you really did defeat everyone in your Sector, if your competition was too weak, the overseer would never grant you such a badge. What good was it in being the best out of a group of trash?

This was a Sixth Dimensional Sector and they actually thought they were worthy of such a thing? Was this a joke?

Despite his feelings, Orinik remained silent. His Force surged and he waved a hand.

At that moment, an enormous billboard formed of motes of light appeared in the skies. It was entirely blank, but what was fascinating about it was that no matter what angle you looked at it from, it would feel as though it was matching your gaze dead-on.

Leonel's eyes lit up when he saw it. It was yet another fantastic application of Force Arts and it left him fascinated once again. These days, he seemed to be finding Crafting and the underlying Force Art mechanisms of it more and more amazing.

"Those who will be participating, send out a strand of your Force toward this construct. If you cannot do at least this much..."

Orinik didn't bother to finish his words this time. He had used this line of reasoning numerous times already. He was sure that those present understood that he wouldn't be here to listen to their complaints and nonsense.

Leonel's brow raised.

Controlling Force outside of yourself, or at least projecting your internal Force outward, could quickly become very difficult.

The billboard might have seemed close, but in order for it to be so large, and yet appear in everyone's vision so clearly, it had to be at least a few hundred meters in the air. Leonel could have never imagined

projecting his Force out so far before he grasped Level Two Spear Force. At least that was the case if he wasn't using his bow.

Of course, since then, he had become far more skilled. In addition, after learning many of the Luxnix family's techniques, he had grasped many Force Manipulation techniques that would make this not too hard to accomplish.

But... This 'simple' test made Leonel realize just how large the gap was.

At that moment, an arrow shot into the skies. It streaked upward with a blazing speed before it pierced through the billboard above.

While the arrow continued to fly higher before eventually rushing down below and crashing into the protective Force Arts that safeguarded the observers, the Force that had coated it was completely stripped away.

The billboard began to flicker and a long string of numbers appeared.

0000001 –

There was no name assigned to the number, but this didn't seem to matter. To the Void Palace, your name was meaningless until you became one of them. All the billboard checked for was your Dimension and then tied you to a number.

"HAHA! Number one it is!"

A youth with a boisterous laughter held up his bow proudly. He didn't seem to be from one of the three main families. In fact, he was from a family just beneath the main three and, on the surface, at the same level as Riah's Sage family.

His actions seemed to result in a cascade of events, numerous streams of attacks rushing toward the billboard as many hurried to get their spots.

One number after another began to appear in the sky, each with their own unique Force signatures. It seemed impossible for one person to impersonate another, even when they used the same exact Force.

Orinik's internal sneer only grew fiercer. He could sense many Sixth Dimensional experts trying to squeeze themselves in. Though they masked it by using Fifth Dimensional Force, how could the Void Palace be so easily fooled? By now, dozens had tried, but each time, the billboard treated them like they were thin air.

However... Ganor didn't have such patience.

At that moment, a sweeping pressure suffocated the arena. Ganor, who had been lazily reclining on a throne-like chair on the ground floor of the arena suddenly allowed his eyes to snap open.

His palm reached out in a certain direction and the shrill scream of a middle-aged man pierced through the ambience of the arena.

Before this middle-aged man could react or even fight back, they found their neck firmly grasped by Ganor's hand.

"Ah... N-no! I'm sorry!"

The middle-aged man could barely squeeze out those words, but the moment they did Ganor clamped down.

Many of those spectating had never seen something so horrible.

A gushing rush of blood shot up from the middle-aged man's neck, his eyes popping out and his face doubling in size before his head imploded.

Blood and gore sprung out in every which direction, but not a single piece seem to land on Ganor at all.

The Galaxy Ranked disciple tossed the corpse to the side and sat back down, yawning and closing his eyes.

Orinik shook his head and sighed. "If you want to keep your lives, I'd advise you stop trying."

Chapter 1152 Mark

Leonel's gaze narrowed, but he didn't say much.

In truth, he thought it was a bit unfair. Not everyone had the ability to be aware that they should restrain themselves within the Fifth Dimension, and even less knew of the diverging paths upon reaching the pinnacle of the Fifth Dimension.

The difference being laid out before them now wasn't one of greed or overestimation, it was just one of class differences. These people simply weren't lucky enough.

This was the first time the Selection had been so open and many of those who had tried just now were geniuses in their own right who never got a chance at a quota. Now that things had suddenly been open when they thought their turn would never come... Leonel could understand how they felt.

If he wasn't born to such parents, at the perfect time, would he have this chance laid out before him?

If the Void Palace was so interested in gathering talents, shouldn't they have made a better effort? Why were there quotas, and why did they allow powerful families who were inherently selfish to begin with control them?

As Leonel was thinking this, there was another individual with a dark expression.

If Miel didn't realize by now that what he had done was unnecessary, he would be too much of a fool. He had only gone so far because he had been present during previous Selections and even with his talent often being clearly better than that of those who participated, he never got a chance himself.

He didn't want his daughter to go through the same thing, but how could he have expected that this year would be so open and free for all?

Despite his fury, Miel's expression gave nothing away. He didn't cast any enraged glances nor did he lose his cool. With things being this way, it was even better for Aina. Even if she would take on a small stain, so long as she performed, there would be nothing the Viola family could do to her.

At the same time, Miel marked this memory in his heart.

...

It wasn't easy for everyone of Earth to complete this task. Some even required a few pointers from Roesia before they managed to succeed.

Leonel could tell that this had taken a toll on many of them. They had been so eager previously, but seeing how thousands had accomplished something they all struggled mightily with, whatever eagerness they had had was tempered down dramatically.

They suddenly felt that the odds of them making it to the second day had gone down significantly. This sort of competition... Maybe it was too soon for them.

Didn't it take decades for many to make it through the Fifth Dimension? They had just entered. Maybe they were in over their heads.

