

## Descent 1291

### Chapter 1291 Useful

The first issue was line of sight. Even being able to see 50 meters ahead felt a lot more like half of that. The trees were very dense and maneuvering about was a problem, making a straight line of sight impossible to maintain for too long.

With such a short line of sight, and lacking the flexibility provided by Internal Sight, Leonel couldn't even tell how far they had to go, or if there was even an end to all of this to begin with.

The second problem was the strength of the beasts. Leonel had fought many Tier 1 Cursed Beasts already, and their strength was nothing to turn your nose up at. In fact, it was directly the opposite. Facing one was a challenge enough already for most, let alone facing a hoard like this. Of those in his group, Leonel was certain that a majority would only be able to handle, at most, a single Cursed Beast at a time.

And that led to his third problem, there were simply too many of them for him to defend and protect by himself. It would be fine initially as all the Cursed Beasts were currently in front of them, but Leonel wouldn't be able to kill them all. As they got further and further into the beast tide, they would begin to receive attacks from the sides and eventually the back as well. At that point...

"I will take your right." Aina suddenly spoke.

Leonel's gaze flickered. That was right... He wasn't exactly alone.

"I will take the left." Noah followed up.

"I want the front!" Elthor chimed in, eager to lead the vanguard. But, he found an arm wrapped around his, pulling him backward.

"We'll take up the rear." Karolus corrected. "So long as you move forward fast enough, we won't be swarmed too badly."

Karolus flashed a smile, but it almost seemed quite fanatical as he looked toward Leonel. Everyone had already gotten used to this, though. After Karolus exposed himself as a fanboy of the Royal Blue Football Team, he had gotten worse and worse at hiding his love for Leonel.

Toward this though, Leonel grinned. It seemed he had been a bit too focused on making it up to everyone. Then again, though, he was always like this. If there was something he could take control of himself, he rarely relied on others to do it.

With a flip of his palm, Leonel's Wind Domain Spear vanished. He once again lamented the loss of his Duality Spear, it would have been far too useful in this situation. But, he had to make do with what he had.

'Kinetic Spear.'

A spear of what looked like black ice appeared in Leonel's hands, a dense black fog erupting around him as he took a heavy step forward.

"Everyone else, gather in the center. Keep your head on a swivel and support where you can."

As Leonel was speaking, his head was enveloped by the fog and his voice fell several octaves, the reverberating baritone thrumming the trees vibrating to the stampeding beasts to life.

Little Blackstar hopped into the air, dancing about on invisible steps before shooting forward.

"Keep up! Blackstar and I will carve the path out!"

BANG!

Leonel shot after Little Blackstar, his body forming an arrow of Force as he crashed into the frontline of berserk Cursed Beasts.

As though a wedge, Leonel's volatile use of Force caused a three meter diameter to split wide open amidst the surging tide, the sturdiness of his back suddenly becoming the marker for all those behind him.

"Tch." Elthor shook his head. "Should have been me..."

Karolus laughed. "We'd better hurry up or else we'd really be left behind."

...

With every movement of his spear, another Cursed Beast fell. Leonel had learned from his mistakes previously. Cutting down these beasts wasn't enough, he had to shatter the source of their strength as well.

Due to the mutation the Cursed Beasts had undergone, their Ethereal Glabellas, or rather, their Beast Crystals, vanished, fusing into their bodies and becoming various physical mutations. If you wanted to ensure that one was dead, you would have to target this location and tear it apart as it acted as a second brain of sorts. This was why the wolf was able to attack Leonel even after he bisected it.

Obviously, Leonel wouldn't make the same mistake twice. Each one of his strikes was lethal to an extreme. Sometimes he would seem to shatter a beast whole, at other times he would only cut off a small piece of their heads, but regardless of what he did, they would always never rise again.

Little Blackstar didn't even seem to treat this like a real battlefield and the little guy acted as though he was on some sort of elaborate, hyper realistic playground.

The little mink hopped through the air, vanishing on a whim and appearing as he pleased. Every time he did so, another head would be ripped from a body. Somehow, even though the little mink wasn't as meticulous as Leonel in attacking the second brain, whomever he attacked would still never rise again...

Shadows of all sorts danced and bobbed in the air, but Little Blackstar simply swallowed them all, happily chewing along as though enjoying a great delicacy.

Leonel left Little Blackstar to his own devices, and yet the two in combination were still like a buzzsaw, twisting through the tide of beasts.

However, even after an hour, there was no end in sight. The looming threat of the more powerful beasts hung over their heads like a guillotine, but even before they arrived, Leonel could already feel that the resistance of the beasts ahead was growing.

He had to keep up the same forward pace, or else they'd be completely swallowed up, but the number of Tier 2 beasts they were coming across had already increased exponentially. Leonel had even locked gazes with a Tier 3 just 20 meters ahead.

Leonel still felt like he could go on for a long while, but the same couldn't be said for those behind him.

With a thought, a necklace appeared around Leonel's neck, this time tied by beast skin.

It seemed there would be nothing easy about this. It was time for his second beast companion to be useful.

Chapter 1292 zero

Leonel actually wasn't sure if the golden scaled koi fish would be able to do this. While it had shown a great amount of talent in siphoning and parsing Force, not only was this world far stronger than any it had experienced before, but it was also filled with a Force that Leonel wasn't sure the koi fish would be able to deal with.

It was because of these reasons that Leonel had hesitated to take this risk before, but now he felt like he had little choice. While he, himself, was doing fine and could continue without pause for at least a few more days, those that followed him weren't doing nearly as well.

They had already used the last sliver of their Force to power the beast skin armor. And, while the function of the fog armor allowed them to slowly replenish themselves over time, the issue was that the process was slow, especially when they had to immediately use whatever headway they made to fight the beasts that were surrounding them from all sides.

Once again, this was ultimately Leonel's fault for not allowing them all enough time to acclimate. While the likes of Aina seemed to be taking this as a great training opportunity, relying on her overwhelming bodily strength to support herself, the others weren't so masochistic, nor did their bodily compositions allow them to be.

'Alright you mass murdering little fish, it's time to be useful.'

Leonel's gaze flashed.

