

## Descent 1191

### Chapter 1191 Bowmen

Leonel sighed.

He could feel the rage of the young man across from him and considering the bow in his hands and the shape of his features, he could guess why. This young man was probably of the Arundo family and very likely related that Ysac character he had killed previously with a combination of his bat construct and his Radiant Fire Force.

Resonance and vibrations were already dangerous enough on their own, let alone when they were paired with a Force capable of destroying cells down to a molecular level.

Back then, Leonel had only wanted to casually try out what the combination would give him, and the result was devastating for Ysac... To say the least.

Isac had been forced to hold down his rage and fury for days, being held back by even his own family members so he didn't rush out and do something that ruined his future. Though, Isac never expected to be so lucky as to get Leonel in his group.

He slowly pulled the bow from his back, his gaze locked onto Leonel. If something like a simple looked could kill, there was no doubt that maybe Leonel would have died several times over.

Leonel decided against saying anything. Sometimes, this was the best course of action. Often times in life, there was no one in the wrong, and yet... you would have to be on opposing sides regardless.

Seeing the bow in Isac's hands, though, something within Leonel shifted. He couldn't remember ever running into a true bowman yet. In his life, he had never met anyone more accurate or skilled than himself in this respect. He really wanted to see...

Just what kind of strength a family of bowmen could produce.

Leonel's palm flipped over, revealing a sleek black bow. It was quite a beautiful construct, but its Quasi Bronze level had long since become outdated. Even still, it had followed Leonel for several years already. Of all his weapons, this was the one he was probably the most familiar with.

The gazes of the Arundo family flashed with rage when they saw Leonel's actions. They couldn't see into his thoughts, how could they believe that he was doing anything more than mocking them? Leonel had displayed skill in the Luxnix's Force Arts and the spear, but now he wanted to be a bowman too?

But Isac felt completely different. There was something about Leonel's demeanor that shifted when the bow touched his palm. He went from a normal young man to a towering mountain. An invisible pressure pressed downward as though there was no distance that was safe, no defense that was impenetrable.

'Today...' Isac thought to himself, slowly drawing his first arrow and tightening his back. '... Even if I have to give up my life, I will take you down with me.'

TWANG! TSSSSS!

Two streaking arrows were released at once, each from opposite sides of the arena. At least, that was what it would seem like. However, if one had been paying especially close attention, it would have been just barely perceptible that Leonel had released a fraction of a moment later.

Isac's gaze flickered, numerous calculations being performed in his mind every second. He deduced the ending in a fraction of a moment and released a second arrow and a third.

Leonel took a step to the side. His hands became a blur, mirroring Isac's actions in a single blink.

**BANG!**

The first two arrows collided, creating a scene that stunned those watching.

They split into four pieces, each one being split in two by the other in an astonishing feat the crowd had simply never seen before. Never had two arrows been so perfectly matched in such a way. But, such a sight didn't even have time to settle in before the second and third volleys met one another.

Leonel's expression flickered, a wide grin spreading across his face.

Isac's second arrow deviated in its path just before it met his own second. Skimming against the side, it threw Leonel's second arrow off course and right in the path of Isac's own third arrow.

In just a breath, Isac used Leonel's second arrow to deviate the path of his own third arrow, forcing Leonel's own third arrow to miss completely.

Leonel's second arrow flew by the right of Isac's head and the third flew by the left of his waist. But, he didn't move a single inch as though he already knew that exactly this would happen.

At the same time, the forced deviation of Isac's third arrow by Leonel's second resulted in both of Isac's arrows flying in a straight line, right for Leonel's head.

For the first time in his life, Leonel had been out maneuvered in a battle a snipers. But, rather than being enraged or saddened, he laughed, a vast violet aura exuding from him without his even noticing.

Leonel was forced to tilt his head to the side to dodge Isac's line of arrows. But, in the split moment of being off balance, Isac had already launched four more arrows, his gaze focused and his mind running on overdrive. He had never felt so focused in his life, so absolutely in control.

This battle. He would win it.

Right when Leonel shifted his head to the side, the first in line second arrow suddenly dipped down, ripping into his shoulder.

A skidding white mark was left on Leonel's skin as the arrow almost drew blood. His mind had been quick enough to pick up on the change, but he hadn't been quick enough to activate his Bronze Runes in that area, causing the white mark that was there now.

But, Isac seemed to have already long since been aware of how strong Leonel's body was, because the third arrow which had been following the trail of the second fell in line perfectly. As though taking the white mark on Leonel's shoulder as a landing strip, it burst with a flood of Force, piercing into Leonel's left shoulder.

A spray of blood began to fall down Leonel's arm, his grip over his bow turning somewhat weak.

However, there was no chance for rest.

A volley of four arrows was already in the air and it was hard to tell just what sort of unpredictable tricks Isac had hidden within them.

Chapter 1192 It Seemed...

Leonel's expression flickered.

The instant the Force surrounding the arrow lodged into his shoulder dissipated, he used his Variant Earth affinity to send it flying out of his flesh. The wound itself immediately began to heal, Leonel's passive Healing Factor having reached ridiculous levels after reaching the Second Awakening of his Healing Branch.

Isac hadn't expected for Leonel to deal with his wound so effortlessly, so he was somewhat caught off guard. This wasn't because he thought his arrow would be lethal, but rather because he expected Leonel to have to be forced to find a moment to pull the arrow out. And, he thought that Leonel would also have to at least weather the injury for the duration of the battle. But, it seemed that he was wrong.

Isac's expression fell for only a split moment before his determination was lit ablaze once more.

His gaze rapidly shifted between the four arrows he had released into the sky, completing another series of calculations in the blink of an eye.

His aura blazed, his Bow Force wrapping around his body like a howling wind.