Leonel fell silent as he felt the shift in the atmosphere. As a leader, there was a lot of things he could do, but giving people confidence they didn't or shouldn't have wasn't one of them. Something like self-belief had to be earned and trained. Often, those who had it without putting in such effort were simply overestimating themselves.

A lot of things had gone too smoothly for the people of Earth. Compared to the people of the Milky Way, their talent was so much greater that how strong their foundations were never really mattered. And, even when the people of other galaxies invaded, much of the brunt of the work was honestly handled by Leonel, Noah, and the other pre-eminent talents.

Being faced with the reality now hit them all hard. Even Leonel's own brothers hadn't found the task easy to complete. Only Drake had a relatively easier time, but that was only because he was a marksman to begin with.

This time, Leonel chose to remain silent. He didn't give them encouraging words, nor did he try to cheer them up. Sometimes, a person would only be able to convince themselves of what they needed.

Leonel's gaze shifted and landed on Elthor.

Even compared to Noah, Elthor had been greatly silent during this whole journey. After all, this was his first time hanging out with so many humans at once. It only made it more awkward that the Void Palace was meant to be the protectors of the Human Domain, so how exactly did he fit into all of this?

Of course, Leonel had already thought of this and asked his grandmother about it. According to Roesia, the Void Palace wasn't completely devoid of non-human species. There were many guardian beasts and the like, as well as a few rare humanoid species like the Oryx. Though it wasn't common, it wasn't unseen either.

That much allowed Leonel to rest easy and worry about Elthor a bit less.

Right now, though, Elthor seemed to be in his element. Seeing so many powerful enemies before him, and seeing such a tall mountain to climb, his heart beat wildly, his gaze locking on to the stages ahead as though he couldn't wait to hop on.

Right then, the billboard formed of motes of lights calmed. The instant this occurred, the numbers began to flicker, rearranging themselves swiftly until several columns were formed. Then, a large number of numbers dimmed while a single group of them glowed brightly.

"Those who can sense their auras glowing above, step forward. The first group match will begin now."

Elthor stood almost too quickly, a bestial aura rolling off of him in waves. His excitement was practically palpable, his handsome, almost otherworldly features, gaining a menacing and devilish charm to them.

He shot forward, appearing on the arena. At some unknown time, an enormous saber had appeared in his hands, a pervading aura of thick darkness hanging around him.

This was what Elthor had always dreamed of. While others thought it might be nice to win the Amethyst Token, he wanted it and was willing to give up anything to get it, even if he had to cut his heart out of his chest.

There was nothing he wanted in life more than to become the greatest General there ever was. Today, he would leave his first mark on the world.

Chapter 1153 Drawn

The appearance of Elthor and his bloodthirsty aura seemed to cause something in the surroundings to shift. Even with how human Elthor's face seemed, his tall and branching white horns stood out like a sore thumb. However, he didn't seem to care about it all in the slightest.

Within the Oryx, there were two things a man could take pride in. The first was their smell. Out of consideration for the humans around him, Elthor had always restrained his own and even masked it quite well. However, this second pride was one thing he had absolutely no intention of hiding.

The mark of an Oryx male, the pride of a Prince of the Oryx Kingdom, his horns.

The stage slowly filled with participants. After the initial shock of Elthor's appearance and his momentum, many calmed. Right now, Elthor was only at Tier 1 of the Fifth Dimension, even a step or two behind a few of Earth's geniuses, let alone those that were here. Even the weakest of the participants were Tier 4 and 5. Elthor quickly fell to the bottom of his bracket.

The greatest shame was that there was no one else of Earth chosen with him. Though the odds were low considering the sheer number of participants, it was now certain that Elthor would be on his own.

"Hey, hey, hey. What exactly are you? Did your mom fuck a deer or something?"

A familiar young man stood forward, curiously observing Elthor from top to bottom. He was none other than 0000001, the archer who acted first.

Being a member of the Arundo family, he was quite confident in himself. Much like every other genius from a family just beneath the heel of the Viola, Montex and Luxnix, they all believed they only needed just a single chance to shoot by them in a single step.

He wasn't the strongest genius of the Arundo, but he was definitely up there. If an equivalent rank was made, he would be like the Rankers of the Luxnix Arms, probably in the top 100. Of course, that was

only if the Arundo were taken into consideration. Whether he could replicate such a feat if he was a Luxnix...

"What did you just say?"

Elthor's gaze narrowed.

His saber hovered just above the platform they all stood on. However, if one looked closely, after Osron of the Arundo family spoke these words, the slightest twitch of Elthor's wrist had caused the blade to nick the hard stone.

The touch was so subtle and almost imperceptible that no one noticed, but the Force that coated the blade cut through the stone so smoothly that not a single sound was made.

To Elthor, his mother was a great taboo. For as long as he could remember, it had always just been him, his father and his brothers.

To birth a child with affinities for Force as powerful as Leonel's Scarlet Star Force or Elthor's Chaotic Particle Force took a lot out of a woman. Though Elthor was birthed with an ability rather than an Innate Node, and the difficulty was lesser as a result, it still wasn't a smooth process by any stretch... While Leonel's mother almost died, Elthor's own wasn't so lucky.

Though Elthor's father and his brothers never blamed him nor made him feel like he was to blame, it was still a weight he carried with him. It might very well be why he was so independent as a child, always insisting on forging his own path.

For this Osron individual to dare to say such a thing to him...

"Begin. The final three will make it to the second day."

Ornik's voice fell, uncaring for the squabbles of those on the platform. Even though there were just over a hundred on the stage now, he had seen too many die in the Void Palace, all of whom were hundreds of times more powerful than the few before him. He had seen hundreds just as eager and willing as Elthor as well, but weren't they all buried just the same... What did it matter?

"Hohoho, you've got a temper, huh? Did that come from the beast side of your family?" Osron laughed.

BANG!

Elthor had already vanished from his spot. His enormous saber trailed him like the tail of a comet lit by black light.

Osron sneered, his bow having already appeared in his hands and two arrows having already been nocked.

With movements as fluid as water and as easy as breathing, Osron glided backward as he released his arrows.