Worse come to worst, the koi fish was swimming around in a lake's worth of Sixth Dimensional Cleansing Waters. Even if it didn't have the skill necessary to piece apart the Force properly just yet, its life shouldn't be on the line immediately.

Leonel didn't need anything crazy, he just wanted to shift the concentration of Anarchic Force in the general surroundings just enough that the burden on the others was lessened to the point that they could recover.

The golden scaled koi fish, still very much afraid of Leonel, didn't dare to delay, quickly doing as it was told. Unfortunately, things weren't as rosy as Leonel hoped them to be.

The moment the fish began to act, Leonel could feel that Anarchic Force was being pulled along. Though Leonel used his connection with the koi fish to try and command it to separate it out, he soon realized that this was beyond the little fish's abilities.

'Dammit.'

Leonel's jaw clenched, his spear jetting outward and leaving streaks of gold in the air as he pressed forward, shredding apart every beast that got within even a two meter radius of him. Without a choice, he was forced to make the koi fish stop.

If he had allowed it to continue, let alone increasing the concentration of usable Force, Leonel would end up doing the exact opposite. In the end, he would be killing his team faster.

'If only I could use a Domain...'

If Leonel could blanket the surroundings, it wouldn't be a problem, he would be able to cover for everyone at the same time. His Chain Domain would be absolutely perfect in this situation.

The issue was that even if Leonel brought out all the stops, even fusing his King's Might into his Domain to expand its size, it would still barely stretch out a few inches from him. Let alone covering for more than two dozen people, he wouldn't even be able to cover for himself. In this world, the range of his Domains was simply far too small.

There were only a few ways to change this. The first was to break into the Sixth Dimension. The second was to raise his mind to the Sixth Dimension and thus increase the pressure his King's Might could exude. The third was to comprehend the Heavenly Body Realm to Completion, the Universal Force it would provide would make his Domains more than large enough. The fourth option was to enter Spear Domain and pull out a Quasi Gold Spear, not to mention hope that it would acknowledge him and help him to use its Domain instantly.

Leonel thought of many solutions, but each one was more impossible to use than the last.

'Then that only leaves one choice...'

It was a nice sentiment to want to pool the efforts of everyone together, but it was simply not possible. There always comes a time when others reached their limits and Leonel would just have to put in more effort to cover for them.

The crimson orbs that hovered within the dark fog that was Leonel's helmet vibrated. In that moment, a miniature humanoid figure of violet appeared above it, its purple hues fusing into Leonel's dark armor and giving it an added sinister air.

The moment Leonel fused the influence of his King's Might with his Internal Sight, its range amplified. From just a handful of meters, Leonel could finally see the surrounding 20 with extraordinary clarity.

Tendrils of darkness erupted from Leonel's back even as Little Tolly appeared once more. In its draconic form, Little Tolly snaked toward the corpses that littered the surroundings of Leonel's feet, shredding them apart and leaving nothing more than the bones behind.

Leonel shifted his spear into one hand, using his left to strike at the air with his fingers. The precision with which Tolliver was being controlled skyrocketed, the little Metal Spirit's actions becoming more refined and deft.

Soon, the sturdy bones of the fallen beasts were refined into sharp daggers without a hint of specialness to them. They seemed unassuming and weak... Until, that is, Little Tolly threw them into the air, allowing the tendrils that had erupted from Leonel's back to snatch them.

Level Two Bow Force bloomed, coating the blades of these daggers with a subtle hint of lethality that chilled the bones.

Leonel's left hand danced through the air, his right controlling the killing spree of his spear, eruptions of golden Level Two Spear Force slicing apart everything in its path, and finally...

The whipping sounds of dark tendrils snapping through the wind followed by harsh whistling filled the battlefield.

With a single flick, dozens of bone daggers jettied outward in all directions, each one reaping the life of a Cursed Beast.

A heated breath left Leonel's lips as the pressure on everyone around him dropped to nearly zero.

#### Chapter 1293 Headache

Leonel's killing speed skyrocketed. He controlled everything within a 20 meter radius. Every dagger his tendrils threw reaped another life and every swing of his blade bisected another body. His mind was in overdrive and his killing was so efficient that those nearer the back suddenly found that they had nothing to contribute. Even Noah and Aina who had taken on the brunt of the pressure with Leonel found themselves withstanding less than 20% of the initial hardship.

Leonel seemed to be both in tune with the world and completely ignorant of it at the same time. His ears heard nothing but soft whistles, his eyes fogged, blurring much of his vision, his sense of touch dulled as the hairs of his skin stood on end. And yet, he seemed so much sharper at the same time.

SHUU! SHUU! SHUU!

Every dagger twisted through the air as though it had a mind of its own, wrapping round trees, ducking beneath paws, twisting past attacks. Without fail, each and every time Leonel struck out, another Cursed Beast would fall. And, somehow at the very same time, Leonel only became more and more efficient.

The daggers took less winding turns in the air, the reactions of the beasts seemed to become slower as he began to target their blind spots, and from time to time, a single dagger would take out two beasts at once instead of just one.

At first, the group was huddle into a five meter diameter at best. But, as Leonel's mind sunk further and further, the breathing room increased again and again. Soon, there was easily a five meter separation between their line of defense and the next onslaught of beasts... And then it became 10... Then 15...

At that moment, Leonel jolted, a sense of warning coming to his mind. It was an instinctual sort of feeling, the kind a General would get when the tides of battle were about to flip.

Leonel wasn't too surprised by this. From time to time, whenever he had to use Bow Force on a large scale, he would subconsciously slip into the Style of that Fire Elemental woman he had seen in the Valiant City on Terrain. Her command of the battlefield was unlike anything he had seen even to this point, so he dabbled and tweaked this Style to his liking depending on the situation.

But now this Style was screaming at him that he was going too far.

Leonel's mind lit like a spark.

At this moment, they were a drop in the ocean. But, if he expanded their range of influence too much, their drop would become a wave and eventually the ocean itself would bite back. If more and more of the beast tide focused on them, they would be in trouble.

The second issue was...

Leonel's dagger whipped out. But, before it could make it to its destination 20 meters away, it lost all its momentum, the Anarchic Force sapping away everything it had.

There was a reason that Leonel had swapped his Wind Domain spear out. Using blade-like Anarchic Force was effective on humans, but to Cursed Beasts, it was like a midday snack, it wouldn't hurt them at all.