The twang of his bow string became like the chords of a symphony. Every pull and release had its own unique rhythm. He didn't care about the depletion of his state of mind, he didn't care about the tingling pain at the tips of his fingers, he didn't care about anything outside of the target right before him.

Leonel rolled to the side. Having lost the initiative, his body was forced into weaving and dodging, his gaze flickering with an excited light.

Isac was the best marksman he had ever met. His skill was immaculate. His calculative abilities were lesser than that of himself, but his talent and grasp of timing were impeccable. The moment he seized a leg up due to a folly on Leonel's part, he didn't let up, his assault only becoming more overbearing and relentless.

There was no cover for Leonel to take, no partner he could use to distract his enemy, and as though by some tacit agreement between the two, Leonel refused to use any skills classified outside his talent as a bowman.

**BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!**

Plumes of smoke rose up outside the arena as arrow after arrow left craters in their wake.

Steam began to rise off of Isac's skin. His fingers trickled with blood, his back burned from the strain and his shoulders cried out. But, he pulled one arrow after another, slowly forcing Leonel back into a corner where he wouldn't be able to step either left or right.

Isac slowly shifted to the side, taking his first steps of the battle. His base remained steady and his feet were heavy. Everything he did was perfect and without flaw. He forgot about everything else, his mind touching an ethereal state where even the pain and aching of his body vanished.

And then...

BANG!

A towering pillar of Force rose into the skies. Isac's aura shifted, his arrows beginning to carry with them the screeching sounds of metal grating on metal as they tore through the skies.

At that moment, Orinik and Ganor's gazes narrowed, their expressions becoming serious.

'Natural Bow Force!'

Under the shocked gazes of the crowd, Isac broke through just as he forced Leonel into a corner. And yet, the man himself didn't even seem to notice. All he could think about was growing powerful enough to defeat the enemy before him, releasing an arrow with enough strength to rip through any defense before him.

SHUUU! SHUU! SHUUU! SHUUU!

The arrows whistled through the skies, their momentum leaving streaks across space and threatening to tear lines into the fabric of reality. However, while they were far from accomplishing such a feat, they were more than enough to shred apart Leonel's defenses.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

A cloud of dust billowed into the skies, covering the scene of everything in the corner of the arena. The crowd watched on in awe. A battle that had started with such a fascinating beginning had turned completely one sided and lost much of their attention. But, the instant of Isac's breakthrough, it was as though all eyes have been glued to him.

Natural Bow Force! Wasn't the conclusion obvious?

However, right then, before the smoke could completely clear, a laughter sounded from within it, causing the plumes of debris to forcefully disperse.

Leonel figure was revealed. Much of his clothing had been drenched in blood but the skin beneath was completely unscathed. What was obvious was the fact the final volley of arrows carrying Natural Bow Force hadn't touched a single hair on his head.

"I understand now, it makes so much sense. So you can use Bow Force like that..."

Leonel was absolutely fascinated. When he thought of the potential applications and what he could do when he gained the skill to do so, he was ecstatic. Maybe he didn't even realize how much he loved the bow until now. Maybe he loved it even more than he did Crafting. It was almost a shame that he was given the Spear Domain Heirloom instead of the Bow Domain Heirloom.

"Let's finish this."

Leonel, who was now confident in his ability to dodge Isac's arrows stood to his full height, tall and proud. He didn't seem prepared to run as he drew his bow, even knowing that Isac held the initiative in his hands. He exuded all the unbridled confidence in the world.

However, just as Leonel was about to nock another arrow to begin his counter, he blinked, slowly lowering his hands.

Isac still stood tall, blood trickling from his fingers, but he was completely unmoving. He swayed slightly in the wind before he fell backward, crashing outside of the arena.

He had given everything he had in that last strike. By the time the last arrow was released, he had already lost consciousness. He was in no state to battle.

It seemed that Leonel had won.

#### Chapter 1193 Hushed

Leonel returned to Earth's seating arrangements a bit disappointed, but also somewhat relieved. He didn't want to have to kill Isac. Not only had he just enlightened him to many things, but he also understood where Isac was coming from.

Leonel had long since grown past the point of allowing guilt to weigh down his soul and threaten his life. But, he had also come to the conclusion that those that wanted revenge on him for things he had done in the past weren't individuals he would hate.

In the future, he would have to cross and harm a lot of people. That was a weight he would have to carry on his shoulders and accept.

The moment Leonel sat back down, after appeasing his grandmother and insisting that he was doing just fine, he immediately entered a state of meditation as the battles raged around him.

The battles started up again in full force, but Leonel had entered his Dream World, several Dream Clones standing around and performing the same actions again and again.

Leonel was absolutely fascinated by Isac's bowmanship not only because of its applications, but also its simplicity. Although the amount of skill it took to use it at high levels was obscene, the entry was simple. It was the sort of thing that was accessible to everyone but very difficult to get extremely skilled at... Kind of like driving a car.

Anyone could take a vehicle from point A to point B. But, how fast could you drive a car without losing control of it? 150 kilometers an hour? 200 maybe? Anyone could park, but how many could parallel park with ease? And what about drifting into your parking spot? Anyone could drive manual, but how many could drive automatic?

The layers of complexity and skill increased almost instantly.

Similarly, Isac's bowmanship started simple but very quickly became complicated. In the start, it was a game of balance and projectiles, but then it evolved into aerodynamics and fluid dynamics, and at its highest levels became the physics of chaos and chaotic events.

To make a potential complex matter simple, Isac essentially coated his arrows in Bow Force, decided the shape and weight the Bow Force would take before he released the arrow. All of the random movements of his arrows from start to finish had never been a form of telekinesis or a special mind technique, but were rather all examples of Bow Force Manipulation!

By tweaking and adjusting how Bow Force was applied to an arrow, you could cause delayed and seemingly random events to occur long after it had left the bow. The result was catching even someone like Leonel, who almost always had everything in his grasp, completely off guard.