Unlike Elthor, Osron had a few members of his own family present. They entered a loose formation together, leaving the former to Osron while they targeted the remaining members of the group. Almost immediately, the group stage was divided into several cliques.

Those who had less to rely on immediately voiced complaints, but Orinik turned a blind eye to them all. Hadn't he already said clearly there wouldn't be absolute fairness?

Elthor, tho, didn't seem to care. A bestial aura continued to rise from him, the pores of his skin opening and closing as the white fur of his battle fur advanced and retreated. As furious as he was, he was having trouble keeping it all under perfect control, but that did nothing to slow his speed in the slightest.

His saber glided forward, splitting Osron's two arrows despite their speed and appearing outside the encirclement of their loose formation.

Osron's smile faded, his expression becoming a touch more serious. He hadn't expected a Tier 1 to deal with his arrows so easily. But, he still didn't panic, his Force surging. He realized that this wasn't a place for him to fool around. Since he had caused this mess, he would deal with it quickly.

Osron nocked an arrow, his Force surging. The arrow seemed to double in size in an instant, a wild and untameable silver Force wrapping around it with a vicious piercing light.

Osron took just a half second to prepare this attack. He could already see Elthor's head being skewered through. But, to his shock... He never got to release it.

Elthor suddenly vanished, his speed suddenly exploding forth.

The last thing Osron saw was the menacing glare of a beast and a row of sharp, glistening teeth.

Elthor's saber swung downward with such speed that nothing seemed to happen even several moments afterward.

It was only after a light gust of wind blew by that Osron fell into two halves, a bloody pool forming and filling in the cracks between the tough stones.

The first blood of the tournament had been drawn.

Chapter 1154 wide Grins

A mad howl left Elthor's lips, a wild Dark Elemental Force surging about his body.

The members of the Arundo family were instantly caught off guard. They had only formed their formation on a whim and hadn't really considered its flaws. Elthor's explosion in speed wasn't something they were able to react to appropriately, leaving them at a loss.

Light Elemental Force was well known for a few of its abilities. Its speed, its piercing ability or its ability to solidify and concentrate, and its healing ability. Though these things could vary depending on the exact type in question, these were general abilities all Light Elemental Forces seemed to share.

Dark Elemental Force, however, was different. It was known for its concealment ability, its heaviness, its looseness and gaseous-like form, and, for lack of a better term, its cursing ability.

If these things were to be summarized, it would be that Light Elemental Force was good at giving something of itself, while Dark Elemental Force was good at taking for itself.

In that moment, while it felt like Elthor's speed had increased explosively, what had actually happened was that everyone around him had slowed down. The same had even happened with Osron's arrows, but the effect was so perfectly timed that even Osron himself didn't seem to have noticed the change.

The shock of the Arundo immediately shifted to fury. They might have been second to the three main families, but that didn't change their view of themselves. To the rest of this Sector, they were still noble and esteemed, to have one of their own killed before them like this was a great humiliation.

Unfortunately... Their rage didn't seem to move the needle one way or another. As for why... That was because Elthor hadn't finished venting either.

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Blood flowed down the stage, a singular young man standing at the center. Elthor's white hair seemed particularly blinding amidst all the crimson, his breathing moving with a labored rhythm.

Though three had been meant to pass on to the next round, the actual number seemed to just be one. Orinik didn't seem too fazed by this result. He would just give the spot to the last two to be cut down, if they could survive, that is. As for the rest of it, it had nothing to do with him.

There was a furious sort of atmosphere permeating around the arena. Though Elthor hadn't killed everyone in his group, there were quite a number that had been cut down, never to rise up again. While a few that had lost out fled the stage, many more would never see another sun rise.

Did Elthor feel bad? Not at all. To him, this was no different from a battlefield. If you didn't have the resolve to die, then don't step foot upon this place.

Elthor had been on many battlefields in his life. Compared to these noble young men and women who lived lives of mostly leisure, he had a different sort of edge to him. That edge was what allowed him to see the air of a veteran of war hanging around Orinik.

Maybe even faster than Leonel had, Elthor realized that this wasn't a joking matter, nor would making it into the Void Palace be all sunshine and rainbows. From here on out, they would wade through a sea of corpses. If those here couldn't clear this trial, they would still find themselves dead eventually.

Elthor slowly walked off the stage, his gait quite slow and his face a bit pale. Though he had won, he was still only Tier 1. And, for the sake of the second day ahead, he had refrained from using his trump cards, making things even more difficult on him.

A cascade of boos suddenly began to fall from the crowd above.

Seeing Elthor win wasn't just something the Arundo family didn't want. As humans, they disliked the idea of someone of another race taking such a resounding victory against them. Despite his handsome face, with the exception of a few swooning women who had fallen for his devilish charm, Elthor very easily became public enemy number one.

If not for fear of the Void Palace disciples and the actions of Ganor earlier making many too apprehensive to step out of line, they might have started throwing things from their stands as well.

Elthor inwardly shook his head.

Though his father had let him come with Leonel, Elthor knew his old man quite well. With how stubborn he was, the likelihood that he would allow the Oryx to follow Leonel was very low. Of course, this wouldn't be about being untrusting of Leonel, but mostly just an understanding of objective reality.

Just look at how these people were treating him just because he was a bit different. Compared to his Oryx counterparts, he was about as close to human as you could get. From him, it only became worse from then on. If they couldn't even accept him, how would they accept the others?

Even knowing that the Oryx only had their best chance to maximize their Hyper Evolution state under Leonel, his father still chose to go his own way. And, seeing such a reception, Elthor couldn't blame him.

'Hm?'

Elthor felt a shadow wash over him. He looked up to find a smiling face looking back at him.

"You did good, your saber needs some work, though. You wasted way too much energy swinging it around like that."

Elthor was speechless.

Leonel stood before him, grinning as though he couldn't see or hear anything around him. Without a care, he critiqued Elthor's battle and wrapped an arm around his shoulder. For a long time, Elthor didn't quite know how to respond. He opened his mouth several times, but nothing seemed to come out.