If the distance his bone daggers had to travel was long enough, the result would be just like this. It would be stripped of its Bow Force and not only would Leonel's control waver, but the resulting impact, even if by some miracle it landed, wouldn't even be a fraction the result he would hope for.

Leonel's gaze flickered, taking deep breath. The heat coming off of him was palpable and it only seemed to make the fog denser.

Sometimes being too efficient and powerful was a problem. He needed to find a balance. Only like that could he not only maximize his rest time, but also ensure that they didn't draw too much attention.

It didn't take long for the beast tide to quickly fill in the gap. After ensuring that they hadn't pulled too much aggro, Leonel sighed in relief and focused his attention on the Tier 3 beast that had swallowed up the distance between them.

...

'Natural Bow Force...? No, normal Natural Bow Force couldn't possibly travel as much as 20 meters in this density of Anarchic Force, and definitely not with that level of control and deftness. What is this child hiding?'

This was the true secret of Bow Force and the Void Palace. Long ranged attackers were so rare that the status of bowman who would be effective in this environment were countless levels above others even of similar skill level in other areas. This was a simple application of supply and demand.

A bowman that could be effective at 20 meters was already enough for the Void Palace to go all out in protecting. Even if Leonel had no background whatsoever, Cornelius would likely swoop down from the skies right this moment and take him out of this trial. Unfortunately, out of consideration for some other things... he definitely couldn't do this.

'A Morales family youth with Natural Bow Force at such a young age... How will the Tarius family react to this...? Not only that, but he's already awakened the Morales family's Elevated Spear Force... Why did they throw this problem on my lap...'

Cornelius had sighed more times today than he had in the last several decades.

The upper echelon of the Void Palace was split. However, regardless of which side they were on, they were in unanimous agreement that they didn't want another Velasco appearance. That man had a unique method of pissing off everyone, and yet somehow still managing to be so beloved.

The result of this was an odd push and pull effect where they wanted to take a hands off approach with Leonel, but also didn't want him to run rampant to the point where that death star could appear here again.

In order to do that, they needed to make sure that Leonel stayed within the confines of the rules and that he integrated as normally as possible, this was minimize the risk. The odds that Velasco's son would be as much of a blazing sun as his father was low, despite what Ossenna had to say about genetics.

Unfortunately, the more Cornelius observed Leonel, the more confused he got.

He couldn't tell if Leonel was a once in a several generation genius like his father, or if he was an ordinary talent riding the coattails of his family's resources. Even now, he had still not yet made a decision, but regardless, this matter was trending poorly for the Void Palace.

...

Leonel's gaze brightened.

'There's an odd sparsity of beasts ahead and the flow seems to have been diverted. There's definitely a change up ahead within the next half kilometer.'

Leonel had made certain to follow a path that led toward one of those golden pillars he had seen at the start of the trial, but he had no way of telling just how far away they were. He now had a feeling that he was approaching them.

What he hadn't realized yet, though, was that he had a few tails that were outside the range of his amplified Internal Sight.

Chapter 1294 Not Good Enough

Leonel internally felt relieved. The drain to his normal stamina was minimal, but using his King's Might like that left him feeling like his mind was being squeezed dry. It wasn't a joke to use his Dream Force and will to forcefully expand the influence of his Internal Sight and he wasn't sure how much longer he could keep it up without it affecting the rest of his performance.

Not long after experiencing this feeling, though, Leonel steeled himself. The truth was that he had no idea what was up ahead. Breathing sighs of relief now would make him sloppy. He had to prepare for every possibility.

'... That's not like me.'

Leonel frowned, his mind suddenly going on high alert. He never relaxed before getting to his goal like that, but he had almost done so just now.

The moment Leonel's mind sharpened, he honed in on his surroundings, soon finding that the violet of his King's Might had flecks of an abnormal pink within them. Without the slightest hesitation, his will clamped down, roaring out like a dragon and shattering the odd pink discolorations.

'Someone targeted me? What about?!'

Leonel's Internal Sight reached out to everyone in his group. They all had light smiles on their faces and their bodies were relaxed. There was nothing odd about this on the surface. After all, after Leonel took the brunt of the burden away from them, they had been able to replenish their Force at a faster rate and their previous helplessness was all but washed away.

However, there were too many oddities. For one, Elthor would definitely not be smiling right now. In fact, he should be pissed. Knowing him, he would want to fight, not rely on Leonel. But, he would also understand that he didn't have the strength to insist on this, so he would be infuriated with himself.

Then there was Arnold and Noah. These two were as stoic as they came, Leonel had yet to see something so benign leave them in a state of perpetual happiness like this.

Beyond this there was the likes of Rychard who was forced to be in a group with Leonel to begin with. He knew that if he tried to leave on his own, not only would it be a question of whether he even had the strength to survive, but it would also be a question of if it would be Leonel or the surrounding danger that would kill him first. He didn't dare to leave because he knew that Leonel would target him in the future even if he somehow survived, by then, he wouldn't even be able to take a single step forward in this place.

Even one of these individuals lightly smiling like this would have been an oddity, but the idea of all of them doing so was simply ridiculous on its face.

'Again?'

Leonel's brow furrowed deeply when his senses focused on Yuri. She was smiling just like everyone else, but Leonel could tell that it was fake. It didn't travel up to her eyes, which continuously darted back and forth as though looking for something.

What was most shocking was that Yuri's pupils, by Leonel's estimation, were focusing on regions dozens of meters away despite the dense fog. So, it was either she had an ability like Leonel's Snowy Star Owl eyes, or...

'Her Internal Sight can lock onto regions that far away? But then why would she bother moving her eyes at all, wouldn't that just be giving her away? Unless she wanted to give herself away...'

By now, Yuri would have already noticed Leonel's scrutiny, but she didn't even look toward him even after several seconds.

Leonel shook his head. 'Don't you think there should be some exceptions even when you don't want to talk to someone? This is a life and death situation, it isn't time to be tsundere.'

"HA!"



Leonel suddenly let out a low shout that almost sounded like an acute clap of thunder. Lacing his King's Might with his shout, Leonel's voice jarred the minds of everyone around him awake.

"Huh?"