The most shocking part of it was that the more clever one was with their application, and the more decoys you used, the more complicated the calculations became and the more difficult it was for a person to see through the truth.

Leonel was so used to being able to directly pinpoint the trajectory of an arrow or projectile because it always followed a simple parabolic shape. He only had to take into account gravity and the force behind it, adding in a sample of the sound it caused for extra measure, and he could tell almost everything about it from the location it was shot from to exactly where it would land in the blink of an eye.

But, with this... It was like Leonel's world had been turned completely upside down. Fluid Dynamics was among the hardest branches of physics even in the 25th Century. The variables only increased as you rose through the Dimensions. And, this wasn't even the most complicated application of Isac's bowmanship that Leonel could think of.

Leonel was so immersed in his own world that it took a tap from his grandmother for him to realize that it was actually once again his turn.

"Hm? Oh, right." Leonel smiled.

The depth of complexity was so great that even after that session, Leonel felt that he had only touched the tip of the iceberg.

The way Force interacted with regular Bow Force versus Natural Bow Force versus Enlightened Bow Force varied so wildly that Leonel had to prepare separate calculations for each. Then there was the matter of considering the atmosphere he was in, the kind of Force his enemy was proficient in, and even how fast or slow his opponent was breathing.

If Leonel wanted to be as accurate as he normally was with normal arrows, he had to take even the tiniest detail into account.

Leonel was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't even realize that the crowd released a deafening cheer when he stepped onto the arena. They were so excited by the next match up that they let it all out.

'Right, I didn't check...'

Leonel rose his head to look at the billboard. But, his eyes caught sight of something that made him realize there was no point.

Before him, a beauty holding a mask in one hand and a battle ax in the other stood. Aina met Leonel's placid gaze with her own cool amber one, the delicate sculpting of her features revealed for all to see.

No one knew why Aina had taken her mask off, but Leonel had a few guesses. Either way, she crushed the mask between the squeeze of her long and slender fingers, a bloodthirsty killing intent hanging around her.

The shards of the mask falling to the ground seemed to be the signal for the battle's start.

Aina's Force became like a towering pillar of crimson. The quantity and quality being so much that it felt like the entire arena would collapse. Even before she moved, the stage beneath their feet shattered like an egg, making it difficult to tell just where it began and just where it ended.

Leonel found himself falling as the platform collapsed, his feet still beneath him as his gaze remained locked onto his opponent.

BANG!

Aina accelerated forth. Her speed was so blazing that it put Syllar to shame. The difference might as well have been night and day.

Her long black hair fluttered to her back, her amber irises glowed with a fierce gold, the stride of her long legs and the tone of her powerful torso winding up as she raised her battle ax.

The shimmering blade reflected the sun's light as she chopped down toward Leonel's head. In what felt like the blink of an eye, she had already appeared before him, her strength causing the arena to tremble and quake.

BANG!

She sliced down with all of her might.

Orinik's expression change. 'Protection!'

The billboard in the skies hurriedly glowed, sending out a wave of Force that protected and reinforced the surroundings.

A blade Force shot through the earth, rising like a wall of dividing light and continuing to the point it crashed against the spectator stands.

Screams of horror and fear resounded as the golden barrier quaked, threatening to crack beneath the pressure and collapse entirely.

The strength was absolutely unfathomable. If Orinik hadn't reacted so quickly, it was impossible to tell just what would have happened to the arena.

Numerous gazes landed on the collapsed stage, no one caring for even a moment about the other battles that had been forced to stop amidst all the commotion.

But, what they saw when the smoke cleared was something they would have never expected to see.

Their Goddess had her head buried into a man's chest, uncaring for his bloody and sweaty mess of a ripped shirt. She wrapped her arms around him so tightly that it seemed as though she was scared he would disappear.

A hushed silence fell over the arena.

#### Chapter 1194 Thoughtful Words (1)

The battle between Leonel and Aina wasn't even meant to occur so quickly. As two undefeated participants, their turn should have been delayed as much as possible. But, due to how poor Leonel had looked in his battle with Isac, and the fact Isac himself was also undefeated for the time being, despite winning, Leonel lost priority to the Arundo family Heir.

The result of these series of events was this battle occurring a lot earlier than anyone could have expected. But, even then, no one could have expected a fight with such an explosive start... could end like this?

First some held the hope that maybe Aina was using some sort of bear hug attack. As for why she would do such a thing when she had an enormous battle ax at her disposal, who knew. But, when it came to matters of fandoms and unrequited love, people were willing to believe the most ridiculous of things.

But, it soon became apparent that this wasn't what was happening at all.

No one knew what to do. The other battles had come to a grinding halt, the audience's attention was entirely on the duo, and even Orinik had no idea what he supposed to do to.

"Shit. And here I thought because that Viola family was wiped out she would be easy pickings." Ganor mumbled beneath his breath.

Even when the Void Palace was taken into account, Ganor could only think of maybe two or three beauties on the level of Aina, and each of them was far beyond his reach. He was starting to regret having volunteered to come to this place. There was nothing but disappointment around every corner.

If Aina was untalented, he might still be able to do something. But, from what it seemed from her previous battles, one of those Golden Tokens was almost guaranteed to be for her. If it wasn't certain before, that attack just now practically set it in stone.

"Wait, this is a huge scandal isn't it?" Ganor suddenly began to laugh. "That Rychard guy said she was his fiancée. Then that Myghell guy went to save her and there's a bunch of rumors going around about that. But now she's hugging a third guy on stage. Fuck, this is more entertaining than watching these weaklings battle."

Ganor slapped his arm rest, finally sitting up for the first time. All he lacked was a bucket of popcorn.