He had been by Leonel and the rest of the Earth geniuses for the past several weeks, but he had never really made an effort to ingratiate himself with them. He always felt that there was a barrier he could never cross over.

But, seeing Leonel act like this, he suddenly felt a bit of guilt in his heart. Despite knowing he'd put a target on his back by doing this, Leonel had still stepped out without a care.

Elthor was quite absentminded, so much so that he didn't even realize that it wasn't just Leonel.

Looking up, he suddenly realized that everyone of Earth had come out with wide grins on their faces.

Chapter 1155 Free Game

"Who are these people?"

Within the Arundo family, a young man with a dark expression sat, staring out toward the 'heart warming' meeting between Elthor and the other geniuses of Earth. Of course, in the perspective of others, this was anything but a wholesome moment. He would have liked nothing more than to put an arrow between their brows.

Osron wasn't a person he knew personally. In fact, on a normal day, Osron wouldn't even be worthy of carrying his shoes. However, in this sort of situation, things were very different.

Every action made by a member of the Arundo family, especially when the person was as high profile as Osron to begin with, was a potential boon or blight on their reputation.

To a high level family, reputation was very important. Though it wasn't exaggerated as a saying like 'Perception was Reality', it wasn't very far off.

When a family grew as large as the Arundo, they actually entered quite a precarious state. They had so much territory to govern, rule and, most importantly, protect. In such a situation, their soft skills became far more important than how large their fists were. Even the Luxnix family experienced such a thing, or else they wouldn't have gone into such a state of hibernation for three generations.

To make a complicated matter simple, the stronger your front as a family, the more battles you could avoid because those far weaker than you would know not to waste your time.

As an example, take the Arundo's territory. They might very well have dozens of much smaller families surrounding them. Under normal circumstances, due to the prestige the Arundo family had built up, these lesser families would never deign to attack them.

The reality was that even if these families did all attack at once, the Arundo would still be able to deal with them. But, such a thing would result in the Arundo stalling their growth phase and wasting resources.

The sturdier front a family put up, the less they would have to deal with such things. It was in the same way a chess grandmaster would know to resign when a game reached a certain point because they had trust that their opponent would be able to close out the game properly.

If the prestige of the Arundo family took a hit, though, and people began to believe they lacked the skill to 'close out the game', it would begin to breed trouble.

The operative word was: Deterrence. Only with strong enough Deterrence could a family occupy large amounts of territory while withstanding the least amount of pressure.

Of course, the youth who spoke was one of the Arundo family's two candidates for their Crown Heir position, Isac. Much like the others of the Arundo, he too was a bowman, and, unsurprisingly, he felt that his performance in these Selections would decide whether he became the Crown Heir or not.

"We don't know who they are, but there are some rumors..."

Another youth of the Arundo family rubbed his nose. He had quite a mischievous streak between his eyes as he seemed amused that Isac wasn't as well informed as he was. Of course, the only person who dared to do this was Isac's rival for Crown Heir, Ysac.

"Stop beating around the bush, this matter involves us both. I don't know about you, but I have no intention of inheriting a laughing stock of a family."

Ysac snorted, clearly not enjoying his distant cousin's lack of a sense of humor.

It had always been this way. Ysac was the more social of the two and though he was slightly less powerful, his he had the far better social network. On the other hand, Isac was the stronger one, something Ysac accepted, but he lacked the skills a Patriarch should have. He didn't know how to speak to people or manage people, he didn't even know about something so important happening.

This said, the relationship between the two wasn't so bad. Not every Crown Heir duo or trio was at each other's throats like Rychard and Gradeyr had been. Though, that was also because Ysac was quite easy going while Isac was quite simple minded.

Still, Isac was right on this one. They were indeed a united front on this matter.

"There was news that came a few days ago that there was a huge commotion that went down at the Luxnix estate. There were even reports that a pillar of light was viewable from outer space. There's been a muddying of the details, but it seems to all revolve around one name: Leonel Morales."

"Huh?" Isac didn't seem to understand.

Ysac rolled his eyes. "Leonel Morales, the name of the boy the Luxnix had stricken from their family records. There were even rumors resurfacing about him in the last few months. I thought it was just some political scheme to deal with the Luxnix, but it seems there were rumors because he's back."

Isac's gaze narrowed. "What is that supposed to mean? We can't get revenge because he's a Luxnix?"

Ysac was at a loss for words. "What is in that head of yours? Sand/ Didn't I just say his name was stricken from the records and that there was a huge commotion caused at the family? And, didn't you see that the Luxnix arrived but he wasn't among them?"

"I'm thinking that they only got such good seating arrangements because of that granny over there. It seems his grandmother was one of the Luxnix family elders before they broke off from the family. So, he's free game. In fact, they're all free game."

The light in both potential Heirs' eyes lit up, murderous intent pervading from them. They might have been two opposing individuals, but they stood on the same side when it came to what they wanted for their Arundo family.

At that moment, the billboard of motes of light had already shifted once more. Those that had failed had their names completely erased while a new set of individuals was highlighted.

"Ah, it seems like its my turn."

Aulina nervously stood, walking toward the arena under the encouragement of the other people of the Moon.

Chapter 1156 Cast

Aulina fluttered onto the stage with her heart nearly beating out of her chest. She seemed quite delicate and frail despite her more than average height for a woman. But, this was just an unfortunate part of being born and raised on the Moon. Her bone structure was more fragile than normal and she had to compensate with her use of Force.

Luckily, thanks to the Metamorphosis, a lot of her deficits had been made up for. But, at the moment, she was at yet another great disadvantage.

Of the Forces, Water Elemental Force was probably the most fickle. The density of it varied wildly depending on how close to a water source you were, how long it had been since the last time it rained, and what sort of climate there was.

As a person whose most powerful tool was her Water Elemental ability, Aulina today was much weaker than she had been on the ocean's surface that day. However, Elthor's performance had given her courage. Who said she couldn't win just because she was weaker than those around her?