A small sweep of confusion breezed through the group. But, no one seemed to understand what had happened. It was like they had just woken up from a dream but their memory of it had already been shattered.

"Yuri, what's the range of your Internal Sight?"

Yuri, who had lagged behind in her little act a bit, was stunned by Leonel's sudden question. After she composed herself, she, quite frankly, didn't want to answer. But, it wasn't long before both Savahn and Aina's gazes landed on her, causing her to bite her lip in unwillingness.

"... 100 meters."

Leonel didn't seem surprised by this answer at all despite the fact many others looked toward her as though they were gazing upon some kind of monster.

In truth, Leonel was pissed despite the fact it didn't show on his face. He was draining himself, drastically cutting down the chances of him succeeding in what would be the later Amethyst level trials, so that he could protect her and the others, when things would have been so much easier if she just explained this long ago.

Leonel didn't hang onto this anger for long, though. There was no point. Not only would it not be helpful, even if it would be, it was still ultimately his fault that they were in this situation.

"Have you mastered a sensory sharing technique?"

Yuri frowned deeply. The answer was yes, but that didn't mean she wanted to use it, especially since she was certain that Leonel would be asking her to share with him.

There were many Internal Sight manipulation techniques, and among them, such sharing was a part. Among all those here, and maybe even among all those of their generation in the Human Domain, there was unlikely to be anyone who could match her in Internal Sight in Yuri's opinion.

"I can just tell you. There are two groups of people following us. 57 meters that way and 63 meters that way."

"Not good enough." Leonel left no room for debate. "Fuse your Internal Sight with mine."

[Important author's note below]

Chapter 1295 Not a Doormat

Almost the instant Leonel said these words, Yuri flushed completely red. Her expression flickered from embarrassment to rage to shyness and back to fury. Just her emotion alone made the small humanoid figure on Leonel's forehead waver and almost collapse entirely. The pressure on Leonel's mind became so great that his Internal Sight range fell to a quarter, only barely able to sustain five meters.

Leonel's expression darkened. Yuri hadn't said a word yet, but he already didn't like where things were going. Just because he had remained silent about it until now didn't mean that he hadn't had a temper about it. If Yuri insisted on putting her own petty rage ahead of what was for the best of the group, he would have to take a stronger approach.

However, before Leonel could say anything, though, Aina spoke out.

"Yuri can fuse with me. I will relay it to you."

Leonel's brow furrowed. Was all this roundabout nonsense necessary? Even a split second lag could be the difference between life and death.

Infighting was inadvisable at this point, but this situation was sensitive. There was no doubt that whoever had targeted them had a larger Internal Sight Range. Just to follow them alone took a certain amount of sensory abilities, let alone actually targeting them through the fog.

When facing such people, such roundabout methods wouldn't just theoretically cause harm, they would most definitely be a detriment to the overall group.

"Aina!"

What surprised Leonel even more, though, was that even after such a concession was being made for her, Yuri still lashed out. Leonel was already unsatisfied with the concession in the first place, but she was actually still unwilling to take this route?!

Savahn's brows furrowed. This matter was becoming very troublesome, very quickly. Aina had chosen to move on from those things, but whether it was Yuri or Miel, both of them were still riding a high of fury, Miel even had to force himself to choose against personally seeing them off for fear of what he might do to Leonel. In truth, the fact that Yuri had remained this silent all this time at all was a miracle in and of itself.

Unfortunately, it seemed that the peace would come...

"That's enough."

Aina's battle ax smashed into the ground, sending a wave of Force outward that knocked the beasts back several meters. Her head turned back, a fiery golden gaze landing on Yuri, shocking the latter awake from her own fury.

Yuri was shocked into silence. Aina had never shown her such an expression before. It only made it worse that she was actually showing her such a face for him of all people. It made her feel all sorts of emotions she couldn't even properly qualify.

Aina had drawn a line in the sand quite clearly.

If Yuri felt that she was in the wrong, she could still accept this. But, knowing what she knew, and knowing that Aina understood her thoughts, and still seeing her react this way... She had chosen Leonel over her and didn't even seem hesitant to do so.

Yuri's eyes watered slightly but she blinked it away.

"Yes..."

Yuri's Internal Sight flourished, blanketing the surroundings. With a thought, a thin string connected to Aina who had already turned her attention back to the beasts. There was only so much attention they could spare to other things in this sort of situation.

The moment Aina felt the connection, she didn't hesitate to replicate it, taking in the sensory input, making it her own, and then forming a connection with Leonel.

Leonel didn't resist when he felt something press up against his mind and he accepted it without reserve. But, the instant he felt the connection solidify, he froze.

It was like he could see everything in crystal clear detail. The surroundings were so sharp and vivid that Leonel had a hard time believing that there was fog hanging in the air at all. It was as though he had gone from 480p to 8k resolution with a single flip of a switch.

While this alone was enough to shock Leonel to no end, what he was really shocked about had little to do with how clear this image was. Rather, he was focused on something entirely different, something so real and intimate he almost blushed in the middle of a battlefield.

All of Aina's thoughts were laid bare before him. As though this much wasn't bad enough, he felt a feeling that he had never experienced before. It was as though he was caressing the naked body of a woman, but he was feeling it so much more intimately than just skin deep, it was as though it was his heart itself stroking the delicate softness of her skin, of her curves, of her ample breasts and plump bottom.

'Shit.'

**BANG!**

Leonel palmed himself on the forehead, hard. It sounded as though stone was crashing against stone, but he didn't hold back in the slightest, even leaving himself somewhat dizzy and flustered. Still, he didn't regret his actions in the slightest. In fact, he almost wanted to hit himself harder.

Finally, Leonel felt his mind clear, allowing him to take a deep breath.

He fully understood why it was that Yuri had been so against this. Just that subtle touch had felt more intimate than even what Leonel would imagine sex to feel like. He didn't even know what he would do if he was flooded with that kind of sensory overload if the target was Yuri.

Wait, it wasn't okay either way.

Leonel moved to cut the connection off entirely, but he felt a sturdy rebuff before he even could.

Aina met his gaze. There was a dangerous light hidden within, almost like a wronged wife daring her husband to take things a step further so she could pull out her rolling pin. She had already humiliated Yuri for his sake, if he dared to make her actions meaningless she really would be pissed this time.