Orinik couldn't help but roll his eyes. The mighty Void Palace's Selection had turned into a soap opera and this guy was just eating it up. Where was the dignity and pride he should have had as a disciple of the strongest organization of the Human Domain?

Orinik didn't seem to notice that while he was shaking his head, his eyes, too, hadn't left the scene before him.

Orinik and Ganor weren't the only ones with their own reactions. When it came to the geniuses of Earth, not to mention Savahn, Yuri and Miel, they were all stunned. Even Leonel's grandmother wasn't sure of how she should be reacting. She felt like she was in the middle of a teenage drama she was about 200 years too old for.



'Well, she's very beautiful. But, what about her character? My grandson doesn't seem to be very happy with her... What do I do?'

Roesia felt the need to remind her grandson that when a man draws a boundary, he should keep it, or else his woman would never respect him the way that she should. However, she felt that it wasn't her place to overstep again. She still felt like she was walking on egg shells around her grandson, scared to push him away. It was the kind of thing that could only be solved with time and patience. No matter how much Leonel said it wasn't a big matter, Roesia still felt the need to only slowly integrate herself.

As for Leonel's brothers, they were stuck between deciding whether they should be high fiving or preparing for the next World War. When it came to the women, their eyes glowed as though they were watching a great romance unfold before them, their hearts fluttering as they wondered when they too would meet the man of their dreams.

Savahn and Yuri looked toward one another. They felt that Aina had way too many surprises in store for them.

Neither of them had ever expected things to go down this route. They had spent the last couple days with Aina but she seemed to be no different from the Aina they had known long before her personality was taken away from her. It was difficult to tell what had changed or what was truly going on in her mind.

In that time, they had all dodged the issue of Leonel, not wanting to hurt Aina. And, Aina herself never brought him up, so they had never gotten an accurate read on what her thoughts were.

In fact, now that they thought about it, Aina should have figured out that Leonel was in her group a while ago. They had been preparing for their own battles so much that they hadn't picked up on these tiny details, but she most definitely had.

This should mean that this matter was likely planned by her. She had wanted to do this from the very beginning. But, what exactly would the result be?

Miel himself watched on with a complicated expression. This was his daughter, his little girl. Every father would feel some hesitation when it came to trusting their children in choosing their partners for a lifetime. For Miel, it was especially difficult because he knew everything that Aina had gone through. After all, much of it was his fault to begin with.

He knew that his daughter had had her first boyfriend while he was away, but this was the first time he had laid eyes on the young man while knowing that he was the boyfriend in question. He couldn't help but stare at Leonel's face for a very long time, his brows furrowing into a deep frown.

Aina, though, didn't seem to care about the eyes and ears and everyone else. In her world, there was no one else but her and the young man before her.

She controlled her breathing, taking in his scent and trying not to allow the wave of familiarity and comfort to overwhelm her emotions. When she finally settled the violent trembling of her throat, she began to speak words she had thought about endlessly over the last several days.

"... I'm sorry."

## Chapter 1195 Thoughtful Words (2)

The voice was soft, but there were too many strong individuals in attendance for it not to be heard. But once again, it was as though Aina couldn't be bothered to care. Usually, it was always Leonel putting up sound barriers making the two of them invisible. Aina didn't know how to communicate silently nor did she care to.

"I know the words don't mean much, but I still wanted to say them. I know that I hurt you. I was so worried about protecting myself and putting up barriers so I wouldn't have to suffer pain again that I put the only man I cared about in harm's way.

"There's nothing that I can say to change what I've already done, but I still want to say these things. No matter how this ends, the one thing I don't want you to think is that I don't care for you... In fact, I care for you so much that I often don't know what to do with myself. It controls so much of my day, takes up so much of my mind, and yet I've never really told you..."

Aina squeezed Leonel hard, her eyes squeezing shut. PANDA-N(OVE)L.COM

She could remember all the times that Leonel had shown her care and affection, how much effort he had put into chasing her for so long and how persistent he was in making sure that she was always happy. There was never anything that Leonel did that hurt her that was done with another choice at hand, and even the things that did leave her shambles were actions he took that were for her benefit. Ultimately, he had wanted to protect her. But, how much had she protected him?

Aina could think of so many times Leonel's care for her was clear and obvious, but when she placed the same scope on herself... Why was it that she couldn't do the same?

What did she give him? Her body? Was that all she could do to show her affection? What then was different from her compared to any other woman?

But when Aina recalled her memories, remembering the ups and downs of their relationship, she realized that it wasn't that she hadn't done anything... It was rather that she was so focused on barring herself from the world that the things she had done might as well have not been done at all.

"I'm not very good at speaking about how I feel... But I... I want to become better at it even if it's embarrassing..."

Aina grit her teeth. These were things she never thought she would tell Leonel, things she thought she would take with her to the grave. However, faced with the idea of losing Leonel forever and realizing that maybe she might never have another chance like this, she had resolved herself to do it. And, there was no person better for her to lean on while she did so than the man she had before her now.

The reason she had attacked so viciously at the beginning, the reason why she had made it look like she was going to strike all out, was because this was the only way she could make certain that Leonel wouldn't dodge out of the way.

It sounded ridiculous when you said it like that. After all, she was attacking him, why wouldn't he move?

But, Aina knew Leonel very well. She knew him so well that she was certain that he'd be able to read the trajectory of her attack even when no one else could.

Aina understood where Leonel's head space was at right now. He probably wanted nothing to do with her. If she tried to hug him normally, it would have never worked. She had to catch him off guard...

It was ironic. But, only with his support could she speak these words. Because without him... She felt lost and alone.

"... I... I liked you from the first time we met... You always had a bright smile and everyone seemed to gravitate toward you... I couldn't really understand because... because your status was so much lower than theirs. Those noble kids liked to snub their nose at everything, but you seemed to always be able to get past those barriers.