Very quickly, all those called upon found their place in the ring. After the first battle, the nervous air was several times greater than it had been before. All those here were keenly aware that their lives might be forfeit at any time.

Aulina calmed herself, steadily accumulating the Water Force in her surroundings.

Suddenly, she felt several sharp gazes land on her, causing her brows to wrinkle. She looked up to find several individuals wielding bows looking right at her. It didn't take her a genius to realize why it was they were giving her such looks.

Aulina immediately went on the defensive.

"Begin."

This time, the battle didn't start instantly. Wary eyes looked around, inching toward the edge of the arena to ensure that they couldn't be stabbed from behind. Unfortunately, some unlucky souls realized that they were surrounded from all sides and couldn't easily retreat. They kicked themselves for being so careless in stepping onto the platform so casually.

This lull, though, only lasted for just a moment.

On the sidelines, Leonel's brow knit. There were less Arundo family members in this bracket, just three, compared to last time. However, if they insisted on targeting Aulina like this, it would be a problem.

Aulina wasn't some spring flower. She had fought two wars and had been on the frontline of the battle against Earth's oceanic creatures. The issue was that she was outclassed by Dimension Tier here, and she was outnumbered.

A low and delicate shout left Aulina's lips, her accumulating Water Force erupting to form an enormous sphere of blue around her. She immediately surrounded the sphere with twin rivers of water, lashing out against the oncoming arrows.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Aulina's expression paled as she slid backward, large amounts of her Water Force dispersing. She quickly refocused her attention, diverting one portion toward the accumulation of more Water Force and another toward monitoring her surroundings.

Aulina knew that she had a weakness in movement technique, but she was very good at control. With this came a powerful Internal Sight, though not as exaggerated as one might expect to find with a Luxnix. Still, splitting her attention into two like this wasn't a problem.

Unfortunately, what she quickly found was that her only enemy wasn't the Arundo. The Arundo were only one of the major families Elthor had offended with his killing spree and it was no secret to anyone in the arena that Aulina was tied with him.

A youth approached Aulina from the side, swinging toward her sphere of water.

Aulina reacted quickly.

While it appeared to be a sphere, the reality was that a portion of it had sunk into the ground. Taking advantage of the cracks and the flexibility of water, Aulina had set up a spiderweb trap of sorts in the ground around her. Unfortunately, she hadn't had enough time to make it as powerful as she could, but it would have to do for now.

The youth was completely caught off guard, howling in pain as a spike of Water Force drilled through the sole of their feet.

Having had their mind blinded by the torturous wound, the youth couldn't even react as a whip of water blasted them from the arena.

At that split moment of Aulina's attention being taken, though, several arrows had already appeared before her.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Aulina couldn't react in time to use her rivers, resulting in the arrows directly colliding with her sphere of protection. Panic colored her features as the arrows tore through, but her shield was just thick enough to slow the arrows to a crawl.

They fell to the ground with dull clangs. However, Aulina had been completely shaken. Of the three arrows, one had been aimed right for her forehead, another had been aimed right for her heart and the last had been aimed right at her womb.

Each was more sinister than the last and it made her feel that her life had been sucked dry. By the time she realized her shield had been just barely enough to block them and she snapped out of it, she was horrified to find that several more attacks were coming her way.

Another attack came from her left, this time wielding a glaive. Her right side, which she had just cleared, had already been filled by yet another. And, right down her middle, a chorus of three more arrows sliced forward, right toward the holes in her water sphere that had yet to heal.

'I'm finish...?'

Aulina was at a loss for words. She had hardly been able to fight the battle she wanted to fight. She had just managed to drum up her courage to face these behemoths, but how had things ended this way...? Maybe she wasn't one of the lucky ones after all...

"FALL OFF THE STAGE!"

At that moment, Leonel's voice seemed to cut through all the noise. Like a pointed roar, it shook her psyche awake.

Not everyone could remain calm in the face of death, and they might even forget solutions they could easily think of in any other situation. Aulina had completely forgotten she was so close to the edge of the stage.

But by the time she registered Leonel's words, it was too late. Even if she fell back now, those arrows wouldn't be stopped, they would still strike true... There was no way to survive this.

'Dammit.'

If Aulina could see through this in her flustered state, how could Leonel not? When he yelled out, he had already moved.

However, it was then another booming voice descended.

"You dare?!" Orinik's voice cast a shadow over the arena.

Chapter 1157 I Don't Know

Orinik's expression was as dark as the night, fury marked between his brows. He hadn't thought that anyone would actually be so brazen as to interfere with the proceedings, especially after both he and especially Ganor had made it clear who held authority here and who didn't.

Did he understand why Leonel was moving? Yes. Did he care about what that reason was? Absolutely not.

Death was an inevitable part of these Selections. There was a reason he hadn't done a single thing as Elthor killed as he pleased. If anyone dared to try to stop Elthor previously, he would have killed them on the spot. For Leonel to dare to do something like this before him...

He was courting Death.

Leonel, however, had a vastly different perspective. He didn't care about the prestige of the Void Palace, nor did he care about Orinik's 'authority'. All he cared about was the fact that Aulina was a woman who had put her life on the line to save his brothers just several weeks ago. If he stood by and did nothing as she died, he wouldn't even be able to look the people of the Moon in the eye.

Leonel didn't want to put his grandmother in a situation where she had to take action. His movement and her movement held completely different weights. He was still a member of the younger generation and his actions could be left as a slight against Orinik himself. However, if his grandmother made a move, it wouldn't be a matter of youths any longer, it would be a slap to the face of the Void Palace itself.

Among the geniuses of Earth, Leonel knew that he was the only one with the speed to make it. So, he took it upon himself. However...

The moment Orinik spoke, an oppressive aura fell like a hammer. It crashed against Leonel's head and threatened to bury him into the earth. The difference in this aura from what Leonel had experienced before in the past was like night and day. Even Sparking Star Order had no ability to match it.