It was then that everyone suddenly became aware that Aina was still Aina. She had made a choice to stay by Leonel's side because she wanted to, but she wasn't a doormat. Her blade edge was very much still there.

Leonel slowly retracted his intent, his face still somewhat flushed.

'Dammit!'

His gaze turned in a certain direction, murderous intent flickering. He suddenly very much needed something to vent on.

Chapter 1296 Top Tier

"Blackstar, this frontline is yours."

Leonel's sudden voice reached out to the little mink who was barely visible up ahead. Despite his playful attitude, Little Blackstar immediately heeded Leonel's call, flashing back through space and appearing half a meter above Leonel's head in the blink of an eye.

At that moment, a dense fog began to exude from the little guy, causing his body's size to appear to increase several fold. Before many could grasp what was happening, Little Blackstar had suddenly become an enormous black bear.

No, it wasn't that the little mink had morphed. In fact, one could still see the vague image of a little mink floating within the head of the foggy construct of the three meter tall black bear. It rather seemed that Blackstar's Dark Elemental Force had formed an encasement for his small body, one that felt no less real than if the actual creature was standing before them right this moment.

Absorbing the Mimicry Bat's blood had already evolved Blackstar down the path of being able to steal abilities, awakening that facet of his Shadow Sovereign Ability Index. After absorbing the Void Beast's blood, though, not only had many more facets of Blackstar's abilities been unleashed, but the ones that had already existed had also evolved.

Leonel was only familiar with some of them as the mischievous little mink never took anything very seriously. However, of the ones he was aware of, he knew that Blackstar could now house several abilities at once, and he could steal more than abilities now...

The black bear construct roared, slamming down its paws and causing a wave of darkness to turn many of the charging beasts to ash.

Without looking back, Leonel's figure flickered and vanished, followed quickly by Aina. The two targeted the closest group first, Leonel's mind having locked onto a particular young woman with a head of pink hair and bright blue eyes. She was quite the beauty in her own right, although falling several steps short of Aina. Still, her body radiated as though carved out of a gem. It gave her a charisma that went past just her raw looks alone.

Using Aina as a bridge to Yuri's senses, Leonel could immediately tell that she was the culprit.

Leonel didn't bother to hide his actions. He could feel that they had been being observed all this time. The moment they cut toward the group, they had already been discovered.

The swath of beasts in their path were cut down by Leonel one after another, his left hand still striking down at the air as he commanded Little Tolly to form dagger after dagger. By the time they had cut the distance by half, leaving just over 25 meters to cover, dozens of daggers had already been controlled to Leonel's back, each gleaming with a menacing light.

Despite knowing he was well out of range, Leonel still sent over a dozen daggers whizzing forward, their bodies leaving streaking lines of silver that vanished into the fog.

In that moment, the pink haired woman's eyes lit up. "Enemy attack."

She spoke these words almost too calmly as though she didn't need to explain anything more. But, astonishingly, those around her reacted as though they could read her mind as well, brandishing their weapons in Leonel's direction and parrying the strikes away with a calm efficiency.

Leonel's gaze narrowed.

He didn't quite understand what had just happened. Had they connected their Internal Sights as well? But after learning what that meant and represented, Leonel had a hard time believing that a girl, or anyone for that matter, would so easily agree to do such a thing with a large group of people.

Leonel felt that he was missing something. But, he had almost forgotten that he had a cheat.

'Old man, be useful.'

'Cheating again? This isn't very Kingly of you.'

'I'm too ignorant of things that seem to be common knowledge for other people. If anything, I'm just trying to level the playing field. If I really wanted to cheat, I'd be using your senses and not Yuri's. Hurry up.'

'Whatever helps you sleep at night, if I really sent out my Internal Sight, you'd end up being sniped and killed in just a few seconds. In my prime, I could hide from them, but you've trapped me in this ring after keeping me split in half, what do you want me to do about that exactly?'

'Less complaining, more explanations.'

'That girl is a member of the Gemin family. They're basically the only ones of the Human Domain who understand anything about the soul at all. You can relay words and images through thought far faster than through words. She can do that without issue.'

'Hold on, then why is this matter such a big deal? Why didn't Yuri just do that in the first place?!'

'You're such an idiot. You didn't ask her to do that, your specific words were to Fuse your Internal Sights. That's a completely different ask.'

Leonel would be lying if he said he wasn't feeling a bit embarrassed hearing such an explanation.

'Why didn't you say anything, then?!'

'Why would I say something? It was peak entertainment, I couldn't stop laughing. You essentially went up to a girl and asked her to strip naked in front of you, top tier comedy, really. A true modern day Casanova.'

Leonel's jaw set. For once, he didn't rebuttal. But, his gaze still flashed with a dangerous light. He didn't like having his mind played with. Even though he had seen through it almost immediately, he wouldn't stand for it.

Leonel's King's Might bloomed, the humanoid figure on his forehead becoming more prominent as it sent a wave of pressure forward. His thoughts were simple. First divide, then conquer. What better way to do that than to disrupt the abilities of this young woman of the Gemin family?

"Stay close to me." Leonel spoke to Aina. "I'll end this as quickly as possible."

The tendrils that trailed to Leonel's back flared like a peacocks tail. Then, once again, they all whipped forward simultaneously.

## Chapter 1297 Fleeced

Keiza immediately saw through the trajectories of Leonel's throws, but when she tried to communicate it, her pupils constricted. She picked up a lag in her actions and understood that she wouldn't be able to relay the information in time.

"Enemy attack! Prepare yourselves!"

Those around Keiza understood that something had gone wrong, but they weren't too shocked by it. They were all geniuses in their own right and they had enough experience to understand that Keiza's abilities weren't infallible. They were still ready to react.

However, when Leonel's strikes came into view, they were caught completely off guard nonetheless.

Leonel had purposely sent his first volley from outside a range he was comfortable with. As a result, it had lulled them all into a false sense of security, believing that Leonel's strikes were normal and easy to handle. But, this volley was completely unlike the last.

They moved through the air as though they had minds of their own. Sometimes daggers would diverge, and at other times they were suddenly clang off of each other, shooting off in directions completely opposing to the trajectories they had originally been following.