"When you confessed to me a few days later, I was immediately overwhelmed. Embarrassment wasn't an emotion I think I had ever felt in life up until that point. But, for some reason, meeting gazes with you for the first time snapped something into place within me and it was as though I could finally feel within the normal range of what a person should..."

When Aina began, she seemed to still be hesitant and slow. But as she continued, her words flowed much smoother and faster. It became easier as she continued, as though it truly was just her and Leonel.

"... I really wanted to say yes, it was my first instinct. I didn't think about anything else and it was at the tip of my tongue. But my body shut down and I forgot how to think. I was too embarrassed to even respond so I ran away instead. And after running away the first time, for some reason, it only became harder and harder to say the word I wanted to from the very beginning..."

"I began to make excuses and focus more and more on the very goal I had had from the very beginning. Revenge for my mother was too important to me to consider other things, or at least that's what I convinced myself of. And maybe it was one part true, but after seeing your talent, it became nothing more than an excuse I told myself to not be forced to confront it..."

PANDA NOVEL.CO,M "Instead of facing my feelings, I hid from them and they began to pop up in the worst of ways. Sometimes it was benign, but other times it became very dangerous. I almost reached a point where I didn't care about anything else, so long as I could satisfy myself in these small ways no one else would ever know about..."

"And... It all started with my hair."

Chapter 1196 Thoughtful Words (3)

"It started off fairly innocent. I liked to learn things about you and found methods of doing so. I couldn't go to your games because they were often at night and there was a small period of time between classes and curfew I could use to train. But, I always watched the livestreams.

"During one of your postgame interviews, the interviewer asked you whether you preferred girls with short or long hair. I remember not liking the question. Shouldn't she have been asking you about football? And why was she so flirty? But I distinctly remember you saying long hair.

"Back then, I remember being traumatized and I agonized over it for several days. A part of me thought you just answered randomly because the interviewer made you uncomfortable. But, another part of me couldn't help but look in the mirror, hating my short hair.

"I always found long hair to be annoying. It also got in the way, it took way too long to dry after a shower, and whenever I trained I had to make extra care not to let it get tangled or caught by an opponent. But, after that day, I couldn't bring myself to cut it anymore."

Aina thought too highly of Leonel's opinion. Even if it was a joke, even if it was an off handed comment to get the interviewer off of his back, she still did it at a great inconvenience to herself. She had always been about optimizing her training, but for the first time in her life, she chose to do something decidedly against her philosophy, just for the small chance at making Leonel happy.

She lost count of the number of times she had done exactly that.

She stopped wearing tomboyish clothes and started wearing dresses to school. She began to worry about her appearance a lot, even changing the settings of the mask that hid her scars to a slightly more beautiful setting. She even remembered regretting choosing a setting that was so normal when she could have made herself the most beautiful girl in school with the change of a few settings.

These were all small and petty things she did 'for herself' that no one could ever prove otherwise. They were all small and under the table, and many of them happened over such a long course of time that Leonel would have never thought that he was the trigger for any of it.

Many would have thought that Aina was simply growing up, sliding into her feminine charms more as she matured just like every other little girl did. How many young girls were boorish tomboys in their youth, only to become prim and proper young ladies when they grew? It wasn't a rare thing at all.

But, Aina was practically going against everything she was, just to fit into an archetype she wasn't even sure that Leonel liked.

She couldn't talk to him outside a classroom setting without her brain turning into a bonfire, so all she could do was pick up hints and clues from his passerby conversations with his friends and the tidbits she grasped from interviews.

She built an entire persona, a woman that wasn't even truly herself, just to make Leonel happy. And the sad part...?

He had already liked her. He had already said as much. In fact, he told her almost everyday, without reserve and without the slightest hint of embarrassment.

"... I remember every time you confessed, I could recall them all. And each time, I respected you so much more, liked you so much more, because you could do exactly what I seemed to have no ability to do... Express your feelings as openly and honestly as you want to."

Aina poured out her soul. She didn't hide even the most embarrassing things she had done, like the time she painted the nails on one hand blue and the other violet and tried to see which one Leonel noticed because she couldn't figure out which was his favorite color...

Or the time she did hanging drills at the end of her training, hoping she would lengthen her spine during the period she thought Leonel might like taller girls...

Or that time she spent practically all the money she had earned during one of her summer internships on a jersey signed by Leonel that, to this day, sat in a corner of her spatial ring... A jersey she never thought would ever see the light of day.

She spilled practically everything a young and naïve girl would do for the sake of her crush. Except the difference was that normally nobody else but her should have been aware of this obsession, but she revealed it all without holding back as though she was truly scared that Leonel wouldn't understand just how much she cared.

"... I did all of these things but I could never take the final step. And I knew that I was running out of time. That day was coming and afterward, I didn't know if I would ever see you again... It was one of the greatest regrets of my life, not being able to drum up the courage to explain things to you..."

Aina wasn't wrong to feel so guilty. In her worldview, Leonel was of common birth and his Gene Analysis exam was also unimpressive. By all rights, he shouldn't have been a talent of any kind and he would likely be among the very first to die during the Metamorphosis.

Aina's own crippling anxiety led her to the point where she chose her own comfort over potentially saving the life of the young man she had pined over for four years already.

It was then that she should have realized just how much of a problem her own emotions were becoming, it was then she should have realized that she was letting something other than her reason dictate her actions...

But by then, it was already too late.

"... I was wracked with guilt and I couldn't even look you in the eye... Things only became worse after the first Trial and my benign actions became decidedly less so..."

Chapter 1197 Thoughtful words (4)

Back when the Metamorphosis first descended, Leonel remembered thinking that this was really the end and that this would really be how he died. He had already concluded that the Paradise Islands had fallen and his father was dead, and now he was certain that he would follow not long afterward.