Right then, though, Leonel's gaze flashed with a blinding violet light, a deep crimson hidden within suddenly lashing out and causing Orinik's aura to splinter like shards of glass.

Leonel's body flickered with Bronze Runes, his figure stepping through space and appearing by Aulina's side and within her water sphere in the blink of an eye.

Wrapping an arm around her waist, he stepped and pulled backward, his free hand tapping forward three times in quick succession. His arm moved so quickly that it left afterimages in the air, almost making it seem like he had four arms instead of just two.

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!

The arrows deflected off of Leonel's fingers like they had rammed into a metal wall, causing even Leonel to raise a brow. His Bronze Runes had already vanished as he had only needed to activate them for a moment to boost his spatial affinity for an instant, but he was surprised by the strength of his body. In fact, now that he thought about it, he had miscalculated the amount of effort he would need to get here as well.

With soft steps Leonel landed with Aulina by his side, splashes of water landing around them as Aulina looked around shaken, her face as pale as a sheet of paper.

"Are you alright?" Leonel's brow furrowed, looking toward Aulina.

"I... Yes... Yes, I'm alright..."

Aulina's voice trembled. She had faced death before, especially during her fight with the three Whales. But... Never had it felt so close until now. It wasn't just that she faced death, it really felt like she had died for a moment.

The entire arena seemed to freeze over as Orinik's gaze locked onto Leonel. The battle on the stage came to a grinding halt, no one certain of what to do any longer.

At that moment, a torrent of boos rang down from the crowd above. They all felt they were rightfully pissed. It was fine when Elthor killed people, but not when others wanted to kill Aulina? Was there anything so good in this world?

"Do you treat my words as air?"

Leonel, who had been making sure that Aulina was alright, only now turned toward Orinik.

"And what words are those?" Leonel asked.

Clearly not expecting to receive such an answer, Orinik's expression became fiercer. Ganor, who had been lazily reclining on his own chair, leaned his head on his palm, opening his eyes to reveal a gaze as sharp as a blade.

"Do you think this is your playground and you can do as you please?"

"How did I do as I pleased? I saved a friend of mine, so just disqualify her and continue with the round. I've done nothing to interfere with your process, nor did I take out anyone who didn't deserve to be taken out."

"So it's fine for your people to kill others, but they can't be killed themselves?"

Orinik hadn't expected to get into a shouting match with a junior. In fact, he would have already acted had it not been for the fact he knew that Leonel's grandmother would never allow him to die.

Orinik didn't fear the elder, but without knowing where his own superior was, he would rather not put his life on the line to fight this battle. If he died and the Void Palace only punished them afterward, it wouldn't be worth it.

"First of all, I never stopped anyone else from trying to save their people, they can only blame themselves for being too slow. Secondly, weren't you the one who said there was no such thing as

absolute fairness? My friend has lost and won't receive a position to enter the Void Palace, does that mean she also has to die?

"Is that how your Void Palace proves how macho they are? By forcing people who don't have to die to do so?"

...

"Aina? Where are you going?" Yuri, who was shocked by what was happening here, suddenly realized that Aina had stood. But, Aina was headed away instead of toward the stage.

"I don't know, I don't like this. I'll be back when it's my turn."

Her voice was just as unmoving and lacking in substance as it had been for the past several months.

Chapter 1158 Not...

Yuri and Savahn looked toward one another. The stress between their brows was almost too obvious for all to see. It felt like they were a pair of mothers trying to care for their child, but the problem was that this child had the strength to flatten a mountain with a single stomp of her feet.

Was it jealousy? Maybe it was a bit of that. But, from what Yuri and Savahn understood about the situation, it was very likely that Aina was seeing something beyond that, something that she simply hated to see.

Once again, Leonel was putting himself at risk for the sake of saving someone else. How many times had she already seen something like this?

The trouble here, though, was the fact that they weren't sure what this meant for Aina's personality. Was it returning? Or was it a child-like temper tantrum triggered by something unknown?

It was simply too hard to tell, and this wasn't exactly a situation where they would be able to tell either. The two worriedly looked toward Leonel. Even if it wasn't for Aina, they wouldn't want to see Leonel die here. But, if he really did die, who knew how it would affect Aina?

...

Hearing the clear taunt in Leonel's words, Orinik's fury was at risk of tipping completely over.

"Leave it be."

The sudden voice was like tinkling rain water, delicate and echoing. It was soothing to an almost impossible degree, and yet it washed over the arena with a momentum that made many freeze. The power behind it was so undeniable that no one seemed to even think of imagining the kind of beauty behind these words. Just the thought alone felt blasphemous.

It was suddenly obvious to everyone present that Orinik, Ganor and the others were only the face of what the Void Palace had presented... The true brawn hadn't bothered to appear... Maybe precisely because they were unworthy.

The only one who furrowed his brows at this voice was Leonel. There was something odd and artificial about it. Though the voice sounded beautiful, he was of the opinion that it would sound even better if it wasn't so strained.

Of course, he had no idea that his mother had changed the pitch of her voice slightly in the off chance that Leonel would recognize it. It seemed that she was right to be so 'cautious'. Maybe only Leonel would be sharp enough to parse apart the difference.

Leonel recovered quite quickly and nodded in thanks to seemingly empty air. Only after this did he lead Aulina away and allow the rest of the second round to continue.

Quite expectedly, no one dared to replicate what Leonel had done. The voice of the woman was like an imprint on their soul. She might have forgiven such a thing once, but who was to say that she would do so again?

"You didn't manage to stop him?" Ganor looked toward Orinik who had returned to their seating arrangements.

The truth was that if Orinik had been standing near the stage, Leonel would have never been able to save Aulina, at least not in time. However, because he hadn't seen much of a point in forcing himself to stand for the entirety of this day, he chose to return and sit, allowing the bill board to handle everything else.

Unfortunately, this put him on the opposite side of the arena to where Leonel had come from, so he could only use his aura. He had thought it would be enough, but he couldn't have possibly expected that Leonel would be able to ignore it.