Toward this sight, even Keiza pupils constricted. They had been following Leonel's trail for a very long time now, so, Keiza had, of course, been focused on comprehending his abilities. It was only after grasping all of this that she took the risk to try to subtly influence Leonel's mind.

This was why Keiza hadn't panicked after Leonel shattered her control. No genius of the Golden Token level would be so easily swayed by her suggestion, especially not in this environment. This was why she had gathered up all the information she needed first.

The trouble was that after her long observation, she had concluded that the limit of Leonel's range was about five meters. This was surprising, but still made logical sense to her. After all, maybe the only person unaware of how important long ranged attacks were in the Void Palace was Leonel himself.

However, what Keiza hadn't grasped was the fact that Leonel had been purposely reining in his range all this time so as not to draw too much attention to himself. Keiza had made a small concession for this possibility, but the idea that Leonel's range was as much as 20 meters didn't even cross her mind. Why...?

Because it should have been impossible!

By the time Keiza awakened from her shock, the bodies of many of her comrades had been pierced completely through. Even those that managed to deflect and protect themselves ended up in sorry positions, allowing the hoard of beasts around them to lash out and take advantage. Another three of her comrades were severely injured in this way even before she reacted.

Keiza's blue gaze became steely. Leonel had purposely not targeted her because he knew he would need at least a bow or a true throwing weapon to make a difference. However, this lack of danger had made her even a step later to react than she normally would have been.

Keiza had already had an elevated opinion of Leonel. But, at that moment, it raised another several levels.

Her arms flared outward, seven feather shaped weapons appearing to hover around her head, shoulders and arms as though they had minds of their own.

The moment Leonel burst through the final line of fog and appeared before her eyes, she reacted, four of them flying forth with blinding speed and three remaining back to defend. Her hair seemed to gain an extra glow to it, her skin shimmering like gems.

Leonel's spear spun in his hands, his left palm finding its way back to its shaft and clamping downward.

DING! DING! DING! DING!

The rotation struck away all four feather blades, but their pursuit was relentless, stifling Leonel's forward momentum in just a single volley.

At the same time, those that had survive Leonel's initial onslaught rebuffed a tide of beasts before beginning to attack Leonel and Aina from the side.

"Don't encircle him. Remain where you are and attack from there." Keiza coldly commanded.

There was a biting sharpness to her current self that hadn't been there before, but no one dared to ignore her words.

Leonel himself already felt that he had underestimated the effort he would need in this exchange. His forward momentum had already stopped and to his back, there were more beasts. Aina had already turned back to deflect their attacks along with the support of his tendrils, but if things continued like this, they would end up just helping Keiza and the others to clear the beasts until they reached the safe zone.

Leonel had to admit that Keiza was very clever. Her choice not to encircle them was perfect, forcing Leonel and Aina to take a brunt of the pressure off of them all while facing their attacks.

Leonel had chosen to strike first, not wanting to be taken advantage of. But, he realized they would lose more than they gained by making this a long, drawn out battle.

At the same time, the second group that had been following them seemed to be making a move, picking up speed as they cut a path toward Leonel's people and making the situation far more complicated. This group happened to be one containing the two Libra family brothers...

"It seems you've made a mistake in targeting the wrong group."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. "You made it so that I would attack you and not them."

Keiza smiled sweetly. "Handsome and smart. You could say that they paid for my services to ... push you in the wrong direction."

"How much did they pay you?"

"Oh my, are you asking me to sell myself again? That would make me feel so cheap."

Aina suddenly found herself becoming very irritated. If it wasn't for these damned restrictions she was under thanks to this Anarchic Force, she would have already sliced this succubus in half.

"How much?" Leonel pressed again, his voice cold.

He was clearly being targeted and that made things troublesome. If he was alone, this matter would be simple to handle, but he had people to protect and he was running out of time. The worst part was that he didn't know what the exchange rates were just yet, so it was very likely that he could get fleeced.

Wise Star Order's laughter echoed in his head. The old man was enjoying this too much.

Chapter 1298 surge

Keiza placed a hand to her chest, pouting slightly at Leonel's rudeness. If one didn't know better, you would have truly thought that she had been wronged by Leonel.

"... It's not impossible for you to buy me off. But, the hit to my reputation will be a very heavy burden to take on."

Leonel's brows furrowed. Why was this woman constantly lacing her words in double entendres? It might have worked had Leonel been susceptible to her coercion, but obviously he wasn't. The only explanation, then, was that she was wasting time. She had no intention of allowing Leonel to 'buy her'.

The moment Leonel reached this conclusion, his mind's focus shifted, locking onto the group led by the Libra brothers. His mind spun, sifting through one plan after another.

The distances were too short, but the beast tide gave them a buffer. The main issue was that this beast tide was getting thinner as they approached the safe zone, which was exactly why their enemies had waited until right this moment to target them in earnest.

In a moment, Leonel had made a decision.

"HA!"

A roar left his lips, a surge of Universal Force erupting from him.

In that instant, Keiza went through three rapid changes of expression. The first was shock that Leonel hadn't bothered to continue negotiating with her and instantly entered a higher battle state. The second was disdain after realizing Leonel's Universal Force was only at the Four Seasons Realm. And, the third and final reaction was once again shock after she suddenly grasped that this wasn't normal comprehension, this was True State Universal Force!



She had forgotten one very important thing. In a density of Anarchic Force like this, regular Universal Force below a certain level couldn't be called down upon. Only those who had master True State Universal Force could manifest this strength at any level!

'Summer... Radiant Core!'

Leonel abandoned spring, winter and fall, putting everything he had into his Artistic Conception of summer. A flurry of Radiant Cores began to appear, dozens of them hovering before the daggers held up by Leonel's tendrils.

In that moment, it was as though the ends of Leonel's tendrils had become volatile drill bits, spinning wildly with violent circulations of Bow Force. The strong rotational, electromagnetic and gravitational abilities of Leonel's Radiant Core bloomed.

Keiza's mind trembled, a towering sense of danger overwhelming her. Leonel's Four Seasons Realm comprehension was too low level to provide any large boost to his Force, and especially not his Bow Force, any longer. However, it didn't need to.