In those moments, he felt lost and alone. He remembered the only thing he had wanted in those final seconds he thought he had was for Aina to look at him, to just spare him one glance as that portal-like wormhole approached them.

He remembered feeling as though his heart was being stabbed through because even then, even when there was nothing else to live for, the girl he had chased for four years didn't even want to look at him. Even now, he could remember how each individual strand of her hair had fallen to the back of her head before he was sucked away and completely lost consciousness.

However, what he hadn't known was that Aina didn't look him in the eye because she couldn't. In those moments, she thought that Leonel was dead, that she would never see him again.

It hurt for Aina to admit any of this, but she gritted her teeth and did so anyway. She felt that she had to...

"... When I saw you came out alive, I was the happiest I had been in a long time. But, I felt that I didn't deserve you, I had done such a horrible thing all because I couldn't open my mouth to speak, so I did something I thought would make you hate me... And I killed Conrad in the most gruesome way possible."

Even now, Aina could remember Leonel's smile fading from its usual bright ray of sunshine. That was the moment the thing she did 'for' Leonel became twisted and dark, so much so that she had a hard time even looking at herself.

"... I realized soon after that what I did was wrong. You had been going through a tough time back then, adjusting to a new world. And, instead of supporting you like I should have, I gave you another dose of trauma..."

Aina didn't realize how bad it was until Leonel went out to fight those A-grade Invalids all on his own. He was suicidal and it was her who had pushed him to that point.

Of course, this wasn't true. Leonel had also let himself be killed by that Mayan girl, his guilt having become far too much. But, this wasn't something Aina learned until much later, so the guilt of pushing the man she cared for to such a point weighed on her even heavier.

And now, she had almost caused Leonel's death not just once, but twice.

"... Luckily, I was able to find you before things got any worse. But I still couldn't open my mouth to say anything.

"When those bandits came to take advantage of how tired you were and I saw how angry you got when they disrespected me, even to the point of not caring about the deaths and killing them directly, one part of me felt happier than she ever had, but another part only felt even more guilty.

"Me, being the idiot that I am, instead of expressing that in words, punched you in the chest to wake you up from your anger. I was just so mad that you kept putting others before yourself... that you kept putting me, a woman who didn't deserve your care or affection, before yourself..."

Aina bit down on her lip hard, as she brought herself to parts of her planned words that were the hardest to say. Even compared to the others, she found that she was almost dying on the inside piece by piece as she said them, but she refused to repeat her past mistakes.

Aina took a deep breath.

"Your memory is very good, so I'm sure you remember the Joan of Arc Zone we entered. Back then, I didn't know what to do and I felt like I was making mistake after mistake. Not even the small kinds of mistakes, the kinds of mistakes that you couldn't take back and you would regret for a lifetime..."

"But to the me of back then, the appearance of that Zone was like a Heaven sent opportunity. Despite the fact I knew it was an eight person limit, I lied to you and said that it was two..."

Leonel remembered this especially well. He remember Uncle Montez telling him that maybe the easiest thing for a scanning device to do was set the entry limit. It might make a mistake in deciding exactly what the quests and main mission were, but it would never make a mistake in something so fundamental and easy to measure.

Leonel had already concluded back then that Aina lied to him, but he didn't mind. The time they spent in the Zone had brought them closer together and he had already put his rose tinted glasses back on. He had also learned about her family back then, so he had assumed that she wanted to gather more treasures to get stronger, faster.

But, he had never thought that the truth was...

"... I wanted to spend time with you. I didn't know how to make it happen but this was the very first chance we seemed to have. I never seemed to have trouble talking with you in class about work related things, so I thought that if we had a task to finish together, it would be easier for me to finally speak with you...

"... And I was right, we grew a lot closer, but I still felt a heavy amount of guilt.

"This was something I ran from for a long time. Even when we fought against the Royal Blue Fort together and you teleported me away, the fear of being found out by you fueled my anxiety even more and it made me shut down the possibility of coming back.

"I didn't trust you with my burdens, I didn't tell you the truth about a lot of things, I couldn't even bring myself to explain how I almost died at the Puppet Master's hands...

"But it was never your fault, it was always mine. I didn't trust you because I couldn't even trust myself. I made so many mistakes, hurt you in so many ways..."

Aina finally couldn't hold back her tears, they began to drench Leonel's chest like a flood.

"... I'm sorry... I'm sorry Leonel... Please let me make it up to you, I'll spend the rest of my life doing so if that's what it takes... I...

"I love you."

Aina gripped the back of Leonel's shirt hard, pushing out those final words with all the strength she could muster.

She struggled to clear her gaze, looking up with what little stamina she had left. It was like explaining all of these things had left her beaten and battered, her heart itself being covered in bruises of blue, green, purple and the deepest of blacks.

But, what she saw when her head looked up left her breathless, as though she had been knocked down once again, her barely paused tears coming back in a second torrent... However, this stream seemed far from finishing.

Those indifferent pale violet eyes looked down at her. They didn't carry hatred or malice. It was almost as though they were gazing upon a stranger, a person of time's long since passed, a woman it had no feelings for.

And then, his lips moved.

"So what?"





His one good eye, however, continued to look forward, a frosty light hidden within them as they watched Miel preparing to jump forward one more time.

The look within those pale violet depths could only be described as malevolent. A smoldering abyssal valley of darkness and destruction. Even as Leonel coughed up several mouthfuls of blood, it never wavered.

Just as Miel was about to bound forward one more time, though, an almost shrieking shout called out, stopping him in his tracks.

"STOP! STOP IT RIGHT NOW!"

Aina's voice caught Miel completely off guard. The fury in his gaze hadn't even waned in the slightest, even meeting Leonel's cold gaze over a distance of several hundred meters. He wanted nothing more than to tear this boy limb from limb.