Orinik's expression darkened, but he didn't give an answer.

Ganor's lazy gaze had likewise become quite sharp. Despite his usual demeanor, he took his role in the Void Palace quite seriously as well. If not for their overseer saying something, they would have acted as well.

"It won't happen again. I didn't expect someone to actually be so brazen. Next time, I will attack directly."

Orinik had wanted to disqualify Leonel and strip him of the right to participate, but after their overseer spoke, he would be looking down on her if he continued to pursue the matter. However, he would remember this.

...

"Why do you look so down?" Leonel smiled. He patted Aulina on the head, but she continued to look down at the ground.

Unshed tears threatened to spill over. If she wasn't scared about being an even greater burden by crying, maybe she would have already failed to hold them back.

Leonel sighed. "We can't win everything. Even though you failed this time, won't there be a next time?"

Aulina's shoulders trembled. She looked up to find Leonel's kind smile.

"Next... time?"

"Of course." Leonel reassured. "Isn't the only requirement that you be below the Sixth Dimension? Right now, you're only at Tier 2. Between now and the next cycle, how much will you grow? By then, who will be able to stop you?"

Hearing such words, Aulina suddenly felt a lot better. She didn't want to be left behind by everyone else, which of them here didn't have their own personal battle to fight?

Her small hands closed into fists. Two single streaks of tears fell down her cheeks as she forced a smile.

"Yes, next time." She said resolutely.

When the two made it back, Aulina was immediately smothered by Joyce. As scared as Aulina was to die, for a moment Joyce really thought she had lost her long time friend. The two cried in each other's arms for a long while...

Leonel took a deep breath, sitting by his grandmother's side.

"Grandma, am I too reckless?" Leonel suddenly asked.

"Yes. Yes, definitely."

Leonel smiled bitterly when he heard these words. But, he knew she was right.

The trouble was... If he wasn't reckless, then who would be? There were certain things he couldn't just sit idly by and watch. These were his comrades and brothers and sisters in arms... He couldn't just let them die when he knew he could do something.

Unfortunately, he knew that his actions had only painted an even larger target on the backs of the geniuses of Earth...

One after another, the rounds passed by. Numerous so-called 'geniuses' of Earth went up... But not a single one managed to pass.

[More coming later]

Chapter 1159 Sensory Image

Leonel sat in silence as he watched his friends lose one after another, realizing that he was quite helpless to do anything about it.

In truth, he blamed himself. He spent so long away from all of them that he never truly helped them to grow like he should have. He buried his head away, chasing a woman he couldn't even explain his attraction to and leaving them to fend against the Dimensional Verse on their own.

He spoke of helping people, but he couldn't even properly help those closest to him. In fact, he had only made things harder on them.

The mountain they would have had to climb to earn a spot to enter the Void Palace was tall to begin with, but now with this target painted onto their backs, and their number disparity, an improbable cause had instantly become an impossible one.

There was not the slightest hint of remorse. Without fail, the geniuses of Earth were the first to be cut down every time. If not for Leonel wising up and giving them some protection before they went up, it was likely that each one would have died.

Leonel's brothers didn't fair any better than the rest. They, too, found themselves on the losing end of their battles.

"Fuck!"

Franco kicked his chair over. It flew out with such speed that it shattered into wood splinters the instant it hit a wall. But, that didn't seem to make him feel any better.

Losing wasn't something Leonel and his brothers were used to. They had been a team for so long and could count on two hands the number of games they had lost in that more than decade span. Yet, each one of them, no matter how far apart they were, hit just as bad.

There was a heavy silence, a fury... a subtle feeling of inadequacy...

All the confidence Elthor had helped them build up deflated like a balloon. A gloominess that Leonel didn't know how to fix took hold, but with it came an underlying determination.

Leonel knew well how his brothers responded to adversity. Giving them words of encouragement now would only undermine and insult them. He was certain that this sort of humiliation wasn't something that would happen again... At least not for a very long time.

The billboard flickered once more and this time, Noah stood, his gaze having long since turned from indifferent to cold.

His gaze shifted over and met Leonel's. Though the two didn't exchange any words, their meaning was already clear.

Noah's crystalline blue saber appeared long before he made it to the stage. His steps were even and measured while the sun seemed to dance off the edge of his blade. Every reflective light seemed to make those that saw it reflexively recoil, worried that one of these 'sharp' rays might slice their neck clean off.

Among those that had failed already, Jessica was among them. Her beast taming ability was useless against these enemies as her pets were simply too weak and hadn't grown. On top of that, the wilderness of Planet Luxnix was far too dangerous for even Leonel to travel through casually, let alone her.

Without a choice, she chose to not even summon her partners, resulting in her losing even faster than the others before her had.

Though she returned gracefully and unwounded, without the same gloominess the others seemed to display, every time Noah sent a glance toward her he only seemed to become more infuriated.

Jessica wasn't weak, nor were her beast partners. The reason she didn't dare to summon them was because she knew well that she would be ganged up on. It simply wasn't worth risking the help of her pets just to lose anyway...

For as long as Noah could remember, Jessica had always followed by his side, a silent help and a right hand woman that was simply irreplaceable. He had long since learned how to read the different shades of her placid expression.

She looked indifferent now, but everything from the sway of her short cut hair to the way she crossed her legs screamed to Noah that she was feeling sadness and guilt to the depths of her soul...

Sadness because she had failed... Guilt because she couldn't follow in his steps...

And it was all the fault of these people.

"Oh? Another one of you? Are you all still stepping up to get embarrassed?"

Noah slowly walked up the steps of the arena, seemingly having not heard the jeers of the Montex family member. His steps were silent and his blade lightly bobbed just above the hard stone flooring. Everything from his breathing to the beat of his heart was steady.

"Begin."

Orinik's voice still fell indifferently. He didn't originally care enough about these proceedings to become invested, but he still found himself watching every time a person of Earth stood up. He told himself that this was to ensure that Leonel could never interfere again, but if he was honest with him, he got a sick sort of satisfaction watching them be wiped out one after another.