In this environment, Universal Force had a countering force to Anarchic Force. In fact, it could be said that Universal and Anarchic Force were two sides of the same coin, one representing the light and the other touching upon darkness.

As a result of this, the impact Anarchic Force had on Leonel's attacks fell by a large measure. To anyone else, this might be a negligible matter. However... To a Bowman like Leonel, it essentially meant that he had suddenly become the Apex Predator of this battlefield.

Leonel's gaze flashed, realizing the change immediately. As expected, his Dream Simulation had been correct.

His dozens of tendrils flexed.

Keiza wasn't a pushover by any stretch of the imagination. The moment she realized the situation had turned unfavorable, she shot backward, her body lifting up into the air and over the beasts as she kept her eyes trained on Leonel.

However, from the very beginning, she had never been Leonel's target.

In a single smooth motion, Leonel's tendrils rocketed forward before rebounding in the opposite direction, spinning about themselves and sending out dozens of red-gold, spinning drills of Bow Force rocketing toward the Libra group.

Keiza's expression changed.

That was ridiculous. The distance between the two groups following Leonel and the others had been just over a hundred meters initially, just within the abilities of their communication devices. The distance had been cut to about 60-70 meters as they made their way toward Little Blackstar and the others, but sending an attack out from that distance should have been impossible in this environment!

Under any other circumstances, Keiza would be correct. Her deductions were perfect, her mind was quick and her calculations were accurate. Unfortunately... Her opponent was Leonel Morales.

...

Huon and Droet blazed a path toward Leonel's group, feeling that they were on a time crunch. They had been able to lay back and relax most of this time because they had forced those around them to do the brunt of the work and, also, following behind Leonel had been like following a safe zone. The beasts behind their group had been much sparser and, though not to an exaggerated extent, most beasts tended to aim for Leonel as most of their comrades fell in that direction.

This had allowed the brothers to maintain themselves at near peak condition, just enough for them to go all out now. In just a few more seconds, they would make it.

However, what neither of them could have expected was for the foggy skies to sudden light up as though several red suns were boring down on them, each splicing through the air as though they had minds of their own and falling down from above with lethal intentions.

The eyes of the brothers widened.

"Enemy attack!"

The assumption that both Huon and Droet made was that they had accidentally offended a powerful beast. One that could attack them from outside their range of site had to be at least Tier 7, if not higher. In fact, they even believed that this might have been the final hurdle they had to cross to be allowed into the safe zone.

However, caught off guard, and being attacked from a direction completely opposing to the destination they were facing... The results were devastating.

Screams of horror and cacophonous booms resounded. Leonel's timing was all too perfect and the Libra group found themselves in shambles. The two brothers could only brandish their rope darts with dark expressions, turning to face the direction of their attackers.

Chapter 1299 Sparks

Leonel didn't look in the direction he sent his volley of attacks, his focus still concentrated on Keiza. Despite what seemed like disregard, he found this woman to be very dangerous and he didn't like the idea of turning his back on her.

'She's flying but she hasn't flown very high... There's probably a good reason for that.'

Leonel made a mental note of this. He, too, could fly. But, he hadn't done so because he needed to escort everyone else. Obviously, though, from what it seemed here, there had to be some hidden danger in taking that route. Leonel didn't believe that there weren't Cursed Flying beasts, they were just lucky that there was a thick canopy of trees here, or else maybe they would have to deal with attacks from the sky as well.

Leonel suddenly felt his connection with Aina waver, causing his expression to shift.

'I didn't account for that. There must be a great strain on her mind right now to not only assimilate Yuri's senses but then also pass them off to me. I can't press this situation anymore.'

Aina hadn't said a word from start to finish. In fact, even now, she still protected Leonel's back, swinging her ax and ensuring that no Cursed Beasts could attack from the back.

Seeing such a scene, Leonel didn't hesitate any longer. Not sparing Keiza another glance, he turned and retreated, wrapping an arm around Aina's waist as his Universal Force flourished. Almost the instant he did, Aina weakly wobbled, but his grip was firm.

Keiza found herself caught off guard again before clicking her tongue.

"Asking me such intimate questions and then running off with another girl. How rude."

Keiza giggled to herself, seemingly not realizing that her team members were still on their backfoot in this situation due to having placed too much attention on Leonel and not enough on the beasts surrounding them.

Leonel pretended as though he hadn't heard a thing, heavy droplets of molten gold becoming his footrests as he shot through the skies, relying on his Artistic Conception of Spring.

In a few massive leaps, Leonel landed beside the still rampaging Blackstar. By this point, the safe zone could be seen with the naked eye. A thin gold barrier surrounded yet another village. Cursed Beasts rushed around it, not daring to step foot within.

Leonel gave Aina another glance, but he chose to hold onto her in the end. Her brows were marred with sweat and breathing was heavy and labored. She had clearly pushed herself very hard. Since the safe zone wasn't far away, he didn't think it was right to leave her be like this. He could only ignore all the knowing stares and winks he was getting right this moment.

Soon, the group had made a final push and crossed the safe zone barrier.

Leonel looked back and met Yuri's gaze. The latter was silent and didn't have much of an expression right now at all. In fact, she seemed to be quite a muted version of her current self.

"I'm sorry. I was ignorant and made an inappropriate ask of you."

Yuri took a while to realize that Leonel was actually speaking to her. But, even after she did realize this, she didn't know how to respond. The result was her mouth hanging open for a moment, but not the slightest inkling of sound coming out.

He apologized to her?

In truth, Yuri had already guessed that Leonel had misspoken. But, she had a lot of anger for him and couldn't stand to explain herself.

Leonel understood where Yuri came from with a lot of the ways she acted and he didn't blame her. If Aina's best friend didn't always have her back even when the world was against her, then who would? If even the far more reasonable Savahn didn't like his actions very much, Leonel wasn't arrogant enough to still believe he was perfect.

That said, the only reason Leonel hadn't tried to see things from Yuri's perspective earlier was because she hadn't explicitly told them that their minds were being targeted or that they were being followed despite the fact she should have known.

Unfortunately, what Leonel was unaware of was the fact that Yuri hadn't known. She had a habit ingrained into her by Miel to always hold back her true strength. In reality, even the 100 meter estimate she had given Leonel was a lie, that was just a fraction of her true range even in this environment. It wasn't until she realized they were being targeted that she let loose a little bit.