"... If you hurt him again, I'll never forgive you..." Aina spoke with what strength she had left. "... Please take me away, I don't want to be here anymore..."

Leonel slid down from the golden barrier, a few cracks quickly mending in his wake. An entire side of his face had become a swollen monstrosity, but the other side maintained a cold indifference that continued to meet Miel's gaze.

Miel's body shook with rage. But, when he felt his daughter weakly tugging at his robes. He couldn't help but feel his own heart breaking. There was no rage worth leaving his daughter in this state.

He turned his gaze from Leonel, sweeping his daughter into his arms. He sent a glance backward, the crimson in his eyes glowing and his flowing red hair seemingly having become a raging dragon of its own.

The oppressive atmosphere in the air seemed to grow palpable. It only became more so after Miel reached out a hand, causing the Brazinger family's Heirloom to snap into his palm. In those moments, it felt like the reappearance of a War Lord. There was no doubt that had Miel had this blade in his hand, he could have single handedly wiped the Viola family from existence.

With a step, he vanished from his location, shooting through the rapidly closing gap in the barrier.

Leonel could feel his face and body healing exceptionally slowly. There was no doubt in his mind that this was simply the difference between being attacked by a being in the same Dimension as you versus one in a higher Dimension. Despite the fact most of Miel's strength had been dispersed by the barrier and the fact he was heavily injured, Leonel had still ended up like this.

A chorus of boos began to rain down from above. If it wasn't for the barriers, there would likely be a lot of things thrown in Leonel's direction as well. But, his gaze continued looking ahead in the same direction, as though Miel was still standing in the same spot.

The rage of the crowd only grew with each passing moment. They vented all their fury and frustration. When what Leonel did sunk in, they became almost feral.

Leonel, though, couldn't seem to hear any of it. He had an anger bubbling up within him, but he didn't know where it was coming from. He thought that maybe it was because of Miel, but with his impeccable memory he knew that this anger had been bubbling within him even before Aina's father's outburst.

No matter how hard he thought, putting every single one of his split minds to work, he couldn't understand why, and it only made him angrier.

"Fuck!"

Leonel's shout was sudden and completely unexpected, drowning out the crowd as though they weren't even there. The barrier to his back shattered and soon after, he vanished, leaving the arena entirely.

Chapter 1199 Do You?

Leonel's fists fell like a torrential storm. He stood within a cave carved by his own fists, his rage only seeming to become worse with each passing moment.

Leonel couldn't ever remember being this absolutely furious before. Every time he tried to consider why that was, he just couldn't pinpoint it and it fueled his tirade even more.

A violent crimson aura hung around him, suffocating his violet fog. The killing intent was so thick and viscous that even the Sixth Dimensional creatures in the surroundings didn't dare to get close.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Blood flew from Leonel's fists and his lips, his body having come nowhere close to healing from Miel's strike. To make matters worse, the mountains of Planet Montex were known for their hardness, even to the point they could grow to a height of piercing into space without faltering.

Yet, Leonel's fists kept wailing, a harsh and grating whistle emitting from them every time he slammed forward.

It was stupid. It was all so stupid.

That was the perfect opportunity to use the spider construct on her father, yet he missed it. She was a warrior maybe even more powerful than himself, yet he had turned her away. Her words had been sincere and even if he didn't care for them, shouldn't he have at least Respected them?

He couldn't think clearly. His mind was covered in a haze and he couldn't line up his beliefs properly. He was absolutely furious, but he didn't even have a target. He simply kept punching the walls of these mountains. His lungs were screaming, his limbs were on fire, and his bones couldn't even properly heal under the strain he was putting them under.

The cave only grew deeper and deeper. Leonel was absolutely relentless and he didn't even seem to show any signs of slowing down.

But while his mind was at one gear, his body was at a completely different one. No matter how much fuel his mind had, his body wasn't in a state where it could keep up.

BANG!

Leonel's mind tried to pull his body along, forcing it to break into Tier 4. But, that was when he rammed into a wall.

His feet faltered, his fist missing the wall before him and his body falling to his knees.

He tried to stand, but it all suddenly hit him like a ton of bricks. Breathing felt like he was swallowing hot coals and his blood rushed through his body like molten metal. He coughed and wheezed, mouthfuls of blood and pieces of flesh coming from his lips.

Leonel's vision swam, but his mind was still in overdrive. After receiving so much rest over the past few days, it had far too much energy. Even if he wanted to pass out, he couldn't do it, let alone the fact he wanted to continue furiously swinging his fists.

It was right at that moment that he suddenly felt a palm touch his back. Even in the state his mind was in, he hadn't been able to sense anything before it approached.

His head snapped backward, but when he saw what was behind him, his mind went completely blank.

It was a woman he had impossibly clear memories of. Those twinkling emerald eyes were all too familiar, filled with warmth and unconditional affection.

The cave Leonel's fists had excavated already traveled more than a hundred meters in, shrouding everything in complete darkness. And yet, her light smile radiated a light of its own.

Alienor kneeled by her son's side, her brows furrowed in worry. She had been fretting over every tiny detail about how she would face her son again, but in the end, her motherly instinct won out. Even if Leonel hated her, she couldn't continue to watch out without doing anything.

Seeing the violent aura around her son and the deep crimson taking over his irises, she couldn't help but react this way.

What she had never expected, though, was for that violent crimson to vanish almost the instant he laid eyes on her, his eyes even watering.

"Mom?"

All the reflexes in the world couldn't have prepared Alienor. She found her son's arms being tightly wound around her, causing her to enter a state of shock for a long while. But soon after, she was on cloud nine.

Not only had her son recognized her instantly, he didn't seem angry in the slightest. There wasn't even a bit of hesitation in him at all.

Alienor wrapped her arms around her son. Feeling the state of his body, she nearly couldn't hold back her own tears.