The instant his voice fell this time, though... He felt that something was different.

BANG!

It was a sound the audience had heard many times before. But, this time, it was so strong and cacophonous that the sturdy stone platform themselves shattered, sprinkling into the air like shards of glass.

Each one of Noah's steps were heavy and there was nothing remotely elegant about his movement. His body grew to three meters in height, his saber became as large as a door and his skin shimmered like diamond beneath the sunlight.

He was like a rampaging titan, his limbs becoming like locomotives, crushing everything in his path.

The soles of his feet shattered skulls, his blade bisected bodies, his fists crushed souls.

Every heart rending cry and spine tingling snap of the bone resounded through the arena, painting a sensory image that would never be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

Chapter 1160 Begin

Noah heavily stepped off of the stage, his body drenched in blood from head to toe, none of which was his own. The arena couldn't help but be silent outside of his heavy step.

When Noah returned, Roesia stood with a dotting expression on her face. She couldn't help but start wiping Noah off.

Seeing how nonchalantly his grandmother was treating so much blood, Leonel suddenly got the feeling that maybe his family wasn't so normal. The dichotomy of sweet, old grandmother, helping her grandson wipe down the lifeblood of his murder victims...

Just what kind of world was he in right now?

Leonel's lip curled into a smile. Though the gloominess hadn't vanished, he could feel that Noah had vented much of their frustration. There was only so much that Leonel could do himself, at some point them witnessing his own success wouldn't move the needle anymore. However, seeing someone else do it... It gave them more courage to believe that they could do the same.

Though the geniuses of Earth continued to lose after this, and even more miserably at that because Noah had re-energized their enemies, they still returned with their heads held high and a fire lit within their gaze.

None of these people knew that the Leonel and his friends had only just experienced their Metamorphosis not even half a decade ago. To have already reached such a stage in a short period of time was something to be proud of. And, there'd come a day where they wouldn't have to show pride in their defeat, but could instead do so in their victory.

...

The events of the day continued to wane. Of the people of Earth, most had already gone up and lost, unfortunately falling short.

However, there were some success stories nonetheless.

Karolus, the preeminent genius of the Moon and a young man Leonel knew for his exceptionally high spatial affinity, managed to become the third person of Earth to claim their spot for the second day. His ability was devastating and one couldn't even approach him without fearing for their lives. Despite the fervor Noah had reignited, he still managed to weather the storm and claim his place.

The next success story was more so of luck than of skill. But, it was one that Leonel happily accepted nonetheless.

Milan and Arnold were lucky enough to get drawn into the same group. Working together, Milan's defensive energy shield ability and Arnold explosive palm ability, not to mention the latter's grasp of Universal Force, was the perfect tandem.

What Leonel didn't notice was that Orinik's pupils had constricted into pinholes when he saw Arnold's use of Universal Force.

It had to be remembered that originally, Arnold followed the same path of comprehending Universal Force as everyone else. He fused it with his Palm Force and made it one dimensional.

However, after his meeting with Leonel and the others, Leonel pointed him toward the more complete path of Universal Force after seeing his talent in it. Now, Arnold walked the same path of Universal Force that Leonel did, it was just that neither of them seemed to realize just how impossibly rare this path was...

But Orinik, Ganor, and the other envoys of the Void Palace most certainly did. In fact, they had all but decided who would get the Golden Token after seeing this display...

...

Time continued to speed by. Unfortunately, outside of Elthor, Noah, Karolus, Milan and Arnold, no others made it. Compared to the accumulating numbers of the other families, it was quite pitiful. However, it wasn't terrible either.

Finally, after dozens of rounds and thousands of participants, Leonel felt a subtle connection call out to him as the billboard flickered.

'Oh?'

Leonel looked up, finding the number he had claimed for himself shimmering brightly. It seems like it was finally his turn.

With a light push off his chair, Leonel stood and stretched, his bones cracking. His mind and body both felt quite alert. After sleeping for over a month, he felt more energized now than he had in a long time.

Almost the instant Leonel rose, many eyes fell onto him. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that ever since that incident of a few hours ago, many had been waiting for Leonel's turn.

The skill he had displayed in that short time frame wasn't small, but it was still difficult for many to get a read on exactly what his limits were. This was mostly because by the time people realized that someone actually had the audacity to move against the wishes of the Void Palace envoys, Leonel was already more than half way there. It was hard to tell if he was just that fast, or if he had just reacted long before anyone else had.

But now, all of those questions would be answered. The people of Earth had been being targeted by proxy only because they couldn't get at Leonel... But now that he was here...!?

Leonel's steps were a lot lighter than Noah's despite the both of them being extremely heavy. He landed softly, his bare feet feeling the cool surface of the hard stone.

Comparatively speaking, Leonel was very casually dressed. He didn't have a weapon in hand nor did he wear any armor. He wore a loose fitting pair of sweatpants and a long sleeved shirt that waved about in the wind, pulling against the toned silhouette of his torso...

It was the kind of nonchalance that made those around him either furrow their brows or sneer.

At that moment, the final contestant stepped forward, a curious glint in his eye. This young man was none other than Ysac and his bow was already in hand.

His piercing gaze landed on Leonel. As though a hawk, he scanned him up and down, the rest of his Internal Sight focused on his surroundings.

This matter couldn't have been more perfect. Leonel and his people had slighted the Arundo. If Ysac defeated him, he would take a leg up on that distant cousin of his. But, he was still a cautious person... One scheme after another began to play in his mind.

Ysac thought he was clever and calculated, but Leonel's mind was so clear at the moment that he could even count the steps of every insect within a kilometer radius right this moment, such obvious glances weren't something he would miss.

'A bow...? I don't think I need to use one here, though.' Leonel thought to himself. 'Why don't we test out a few things instead?'

Leonel stood in the dead center of the arena, seemingly oblivious to the danger of his position.

"Begin."