In addition, the reason why she used such a roundabout way to inform Leonel was also because of her habit of hiding herself. Not everything she did was from a malicious or petty view. It was just that Leonel didn't know about her past and why it had to be hidden...

But that was also precisely why what Aina had done hurt so much more than anything else. Anyone else could be ignorant, but Aina knew all of those things... And still chose Leonel's side. It was like she had drawn a hard line in the sand. It was either Yuri accept that she would always have feelings for Leonel, or they wouldn't be sisters anymore.

These were the emotions that Yuri was trying to process when Leonel so suddenly did something she hadn't expected.

Unable to come up with a proper response, Yuri crossed her arms and looked away.

"... You're too nice for your own good. And, somehow also not nice enough when you should be." Yuri mumbled beneath her breath.

These words were only meant for her to hear, but she had clearly underestimated Leonel a bit too much. Even hearing this, though, Leonel could only chuckle.

Seeing that this matter was resolved, at least for now, Leonel began to look around. He needed to find a place to allow Aina to rest and he also wasn't sure how long it would before this safe zone was no longer a safe zone much like the previous Village 0012.

Before he could find an answer to this, though, another group charged in from a separate entrance.

Beaten and bloodied, the Libra brothers and what remained of their cohort collapsed. The Libra brothers themselves seemed to be fairly unscathed, but their expressions were very much dark.

By their sides, a smiling Keiza stood, unblemished and beaming like a small star.

Sparks almost instantly flew through the air.

Chapter 1300 Pass? Or Not...

Leonel met their gazes, his own narrowing. The sight of the Libra brothers wasn't something that he was expecting, it was the first time he was seeing such odd humans. The natural blue hair of the Adurna family was already a great shock to him, but the white as clouds and dark as night skin of the twins was yet another culture shock for Leonel. The both of them seemed as though they had been painted into reality rather than being naturally occurring.

Still, Leonel only lingered on this thought for a moment. What was more intriguing was the odd way Force moved about the two of them. There was a clear push and pull effect between the two brothers as though they were pulling in Force together and separating it into parts in a game of tug of war. In the end, there would be a light pop and the 'rope' would cleanly separate, leaving each brother with their own clean half of the Force.

It was a perfect sort of a balance. Droet's Force was a bit lighter and brighter while Huon's Force was a bit darker and heavier.

Leonel looked away. He couldn't waste any more time on these people, there was a time crunch.

He took a step forward but Aina was a bit slow. Seeing that her legs felt weak, Leonel put away his spear and swept her legs into his arms as well, not really thinking twice about it.

Huon and Droet frowned at this scene. If Aina was a normal beauty, they wouldn't have even thought twice about what they were seeing. What kind of beauty hadn't they experienced with their noble standing? Unfortunately, Aina wasn't very normal at all.

These petty feelings only made the anger they felt toward their failed ambush worse. But, within the safe zones, the rules of the Void Palace were put back into place. It was already too late for them to do much of anything.

Surprisingly, though, Leonel didn't get the chance to explore very long before a flash of light appeared before them.

Soon, it faded, revealing the figure of Ossenna within.

The safe zone was quite small, only being about 30 or so meters in diameter. So, despite the fact Ossenna stood at the center, she was still viewable to them all through the gaps left between the storefronts that called the core of the village home.

"Congratulations on making it this far, you can now be considered Nominal Disciples of the Void Palace."

Leonel's expression flickered, but then he settled down in understanding.

They had been fighting without pause or rest for more than a day. If it wasn't for him and Little Blackstar taking up the vanguard, and then him proceeding to take the brunt of the pressure away from everyone else, it was likely that no one would have passed from the Three Pillar Sector.

Of course, that was also because Leonel's coma hadn't allowed them the time they needed to acclimate. There was no doubt that they would have performed far better if given the same time to adjust as everyone else.

If Leonel had to be objective, probably about half of those here would have managed to pass. If they were able to all work together like they did under him and not allow their clashing origins and backgrounds to interfere, then at least 60-70% would have passed. The quality of their Sector was definitely decent even if it didn't seem like it.

That said, it was still lagging behind others. If not for Leonel's interference, 100% of both Keiza and the Libra brothers' groups would have passed. And, that was taking into consideration the fact all three hardly raised a finger at all.

"Those without Tokens will be staying here. You will have one year from this point to make it to the next safe zone, or else your Nominal Disciple Rank will be revoked. Those with Gold Tokens, you may remain in this safe zone for three hours before you must leave and head to the next checkpoint.

"From now on, this will be a contest of not just checkpoints, but also speed. Safe zones will only allow a certain number of Tokens to pass through. Some will only accept one while some will accept up to three. You will be able to tell by the zone's size.

"Good luck."

After saying these words, Ossenna vanished once more, leaving Leonel surprised once more. It seems that he had been too naïve. How could the Void Palace make things so easy, even if it was for Nominal Disciples?

From what it sounded like, making it up the mountain was a rite of passage for all students. Even if you were a Nominal Disciple, you would have to do it, it was just that you were given a little more time to do so while those who carried the burden of higher level Tokens were under a stricter time crunch.

It was likely that if you wanted to graduate from your status as a Nominal Disciple, you would have to make it all the way up the mountain to the final checkpoint within the allotted time given to you.

'Another three hours, huh...'

The three Golden Token holders of the Three Pillar Sector were Myghell, Aina and Noah. And, of course, there was Leonel who had the Amethyst Token and was obviously involved with all of this as well.

Myghell had already gone ahead. Leonel wasn't sure if he had already stopped by the safe zone and chose to leave already, or if it was the case that he had went in another direction and ended up at a completely different safe zone. Either way, he wasn't here.

Ultimately, Leonel decided that this was a net positive. Now everyone had a year to adjust and with the storefronts here, they could exchange for everything they needed.

Since there wasn't anything necessarily tying down this safe zone to Village 0012, they shouldn't experience the same problems.

'Three hours, need to be more efficient this time.'

"I'll be back in a few minutes."

Leonel's gaze narrowed. He realized that there was one elephant in the room he hadn't considered just yet, and trying to ignore it could lead to a lot of problems.

Carrying Aina, he quickly made his way to the storefronts.