When it came to how Alienor and Velasco wanted to raise their son, they were practically at two opposite sides of the aisle. Velasco would let Leonel jump into a vat of boiling oil even if he knew it was a mistake. He thought that Leonel needed to grow on his own. Even when it came to the treasures he left behind for Leonel, all of them could only slowly unlock their potential under Leonel's own efforts.

Alienor, though, would lock Leonel away in a safe room with padded cushions for walls if she could have. The treasures she gave Leonel were instantly valuable and far beyond what even most large families would give their children.

If they saw their son in such a state, Velasco would probably force Leonel to heal on his own. Alienor, though, couldn't possibly wait for such a thing and instantly began to use her Snow Force on him.

Miel's influence vanished like a fragrance in the wind, Leonel's body quickly returning to its peak state in just a few breaths of time.

However, his grip on his mother only tightened.

Alienor sighed, rubbing her son's back. Though there was a silence between them, Alienor could feel the heaviness of Leonel's spirit. Alienor might not have been there, but she had still watched her son grow up. She knew well that even when Leonel lost his temper, this wasn't how he reacted.

"Do you regret it?" Alienor finally asked.

Chapter 1200 A Little Bit

Leonel didn't answer for a very long time. For a moment, Alienor began to worry about the same thing her own mother had. Had she been away from Leonel's life for too long to be able to ask such a question? Should she have waited longer? But, the result wasn't what she thought it would be.

"... I regret how I did it."

Leonel's voice was still somewhat hoarse. When he pulled back from his mother's embrace and leaned back against the walls of the cave he had created, a flickering sort of indecision was still within his gaze. He still couldn't understand.

"How you did it?" Alienor probed.

Despite her streak as a clean freak, something she seemed to have only passed onto her son in part, if it was for Leonel, she didn't mind sitting on these dirty floors.

"... There was no need to be so cruel. I don't know why I did that. The words came out before I could even control them.

"I just... I just don't think I want to be with her anymore and didn't want to give her an opportunity. But I should have figured out another way..."

"You don't?"

Alienor looked deeply at her son. Leonel's rage seemed to be fueled by something other than what he said. But, she couldn't tell exactly what that was. That said, his statement was as clear as day.

"My mind is too clear and my path is too straight without her. I've made more progress in just a few days than I used to make in months. My head used to be filled with thoughts of her and even the lens I saw the world through was filtered through her first. But when I let go everything improved."

"And that's what you want? To follow your path over everything else?"

"It's not what I want. It's what needs to happen." Leonel closed his eyes. "This world is filled with nothing but trash. Maybe I was angry because today I became one of them."

Alienor's expression softened even more considerably than it did before, her finger gliding over her son's forehead and fixing the sweaty strands of his hair.

"And what is your goal?"

"To unite the Dimensional Verse." Leonel said softly.

Alienor's heart skipped a beat. Even with his eyes closed, Alienor could sense the determination of her son.

"It's quite stupid, isn't it? That's what she said, anyway." Leonel continued. "But maybe it is. I left the arena today even though I know how important getting into the Void Palace is, and I don't even feel like appearing for the third day of the Selections, not that they would even allow me to make it past..."

Leonel felt like an idiot. His mistakes compounded. Now he had let himself down and he couldn't even enter the Void Palace anymore. Great on his part, really. Top tier.

Alienor smiled and shook her head. Her son was clearly still unaware that the Tokens were all in her hands. She flipped over a palm and a gem of shimmering Amethyst appeared. It was carved into the shape of a coin the size of a palm. On its body, a dark and brooding palace could be seen.

Leonel's eyes snapped open. He could feel a strong might coming from the Token, a might that could only come from a higher Dimensional material. Just looking at it, it was at least on the same level as the Memory Ore Uncle Montez had given him, if not beyond.

"This is...?"

"This is the Amethyst Token. Mom can give it to you, but you have to promise not to tell your father. He'd throw a fit."

Leonel was stunned for a moment before he began to laugh. His laugh was in one part ironic, another part because he truly found the situation to be funny, and a final part sad.

This world was truly unfair. Who knew how many were risking their lives for a chance to grasp this Amethyst Token, yet his mother was handing it to him without him having proved anything.

Did Leonel think he could get the Token on his own? Yes. But it didn't make a difference to him at all. After all, even if he did earn it the normal way, he would have to rely on talent he was lucky to be born with to do so anyway.

Of course, Alienor didn't care about all of that. She wasn't exactly sane when it came to matters related to her son. Maybe the only reason Miel still had a head on his shoulders was because Alienor's heart softened for that little girl. But, even then, she didn't reprimand her son.

Luckily, it seemed that Leonel was aware of his own mistakes.

Leonel took the Token, moving it between his fingers. It carried a great heft to it.

"Can you give this to her?" Leonel asked.

Alienor blinked. "... Are you sure? Every representative is only given a single one. Even I can't get you a second. The advantage of having one is very great. One of my regrets is that I wasn't patient enough for my true talent to awaken and couldn't get one myself."

Leonel shook her head. "She deserves at least this much for an apology. Revenge for her mother is very important to her and her luck is less than that of mine. I have you and dad, but she... Well, anyway, a Gold Token is enough for me."

Alienor smiled, a hint of sadness in her eyes. This wasn't because Leonel had turned down her good will, but because she could hear the affection in her son's voice... And it most definitely wasn't aimed toward her.

However, Alienor also understood from her own experience with relationships that no outside party could ever force anything to happen. She would have to wait for Leonel to figure it out himself, and she hoped that it wouldn't be too late for him by then.

'I guess... that little girl isn't so bad. Maybe I can help her out a little bit...'

...

On another side of Planet Montex, Aina sat in silence, her tears having dried. She looked off into the distance blankly, not even budging when she noticed Savahn's presence behind her.